



Legend of the Five Rings™

ROLEPLAYING



SINS OF REGRET

AN ADVENTURE IN THE FORGOTTEN HEART OF THE EMPIRE

Sins of Regret

Sins of Regret is an adventure for the *Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game*. Designed for player characters of rank 2 or higher, it tests their commitment to Bushidō in the face of a looming conflict between an unjust lord and desperate peasants.

This adventure contains encounters designed for rōnin PCs, with choices, challenges, and rewards that give these lordless samurai opportunities to exercise their free will, foster their reputations, and perhaps even prove themselves worthy of a lord's patronage. However, not all players are ready or willing to set aside their clan affiliations. To ensure such players are not excluded, tips for running the adventure for lorded samurai are provided within the text.

The *Legend of the Five Rings Core Rulebook* allows players to create rōnin PCs, and *Path of Waves* offers additional options. Although this supplement is not required for running *Sins of Regret*, it does include further setting details and adventure ideas. If the PCs have already explored Twin Blessings Village, this adventure can occur on the PCs' return visit, exposing them to all the changes wrought by the new daimyō.

This adventure can be expanded for additional playtime, with extra, optional encounters available for download. It is strongly recommended that the GM (and only the GM!) read through *Sins of Regret* in its entirety to become familiar with it before running the adventure.

THE ADVENTURE

Sins of Regret begins with the arrival of the PCs in Twin Blessings Village, which is suffering under the governorship of a new *shugo*, or minor lord, Reju Jikai. Evidence of this daimyō's unjust rule is widespread, and the PCs witness the dishonorable behavior of his bushi immediately. The village is also experiencing an elemental imbalance that has ruined the crops. The villagers believe the local kami are offended by Jikai's behavior, but the PCs might find evidence of sabotage. Jikai's magistrate demonstrates no mercy when the villagers are unable to pay the annual rice tax, and the villagers beg the PCs to go to the lord's castle and speak on their behalf.

The PCs must decide whether the transgressions of Jikai and his samurai necessitate their interference, or whether the local troubles provide them an opportunity to enter the lord's service. Either way, to meet Jikai the PCs must visit the castle, where the lord and his small court have problems of their own. Half the court—and the castle itself—seems determined to remove Jikai, while the other half resents living in such a place. Otomo Nobu, the steward, works toward overthrowing Jikai, gradually turning both samurai and peasants against him.

Once the PCs get inside the castle and gain an audience with the daimyō, they find that he neither heeds their advice nor swears them to his service until they gain his good opinion. They may then seek to earn his trust or find a way to remove him from power. Either way, Jikai's enemies move against him.

The nature of the **Final Conflict** (page 27) reflects the decisions the PCs have made throughout the adventure, while also giving them further options to influence the outcome. In the end, Jikai either defeats his enemies, or falls. The PCs might fight for or against the daimyō, and their success or failure determines not only their own future but that of everyone under Jikai's governorship.

THE ELEMENTAL IMBALANCE

Within the village and lands surrounding the castle, the PCs witness the effects of an elemental imbalance. Any PC who makes a successful **TN 2 Theology check (Void 1, Fire 3)** deduces the existence of the imbalance, but determining its cause and alleviating the problem are more difficult.

The villagers believe the actions of Lord Jikai have angered the local kami, which only adds to their dislike of the daimyō. Some of the servants in the castle also believe his presence aggravates the kami, while the guards and courtiers the daimyō brought with him believe the castle itself is cursed.

The truth is that what began as a minor problem, an imbalance in and around the castle since its construction, inspired Otomo Nobu, the steward of the castle, who wants to oust Lord Jikai and govern in his place. Using the advice and skills of a vindictive shugenja, Reju Toshio, he has deliberately angered spirits in the castle and village. This is part of his campaign to undermine Jikai's authority, allowing Nobu to gain support among dissatisfied courtiers.

Toshio traveled to the river to provoke and anger its kami. This is why the river has changed course and ruined the crops. Nobu's intention is to have Toshio appease the river kami once the daimyō is overthrown. Nobu himself has thrown bones into the well to render it unusable. With these and other, more mundane tricks, Nobu, Toshio, and a treacherous servant named Atsuko have heaped problems upon the unfortunate Lord Jikai.

The fact that Jikai has been unable to address the imbalance, combined with the lack of rice for him to pay tax to his superior, Lord Itsuki, damages his already poor reputation further. Jikai has been sent to Closed Shell Castle as punishment (see page 14), and believes the mounting problems are a just part of his sentence.

RÖNIN SAMURAI

Living the life of a rōnin lacks many benefits lorded samurai claim, and some rōnin are willing to do whatever it takes to gain a position. Others relish the freedom and find success and glory through their own actions. *Sins of Regret* provides opportunities for rōnin of all kinds, and demonstrates how shaping one's own fate can bring great rewards or great dishonor.

GAIJIN CHARACTERS

Gaijin characters created using *Path of Waves* can take part in the adventure alongside their rōnin allies. Although gaijin characters may encounter the same suspicion as elsewhere in Rokugan, the desperation of the villagers of Twin Blessings ensures they do not turn away any potential help.

Lord Jikai of Closed Shell Castle is fascinated by gaijin culture. PCs might take advantage of this to help secure their position within his court, or to work against him.

CHARACTER GOALS

Sins of Regret has plenty of opportunities for intrigue, excitement, and action, but like all adventures, it works best if the PCs (and players) feel a strong impetus to engage with what it offers. To that end, it's worthwhile to spend some time thinking about the PCs' motivations for taking part in the adventure, and discussing this with the players. Whereas clan samurai often act on the orders of their lords, rōnin generally pursue their own goals or flee their pasts. Linking the adventure to the PCs' personal ambitions is an effective way to motivate them. Here are a few ideas to help the PCs engage with the adventure.

- ✱ Rōnin characters might have heard that the new lord of Closed Shell Castle is looking for mercenaries to hire or even to swear samurai to his service.
- ✱ Gaijin characters might learn of the desperate situation affecting the village or castle and see it as an opportunity to ingratiate themselves with Rokugani people. They can learn more about the Empire and its culture—or gain particular information or assistance for any goal that brought them to Rokugan.
- ✱ Clan samurai might be tasked with assisting Jikai to raise their own lord's esteem among certain Imperial families, or with usurping him to further their lord's power or territory.

Part One: Twin Blessings Village

As introduced in *Path of Waves*, Twin Blessings Village has no hard-and-fast location, to allow GMs to situate it based on the needs of their own campaigns—for this story, it is assumed to be somewhere rural and remote. Far from any major holding, the word of the local daimyō is law—as long as he can enforce it. This is important, as it inspires the PCs to make their own decisions and act without orders. While the daimyō seemingly does not feel responsible for upholding Bushidō, the PCs might, as there is no one else to come to the villagers' aid. Or they may feel able to act outside the laws of Bushidō as his samurai do.

Rural villages like the one encountered in this adventure exist all across

Rokugan. Even if the GM decides to locate the village within the territory of a particular clan, it can remain on the fringes, far from any major family holding. Such villages are compact and independent societies, each one individual but working towards the common goals of survival and paying the rice tax.

APPROACHING THE VILLAGE

If the PCs have already begun their campaign using another adventure, the GM should tailor hooks to appeal to the particular wants and needs of those PCs. Perhaps they need a safe place to rest and recuperate, are short on supplies, or are in need of a priest's spiritual advice. PCs might have heard of certain recent events in and around the castle and village that pique their particular interest.

For new characters, or those who need extra incentive, there are more direct ways to bring them to the village. A sudden storm might spring up, forcing the characters to search for shelter. (Although it should die down before the PCs encounter the bushi at the edge of the village, see page 5.) This might be their first clue that the village is suffering from an elemental imbalance. That same imbalance can cause earth tremors that damage the roads near the village, which might injure a frightened horse or even make the road impassible until repaired.

THE PILGRIM

As another option for incentivizing the PCs to travel to Twin Blessings Village, the PCs can meet the pilgrim Naoki on the road. He is an amiable, inquisitive traveler who asks the PCs to help him get safely to the village. He wishes to visit the shrine there, but has heard wolves howling in the forest and heard stories of bandits, and so does not wish to travel the road alone. He appeals to the PCs' honor, but if that

CLAN SAMURAI

Playing rōnin offers a unique way of exploring Rokugan, unfettered by duty to family, clan, and lord. However, clan loyalty runs deep, and for players who aren't prepared to put aside their affiliations there are a number of options to consider. Firstly, a lord may send a samurai to prevent (or encourage) a peasant rebellion in Twin Blessings Village, as a favor to an Otomo ally (or to cause trouble for a foe). If this assignment is far from home, the samurai might have to make concessions when seeking allies, so could end up working alongside rōnin PCs.



EXPAND THE ADVENTURE

You can find additional content for *Sins of Regret* as a free download at FantasyFlightGames.com. *Cresting Waves* includes several additional encounters for the PCs to experience during their time in Twin Blessings Village and Closed Shell Castle.

doesn't work, he offers them a small reward for accompanying him: a healing salve of his own making, a poisonous root, a statuette of a cat he claims brings good luck, or some other item the GM deems appropriate. If the GM chooses to include Naoki, read or paraphrase the following:

You meet a lone figure on the road. He wears the small topknot of a merchant, but his traveling cloak is dusty from the road and his sandals are worn and need replacing.

"Samurai-sama," he bows to greet you. "A fortunate meeting! Perhaps we could travel together?"

Naoki is a genuine pilgrim who has taken to the life, and years spent on the road have toughened him since his merchant days. If the PCs are amicable, he is too. He has a good knowledge of geography, and the location of shrines and temples in particular. Naoki visited Twin Blessings Village several years ago, so he can explain the basic features of the village and its surroundings. He may also speak at some length of the beauty of the village and its fertile fields along the riverbank, making the revelation of the village's current state even more shocking.

It should be noted that if the PCs enter the village with Naoki, the villagers consider him a member of their party. If he gets into trouble, this reflects badly on the PCs. On the other hand, treating pilgrims kindly is an outward sign of the Bushidō tenets of Compassion and Courtesy, and by setting such an example the PCs encourage the villagers to exhibit the same virtues to them.

Naoki the Pilgrim

Naoki is traveling from shrine to shrine, temple to temple, across Rokugan. Once a merchant in Ootosan Uchi, his material success brought him no joy, and so he took to the road to seek spiritual fulfillment. His straw sandals are the same as any peasant wears, and his traveling cloak is plain, but his kimono bears fine embroidery in a garish pattern containing an array of lucky symbols. He has witnessed great ceremonies and participated in humble village festivals, and he claims to assign the same worth to both. He considers rōnin comrades, since he is as free as they.

Naoki might sometimes receive a warm welcome in places rōnin are driven out, but he is still vulnerable, traveling unarmed and reliant on the goodwill of the populace for his safety and survival—at least, that is how it appears. In truth, Naoki has his wits on which to rely, as well as a few tricks he's picked up on his travels. Once he has visited shrines in the village, and partaken of the villagers' hospitality, his next destination is the nearby way station, where he hopes to trade some rare (and poisonous) herbs he's collected for his favorite tea—poppy.

Naoki tends to pilfer things he shouldn't. As an optional complication, a villager might notice something missing, such as a bottle of sake or newly made sandals, which Naoki places in a PC's pack to shift the blame from himself.

If a profile is needed for Naoki, use the **Humble Peasant** on page 312 of the core rulebook with the addition of the **Trickster** template.

ARRIVING AT TWIN BLESSINGS VILLAGE

However the PCs are brought to the village, and whether Naoki accompanies them or not, as they approach read or paraphrase the following (bearing in mind that if there has been a sudden storm, it disappears as quickly as it came):

The sun appears as you come into sight of a village nestled in the valley between twin, forest-covered hills. Fields and rice paddies stretch along either bank of a winding river, glinting silver-blue. A cluster of thatched buildings, interspersed with leafy trees, spreads across both sides of the river, connected by a slender, white-wooded bridge.

Approaching, you realize the paddies are dry, rice-stalks brittle in the sun, while the millet fields drown, leaves limp in the water. It's as though the river has deliberately burst its banks only where it could do the most harm. Then, you hear the galloping of horses and cries for mercy. Is the village under attack?

In the unlikely case that the PCs flee or hide from trouble, the two samurai who are taunting the villagers gallop past them as they leave the village, ignoring their presence whether they spy the PCs or not. The bushi leave the villagers shaken but unharmed.

Assuming the PCs press forward, they find a group of village folk including Setsuo, the leader, cowering in the presence of two mounted samurai. These samurai wear the colors of the Reju family, purple and teal. They demand sake of the villagers, who claim they have none. Setsuo respectfully reminds the bushi that Lord Jikai ordered the brewery closed—to which the bushi accuse the villagers of hiding a store of sake somewhere.

Some villagers bring brushes to rub down the horses and offer bowls of food that the samurai cast aside. An astute PC might notice that one samurai is behaving worse than the other, as she loudly insults the villagers and deliberately wheels her horse around to scatter them. She appears to have imbibed too much sake already.

The more belligerent samurai, called Rin, was born rōnin, and though she has sworn to serve her new lord, she only serves him while it suits her. She likes to

USING NAOKI

Naoki does not have any part to play in the adventure's culmination. Primarily, his role in the adventure is to serve as a guide for the PCs. He can lead the PCs to Twin Blessings Village, offering tidbits of relevant gossip to motivate the PCs to visit. If the PCs don't show an inclination to visit the way station on their own, Naoki can suggest traveling there together. Once you decide that Naoki's role in the adventure is fulfilled, he can simply move on to the next village after saying a brief farewell to the PCs.

THE BUSHI

The bushi, vassals of Reju Jikai, are Reju Genzo, who can be represented by the **Loyal Bushi** profile on page 312 of the core rulebook, and Rin, who can be represented by the **Skillful Rōnin** profile on page 316 of the core rulebook, with the addition of lacquered armor (Physical 4, Ceremonial, Cumbersome, Wargear). When first encountered, both have the Intoxicated condition.

call herself samurai, but cares nothing for the code of Bushidō, and enjoys tormenting the villagers. In contrast, Genzo was once a proud samurai, but is ashamed of what he has done in service of his lord. He follows Rin's lead, but deep down he yearns to redeem himself and live by his old code again.

ENCOUNTERING THE BUSHI

If the PCs merely watch the scene, the bushi soon grow tired of tormenting the villagers and ride away. Rin throws an insult as she gallops past the PCs: "Looks like vagabonds come to beg food from the peasants!" If a PC wishes to react, they have to catch Rin, who rides hard toward the castle, and only laughs at any returned insults or challenges issued. Any PC frustrated in this way suffers 1 strife.

The PCs might attempt to reason with the unruly samurai, in which case Rin accuses them of interfering. If the PCs then persist, threaten, or challenge the bushi, Rin laughs, telling them she will report them to Lord Jikai. Rin and Genzo then ride to the castle with news of the PCs, unless the PCs prevent them. In this case, Lord Jikai receives prior warning of "troublemakers" and it may be harder for the PCs to gain audience with him.

Rin fights back if attacked or unhorsed but won't agree to anything as fair as a duel. Genzo obeys her and fights alongside her but, if he is challenged directly, accepts a warrior's duel (see page 258 of the core rulebook). If defeated, he answers questions and agrees to return to the castle. He knows nothing of Lord Jikai's plans or Nobu's plot, but can reveal the history of the castle, the identity of his lord, and the fact that Jikai has been swearing rōnin into his service as samurai.

Once the bushi are gone, Setsuo greets the PCs on behalf of the villagers. His attitude depends on their actions. He is grateful if the PCs attempted to speak up for the villagers, but not if they fought the bushi, as Setsuo fears further reprisals. If the PCs suggest reporting the unruly samurai, Setsuo explains that such a report would be pointless. If the bushi have not provided the

information already, he tells the PCs there is a new lord at the castle who has sworn rōnin into his service. They are little more than common bandits, and take advantage of the village rather than protect it. The PCs might see an opportunity here, if entering a lord's service is their goal.

Setsuo encourages them to enjoy the village's hospitality and invites them to stay in his house. "We have little to offer, since our new lord increased the rice tax," he says, "but what we have we willingly share."

STAYING IN THE VILLAGE

While the PCs are in the village, the villagers' routine offers an easy way to keep track of time. Each morning the villagers rise with the sun, have a small meal, and set off to work in the fields or attend to jobs around the village. At present, many villagers spend their days carrying buckets of water to fill the rice paddies or digging new irrigation channels. However, the elemental imbalance makes their task near impossible.

In the evening, the villagers come together for a communal meal, discuss their problems, and retire with the setting of the sun. If the PCs are staying in Setsuo's house, he sits up with them and offers them sake that evening, asking about their own lives. Come morning, he brings them a meal to break their fast, before joining the other villagers at work.

The PCs can explore the village locations in a day but having them stay for at least one night allows for more encounters. The magistrate can arrive to collect taxes when the PCs have sufficiently explored the village, and the GM should bring this event forward if the PCs prepare to move on (see **Collecting Taxes** on page 9).

THE VILLAGERS

The following character descriptions can be used to give life to some of the inhabitants of the village. During play, each can be represented by the **Humble Peasant** profile on page 313 of the core rulebook, with the noted additions.

SETSUO, VILLAGE LEADER

The recent hardships of the villagers weigh heavy on Setsuo's hunched shoulders. He also speaks bitterly of his son, Ichirō, who has recently abandoned the village (see page 8). Setsuo has hidden his ledger, as he would rather be punished for losing it than have the magistrate examine it too closely. Setsuo has not been declaring everything, such as the plum crop the villagers were forced to eat rather than trade this year. To represent Setsuo, add the **Sage** template.

PATH OF WAVES CHARACTERS

GMs with access to *Path of Waves* might prefer to use the profile for Setsuo found there. However, it is worth remembering that he has been cowed by recent events. Other villagers from the supplement can also be used, though some have relocated to the Hermitage (see page 7), and Michi the monk has left.

Villagers are reluctant to talk about the monk, but if pressed, the priest or Setsuo might reveal that Michi recently left to them to visit the castle. Monks come and go as they please, after all.

ABOUT THAT SAKE...

The PCs may point out that Setsuo was lying to Rin and Genzo about not having any sake. Setsuo sadly admits this and explains that he is ashamed of lying and concealing the sake, but that it is all the villagers have left; if he gives it up to Rin and Genzo, they would soon return demanding more, anyway.

HARD TIMES

Anyone familiar with Twin Blessings Village from *Path of Waves* may find the village description here quite different. This reflects the changed situation of the village and demonstrates how a single harsh or unwise daimyō can ruin a once-prosperous and productive village, bringing misery to many people in a relatively brief time.

HELPING HANDS

All the villagers, and Setsuo in particular, are very grateful if the PCs help in a practical way around the village. Taking part in manual work drives home the idea that the life of the villagers is demanding. This may be undertaken as a downtime activity, requiring a **TN 1 Labor check**, with bonus successes indicating how helpful a character's contribution is. If the PCs have any specific, practical skills, the GM may be able to create a job in the village to which they are particularly suited. Otherwise, they could be invited to join in a communal activity, such as working in the fields. Also, if the PCs are brave enough, they could forage in the forest as a downtime activity, making a **TN 2 Survival (Water) check** to fetch wood and gather foodstuffs for the villagers: mushrooms, berries, or herbs. Bonus successes might allow them to find a suitable cypress tree to provide wood to repair the bridge (see page 7). Whether or not they successfully forage, ✨ may be spent to have the PC come across the way station (see page 8).

NATSUMI, OUTSPOKEN VILLAGER

A strong, heavysset young woman, Natsumi is the voice of the discontented villagers, believing they should stand up against Jikai, and likely to become leader after Setsuo. She trained with a warrior monk called Michi during their recent stay in the village and, whether she becomes leader or not, is at the forefront of any peasant mob in the event of a revolt. To represent Natsumi, add the **Warrior** template and make her an adversary.

SHINICHI, OUTCAST VILLAGER

The other villagers begrudgingly accept Shinichi's presence, but as his mother, Otoha, was the way station proprietor, her reputation has tarnished his. He witnessed the destruction of the way station days ago, hiding in the stables. He has an affinity for horses and, if the PCs have mounts, offers to care for them, taking special care if any are injured. Shinichi wishes vengeance for his mother, and laments the loss of a golden ring, her last gift to him (see **The Way Station** on page 8).

DAIZŌ, VILLAGE PRIEST

Daizō has lost the respect of his fellow villagers as he cannot placate the kami and right the elemental imbalance. He spends hours praying at the shrine by the river,

and barely sleeps or eats. He is painfully thin, with dark sunken eyes and shaking hands. He mourns the loss of Kokoro, an old villager who died soon after the arrival of the new daimyō, as he now has no one to ask for advice. He thought he saw her spirit one night at the river shrine, but she did not answer him and disappeared into the darkness. The priest doesn't realize, but this was Reju Toshio, the shugenja from the castle (see **Castle Inhabitants** on page 14). To represent Daizō, add the **Spiritualist** template.

VILLAGE LOCATIONS

Twin Blessings Village has been suffering under the unjust rule of Lord Jikai long enough that the consequences are visible throughout the village. The PCs may have also noticed the state of the fields and paddies as they approached the village, a result of the elemental imbalance. If they visit these, they find villagers trying to salvage their crops. If the PCs show sympathy and a willingness to help in any way, the villagers are extremely grateful and even more accommodating to their guests.

The villagers themselves are polite, but fearful and subdued, and many appear undernourished. Several homes need re-thatching. The sake brewery has been closed up, as the lord forbids brewing, which he sees as "drinking away" his precious rice. The nearby hot spring, which villagers once bathed in, is now so hot no one can enter it, as its kami is angry. The hens have been slaughtered for their meat, so the henhouse is empty save for rats. There are also fewer villagers than might be expected from the number of houses. This is because some inhabitants left to join the bandits in the forest, but the villagers only say the lord's actions have caused some villagers to flee for their lives. The shortage of workers, and desperation of the villagers, lead Setsuo to humbly ask the PCs for help whether they spoke up against the bushi or not. All he can offer is shelter, meager meals, and the eternal goodwill of his village.

THE LEADER'S HOUSE

Setsuo's house is the largest building in the village, apart from the storehouse and brewery, but is mostly empty. Any items Setsuo could trade or use elsewhere in the village he has done so. A paper partition separates his room from the room he offers guests, though he might move this when lighting a fire in the *irori*, so that everyone can share the heat and light it provides. Setsuo lives alone, his son being one of the youths who've left the village. His most important possession is the large ledger in which he keeps the village records, and he keeps this in a secret compartment in the wall within his room. He also has a pair of worn—but clean—mats he offers guests to sleep on and shows visitors every courtesy.

NATSUMI AND THE BANDITS

Natsumi knows Ichirō (see page 8) leads the bandits in the forest and intends to encourage the village to join forces with them. Even if she or Setsuo agree to wait for now, this is likely to occur by the end of the adventure. For more, see **The Hermitage** on page 7.

THE BRIDGE

The bridge that connects the two halves of the village was once a beautiful structure, made of a white wood not common in the local forest. It was the pride of the village, but parts have recently been hurriedly repaired with more common wood. Scraps of prayer ribbon have been tied to the struts of the bridge, as though the villagers ask forgiveness, and these ribbons flutter violently in the breeze, trying to work themselves loose.

If the PCs cross the bridge, one of them steps down too hard and is sent plunging into the freezing water below. Have the PCs make a **competitive TN 2 Fitness (Water) check**. The character with the lowest result falls into the water (and in the case of a tie, multiple characters fall). Each character who falls this way receives 3 fatigue and 3 strife.

The villagers aren't happy about further damage done to their bridge, and the unfortunate PC might receive more angry glances and unspoken resentment than they do sympathy.

SHRINE TO THE RIVER KAMI

On the far side of the village, a small stone shrine stands near the river, a simple structure with room for a single supplicant to kneel within its partial shelter. Offerings to the river kami lay scattered on the ground around the shrine, displaced by the erratic shaking of the earth.

Daizō is on his knees within the shrine, muttering his prayers as incense blooms around him and disappears on the wind. Like the rest of the villagers, he is desperate enough for help that he accepts it, even if he doesn't trust the PCs.

As a priest without the gift of shugenja, Daizō cannot invoke the kami directly, and he has been unable to determine the cause of the kami's agitation. The figure Daizō saw at the shrine one night was not the ghost of his departed friend Kokoro, as he believes (see **The Elemental Imbalance** on page 2), but Toshio, the treacherous shugenja of Closed Shell Castle. Toshio has deliberately disrespected and angered the river kami, resulting in the river's erratic and destructive behavior. A shugenja or other PC who uses Commune with the Spirits can learn more, but the TN of any check to use this technique while at the river shrine is increased by 2.

As a downtime activity, a character who knows the Commune with the Spirits ritual may undertake a special rite to pacify the water kami. They must give a proper offering of ritual sake (or a similarly valuable object) and make a **TN 3 Theology (Water) check**. If they succeed, the river begins to return to normal. For the crops to recover, the river must return to its normal activities for a considerable time, which is only possible if the PCs prevent Toshio from returning to again offend the kami.

SECRET CACHES

Under Setsuo's direction, villagers have taken to hiding valuables around the village, wrapped in cloth and buried under a shallow layer of earth. These secret stashes of weapons, tools, sake, and other items, can be found at various locations near the houses, at the GM's discretion. One near the sake brewery contains bottles of sake, while most contain tools that can be used as weapons, such as *kama*, *kumade*, axes, and knives. Some tools have been hidden by Natsumi and other villagers preparing to one day fight back against their daimyō.

Not every villager knows about every hidden cache, but if reported to the daimyō, Setsuo, as leader, is the one to face the consequences.

As an optional encounter, an earth kami shakes the ground, unearthing a cache. Alternatively, a PC who searches an area, and makes a successful **TN 2 Survival check (Water 1, Earth 4)** using Survival with a Scholar approach, might notice an area where the ground has been recently disturbed.

THE HERMITAGE

PCs who explore the forest might stumble across what the villagers call the Hermitage. Michi, a monk, once stayed here, but now a group of bandits has moved in. They have erected tents in the trees around a clearing where they light a fire to cook the animals they catch in the forest. Whether the PCs find the bandits here, or the bandits hear them coming and disappear into the trees, depends on the PCs' approach. If they intend to move stealthily, the PC leading the group makes a **TN 2 Fitness (Air) check**.

If profiles for the bandits are needed, use the desperate bandit profile from page 315 of the *Legend of the Five Rings Core Rulebook*. Two bandits are present for every PC. If the PCs are overwhelmed, Ichirō (see page 8) can step in to stop the fight. He and many of the bandits were once villagers and are preparing to rebel against the daimyō. All wear masks when they raid nearby villages or even attack lone samurai. Ichirō is Setsuo's son; he claims to have joined the Perfect Land Sect and expects other members of the sect to join him soon so he can attack the castle.



ICHIRŌ, BANDIT LEADER

ADVERSARY

CONFLICT RANK:  2  1

Ichirō could not bear to watch his father, Setsuo, submit to Jikai's cruelty, so he abandoned the village to live in the forest. Reo the dōshin, or local law enforcer, followed him. They gathered together several of the villagers who wanted to fight rather than starve, most of whom trained with Michi (see page 11). Ichirō is young and naïve, and if the PCs swear to keep his presence secret, he does not prevent them from leaving the Hermitage.

Although Ichirō tells the other bandits that the Perfect Land Sect will appear to help them one day, he cannot really know this. In the meantime, he encourages the bandits to train and hunt in secret in the forest. He hopes to ultimately help the village by overthrowing Jikai. How and when has never been established, and he fears the others will lose faith in him before he finds the resources and will to put his plan into action.

SOCIETAL	PERSONAL
10 HONOR	ENDURANCE 10
10 GLORY	COMPOSURE 7
15 STATUS	FOCUS 5
 +2,  -2 DEMEANOR - AMBITIOUS	VIGILANCE 2
ARTISAN 0	MARTIAL 2
SCHOLAR 0	SOCIAL 1
	TRADE 1

ADVANTAGES

Wary:

 Martial; Physical

Idealistic:

 Social; Mental

FAVORED WEAPONS & GEAR

Kama: Range 0–1, Damage 3, Deadliness 3/5, Concealable

Gear (equipped): Peasant garb (Physical 1), bandit mask

ABILITIES

FOREST FIGHTER

When Ichirō makes a Martial skill check while in forest, he adds one rolled .

THE WAY STATION

This once-bustling den of black-market trade and shameful decadence has been abandoned and looted. There is little left but an empty, burnt-out husk of a building, a firepit, a well, and a stable large enough to accommodate four horses. The water in the well is stagnant and unsafe to drink.

The way station's history might be learned from Shiniichi in the village. The daimyō ordered his samurai to destroy the way station, and though he was within his right to do so, Rin took his orders a step further. Some days ago, she trapped everyone inside the main building and burned them alive. Although Genzo was horrified at Rin's actions, he did not attempt to stop her. Should the PCs question the two bushi about the way station, Rin is almost eager to discuss her deed. Genzo is ashamed of his complicity, but does not lie about events.

The remains of the victims lie in the burnt ruins, as most of the villagers are unaware of what really transpired here. Shinichi has not shared what he witnessed. Those villagers who saw smoke rising from the direction of the way station assumed it had something to do with the latest misdeeds by the proprietors and clientele, which has been a topic of some gossip.

Treasures of the Way Station

Rin did not know or care who the travelers were, so she certainly had no idea one was a shugenja of an Imperial family. Miya Emon was on his way to visit his niece, Miya Shinako, during her stay at Closed Shell Castle. Normally, a shugenja as skilled as Emon could call upon the kami to extinguish the flames, but the elemental imbalance prevented this and doomed him, and the other victims, to a fiery death. Miraculously, Emon's ancestral wakizashi survived the inferno with no lasting harm.

Any PC who searches the ruins finds the gleaming wakizashi in its scabbard among the ashes. The firepit in the center of the way station does not light until this wakizashi is recovered. Once found, it must be returned to the shugenja's family, or it brings ill-fortune to the bearer, who suffers the Afflicted condition to their Void ring. This can be resolved in Closed Shell Castle, where the PCs meet Miya Shinako (see page 15). Alternatively, the GM can use this as an opportunity to direct the PCs to a particular territory for a later adventure by changing some or all of the details of this artifact.

A golden ring is hidden amid the straw in the stable. Its small size makes it difficult to find, requiring a successful **TN 3 Skulduggery check (Water 2, Fire 4)**, using a Scholar approach. This is Shinichi's ring, and the PCs are awarded 3 honor if they return this valuable heirloom.



THE DESTRUCTION OF THE WAY STATION

Lord Jikai did order his bushi to put the way station out of business but is furious if he learns of the dishonorable actions of Rin. Whether he learns this from PCs or the guilt-wracked Genzo, he immediately dismisses Rin from his service. She may linger in the area to cause problems for the PCs or return in the future to take her revenge.

If Jikai learns of the death of Miya Emon (or a similarly important personage, should the GM decide to modify the details), the situation is much more severe. Lord Jikai might have Rin put to death—perhaps tasking the PCs with this—or even attempt to silence the PCs, should he fear being blamed for the death. How the PCs handle the revelation of the wakizashi, and what they choose to tell Jikai, could provide them with either bargaining power or serious trouble.

- ✱ The poor condition of the roads makes it difficult to get goods to the nearest town to trade.
- ✱ Some of the younger members of the village have fled. The villagers can't let the daimyō learn this, or he may punish the village. This also means there aren't enough hands to keep up with all the of villagers' tasks.
- ✱ The daimyō has forbidden the villagers from making sake in the brewery, which means one fewer sources of income.

COLLECTING TAXES

The villagers know their taxes are due soon, but believe they still have a few weeks before the magistrate arrives. However, the daimyō anticipates the villagers are unable to pay (or claim to be), and sends the magistrate early to investigate and rectify the situation. So, although the villagers have been living in fear of this coming event, they are caught off-guard and unprepared when it occurs.

When the GM deems the arrival of the magistrate appropriate, he arrives on horseback accompanied by two bushi: Rin and Genzo if available, or other samurai in Reju Jikai's service (use the **Loyal Bushi** from page 312 of the core rulebook). On the magistrate's arrival, read or paraphrase the following:

Three riders enter the village, their horses at a walk. The leader sits stiffly upright, his eyes narrowing above his *mempo* as he surveys the village. His purple armor is polished to a shine, rattling slightly with the movement of his horse. Behind him, his bushi are silent and alert. Their presence draws villagers from the fields and houses, who prostrate themselves on the dusty ground. Only Setsuo dares raise his head to speak: "Welcome, Lord Tsugumasa!"

Tsugumasa is a magistrate sent from the castle to collect the rice tax, and he has arrived earlier than expected. He mentions that the villagers have already been warned about the tax increase and wants to inspect the ledger. Setsuo asks for more time, and claims the ledger is lost. The pair of bushi approach Setsuo threateningly.

At this point, the PCs may wish to intercede, and their actions determine whether Setsuo is beaten, dragged off to the castle, or merely left with a warning. If the PCs ask that the villagers be given more time, and reasonably cite their recent hardships, a successful **TN 3 Courtesy check (Void 1, Earth 4, Fire 4)** persuades the magistrate to grant the villagers extra time. An alternative check might be possible, but the PCs must choose their words and actions carefully, or news of the offense reaches Jikai.

If the PCs produce Setsuo's ledger or reveal its location, they earn the magistrate's favor. However, in this

VILLAGE PROBLEMS

The elemental imbalance, resulting poor rice crop, and unsympathetic daimyō are the villagers' main problems. However, they also face other challenges, which both exacerbate these problems and provide possibilities for further encounters within the village. The following is a list of problems the villagers face for easy reference, though the GM can, of course, add to these.

- ✱ The river has changed course, so the rice paddies that fed the village and satisfied their lords for generations have dried out.
- ✱ The villagers fear the lord's samurai, but also the bandits who have been stopping people on the nearby roads.
- ✱ The villagers are afraid to go into the common-land forest. Several people have disappeared, and the villagers fear bandits, wolves, and worse. This means they are short on lumber and have access to one fewer sources of food.
- ✱ There are no fish swimming in the river, which means less food for the villagers. They consider this a poor omen.
- ✱ No sooner have the villagers repaired a road than the earth shakes it apart again, and this angers their daimyō. Reju Jikai's samurai may demand a road be repaired at short notice.

case, Tsugumasa soon realizes the ledger is not accurate and has Setsuo taken into custody, leaving Natsumi as leader in his place. The PCs lose the villagers' goodwill but can count on the magistrate's support in the castle later. This is also the case if the PCs inform the magistrate about any of the hidden caches, warn him about the local bandits or the potential threat of the Perfect Land Sect, or otherwise assist him.

If the PCs ask to join Lord Jikai's service, Tsugumasa tells them to present themselves at the castle. As long as the PCs remain courteous, he answers any questions about his lord (whom he knows well) or the castle (of which he knows little).

The magistrate shies from a fight, instead taking his bushi back to the castle. In this case, he leaves the rice and promises to inform his lord. Jikai soon after dispatches more samurai to punish the villagers and PCs. Setsuo rebukes the PCs for such action, while Natsumi thanks them.

If the PCs do not intervene, Tsugumasa has Setsuo arrested and brought back to the castle to face punishment. Natsumi does not interfere, but uses this opportunity to take charge of the village and prepare for a full-blown revolt.

REJU TSUGUMASA, MAGISTRATE

ADVERSARY

CONFLICT RANK:  2  3

The magistrate is an aloof but honest man who's been in the daimyō's service a long time. He's trusted and works hard, but his job here is very different from when his lord lived in the capital. He is accustomed to ordering servants but doesn't like dealing with farmers.

Tsugumasa would rather oversee from afar and let the bushi do the work. He does not trust the newly made samurai, but they at least attempt to behave like proper samurai when he is present. He is loyal and dedicated but has a fondness for wealth and comfort that is not satisfied in his current situation.

SOCIETAL		PERSONAL			
34 HONOR	 3  3  2  1  2	ENDURANCE 8			
42 GLORY		COMPOSURE 10			
40 STATUS		FOCUS 3			
 +1,  +1,  -2 DEMEANOR - DETACHED		VIGILANCE 3			
ARTISAN 0		MARTIAL 1	SCHOLAR 2	SOCIAL 2	TRADE 1
ADVANTAGES			DISADVANTAGES		
Analytical Thinking:  Scholar; Mental			Haughty:  Social; Mental		

FAVORED WEAPONS & GEAR

Katana: Range 1, Damage 4, Deadliness 5/7, Ceremonial, Razor-Edged

Gear (equipped): Lacquered armor (Physical 4, Ceremonial, Cumbersome, Wargear), wakizashi

ABILITIES

ELITIST

When making a check to give orders to a subordinate or other character with lower status, Tsugumasa counts his Social skill ranks as 4. After making a Social skill check targeting one or more peasants, Tsugumasa receives 2 strife.

A PLEA FOR HELP

The villagers are left distraught; now the daimyō knows they cannot pay their taxes, and they expect to be punished soon. Setsuo or Natsumi begs the PCs for help. If Setsuo was taken prisoner, Natsumi asks the PCs to rescue him while she makes plans to "deal with" Lord Jikai. Otherwise, Setsuo entreats them to go to Lord Jikai and plead the villagers' case.

Either leader reveals the existence of the secret store of sake and offers it to the PCs as payment, explaining that it would fetch a good price in the nearby town. In truth, the sake produced by the village is considered inferior and not particularly valuable, but none of the villagers admit this.

THE ARGUMENT

Whether the PCs help or not, the villagers argue whether they should flee the village or rise up against their lord. They all know they cannot meet the magistrate's demands, even if the PCs' intervention has bought them more time. Natsumi and Shinichi want to fight back, while Setsuo and Daizō still hold out hope that the daimyō will see reason. Other villagers rally behind one or the other, and all are divided.

The current leader has the final say, for now. If the PCs try to sway the leader one way or another, Setsuo can be persuaded to prepare to retaliate with a **TN 2 Courtesy check (Fire 1, Air 4)** or **TN 3 Command check (Fire 1, Air 5)**, while Natsumi can be persuaded to wait and hope on a **TN 2 Command (Earth 1, Water 4)** or **TN 3 Courtesy check (Earth 1, Water 5)**. Otherwise, Setsuo defaults to waiting and hoping, while Natsumi decides to teach the magistrate a lesson when he returns.

Part Two: Closed Shell Castle

Whether the PCs go on behalf of the villagers, or in the hope of entering Lord Jikai's service, traveling to Closed Shell Castle leads to the next part of the adventure. The following encounters assume the PCs take the road, a journey that takes half a day on foot. If they decide to travel by river, it can take them some of the way, though the villagers own no boats, so the PCs must improvise. As the river does not run directly through the castle grounds, they still have to complete the journey on foot, and so pass Michi.

JOURNEY TO CLOSED SHELL CASTLE

A road leads directly from the village to the castle, and under normal circumstances traveling this road would be easy and uneventful, taking only a few hours on foot. However, the local elemental imbalance affects the journey, making it much more difficult, unpleasant, and potentially time-consuming. The road counts as Imbalanced Terrain (see page 267 of the core rulebook). The imbalance applies to different elements at different times or in different places, the balance shifting periodically, at the GM's discretion.

Once the PCs have set off, read or paraphrase the following:

The road stretches through fields, then forest. Throughout the relatively short journey, it is clear something is wrong with the land itself. The wind rises and threatens to knock you off course one moment, then falls still the next. The sun beats down hard, then without warning clouds gather and unleash a torrent of freezing rain, chilling you to the bone. Hopelessness pervades your soul, an unshakable sense of foreboding and terrible doom ahead...

Characters may resist this elemental bombardment with a **TN 3 Meditation check (Void 2, Air 4, Earth 4, Fire 4, Water 4)**. Those who fail suffer the Exhausted condition.

The effects of the elemental imbalance are unpredictable. Whether or not the PCs or others have similar experiences on other trips between Twin Blessings Village and Closed Shell Castle is left to the GM's discretion.

THE MONK

As the PCs near the castle, they encounter Michi the monk, who is still on the road despite having left the

village days ago. Michi sits deep in meditation on the roadside, wrapped in saffron robes. Michi calls out suddenly as they pass. If the PCs sneak past them for any reason, the monk soon catches up on the road and introduces himself. They offer a flask around, which contains sake from the village.

If there are any important facts the PCs haven't learned from the villagers, Michi fills them in without being asked. The only thing the monk refuses to talk about is the Perfect Land Sect. If the PCs mention this, Michi only shrugs and says, "Ah, the folly of youth," or something equally vague.

Michi accompanies the PCs whether they wish this or not. If they intend to arrive secretly and fear the monk's presence may be a problem, they must tell Michi to go ahead or behind directly. Any hints are ignored. Michi values plain speaking, however, and does not take offense.

MICHI, THE MONK

ADVERSARY

CONFLICT RANK:  4  2

On the road, Michi is friendly and inquisitive. The monk speaks cryptically but openly, and appears harmless. However, once they reach the castle Michi's manner changes entirely; the monk becomes serious and sober, quoting Shinsei's wisdom when spoken to, otherwise remaining silent. Michi visits the shrines to pray, then finds a particularly uncomfortable-looking corner in the Training Courtyard to sit and meditate. The monk appears to be waiting for something but won't say what.

SOCIETAL	PERSONAL
25 HONOR	ENDURANCE 12
36 GLORY	COMPOSURE 10
22 STATUS	FOCUS 4
 +2,  -2 DEMEANOR • TEASING	VIGILANCE 6
ARTISAN 0	MARTIAL 3
SCHOLAR 1	SOCIAL 2
TRADE 0	

ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
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Quick Reflexes:

 Martial; Physical

Poverty:

 Trade; Interpersonal

FAVORED WEAPONS & GEAR

Sturdy Walking Stick: Range 0–1, Damage 3, Deadliness 3/5, Mundane

Gear (equipped): Monk's robes (Physical 1, Mundane)

ABILITIES

EVERYTHING IS CONNECTED

As an action, Michi can activate any rank 1 kihō of any element but cannot use its burst effect.

UNDESIRABLE
TERRITORY

Closed Shell Castle has endured periods with no official daimyō in residence, and its territory has been divided and parts given away. It has shrunk to include a single village, some fields and forests, and the barren wasteland around the castle itself. Jikai is daimyō in name only; his posting at the castle is an insult, barely a step up from stripping his title from him entirely. The daimyō above him, Otomo Itsuki, has little sympathy for this minor lord, and would likely not deign to notice if a neighboring lord was to attempt to add Jikai's land to their own. Even the servants at Closed Shell Castle consider it inevitable that the castle's territory will be shared out between neighboring lords eventually.

THE HISTORY OF CLOSED
SHELL CASTLE

Otomo Nahoko is a name some PCs might recognize if they have studied military history. She was a successful general who won many battles, developing tactics the Imperial Legions still practice, such as the inescapable "closed shell" maneuver. What the histories fail to mention is that as she aged, she grew paranoid, seeing enemies everywhere, and yet refused to retire to a monastery. Her family's solution was to give her land to build herself a castle and live out the remainder of her life governing a small territory.

Nahoko designed the Castle of the Closed Shell herself, and her growing paranoia is evident in everything from the unusually deep moat and vast number of yasama (arrow-slits), to the numerous trick doors and trapdoors. Though the land Nahoko was given to govern was small and relatively safe, surrounded by other imperial holdings, she built so many defenses that courtiers laughed about it behind their fans. Even the hill the castle stands on is artificial, as Nahoko lamented there was no location in her new territory with suitable natural defenses.

Officially, Nahoko died of old age, barricaded inside a castle that never saw a siege, but rumor has it her death was hastened by her own successor, who grew tired of being embarrassed by her. Some say both Nahoko's ghost and that of her successor haunt the family rooms in the castle, and their arguments keep the resident family awake at night.

The area Nahoko had cleared around the castle remains barren and unsightly, and the elemental imbalance is clear here. This means that no village has ever grown up in the shadow of the castle, and Twin Blessings Village serves most of the castle's needs. According to the resident spiritual advisor, Reju Toshio, the imbalance is due to the kami Nahoko angered when she built the castle, failing to listen to her advisers and take care that the castle fitted well with its surroundings. However, this does not explain why the imbalance is now spreading and worsening.

The new daimyō and his court lament the lack of comfort and aesthetically pleasing features in the castle, but some people might find a stark, utilitarian beauty in it. Longstanding servants like Shaki (see page 15) are proud of the castle's odd history and are willing to educate visitors, and do so without disparaging the castle.

GETTING INSIDE

As the PCs come into sight of the castle, read or paraphrase the following:

The gable roof of the main keep comes into view above the trees just before the rest of Closed Shell Castle appears. As you reach the forest's edge the trees give way to wasteland, where only weeds grow from the dry earth. The ground slopes up toward the castle, and beyond the empty moat rises a plastered wall three stories high. The heavy wooden gate, braced with iron bands and flanked by a pair of towers, stands closed.

The PCs may attempt to gain entry to the castle in any way appropriate to their purpose at the castle, secretly or openly. Some ideas are listed here, though PCs may propose other options. As the adventure requires the PCs to interact with the residents of the castle, the GM should allow any method to succeed, with-in reason, though of course each decision should also have consequences.

BY OFFICIAL CHANNELS

If the PCs simply approach the gate, a castle guard appears above, demanding to know their business at the castle. The guard is reluctant to let them inside but is persuadable if the PCs cite a good reason, such as bringing important information for the daimyō. To convince the guard, the PCs must obtain a total of six momentum points using appropriate Social skill checks. The default TN for these checks is 2. If he lets them inside, they are taken directly to the audience chamber, where they are kept waiting for a long time (see page 15).

By Signing Up

If the PCs tell the guard they wish to enter the lord's service, they are allowed through the gate and made to wait in the training courtyard. The *taisa*, Reju Masaru (see page 15), appears to consider them as potential recruits, and gives them an insulting offer to sign on as poorly paid mercenaries. If the PCs accept, they are sent immediately to the barracks. If they reject this offer, they might still persuade the guard to take them to the audience chamber to meet the daimyō, but this is now harder, increasing the TN of Social skill checks by 1.

By Association

If Michi is with the PCs, the monk says nothing, but allows them to make the decision and follows them. However, if the PCs ask the monk's advice or allow Michi to approach the castle first, Michi's approach is to very humbly beg the guard for entry. Michi claims the PCs are pilgrims spreading the word of Shinsei, and the guard reluctantly allows all to enter. In this case the PCs, at least initially, share the monk's unusual status. They are allowed to explore the castle but are largely ignored.

BY DECEPTION

Even if the PCs do not arrive with Michi, they might present themselves to the guard as pilgrims, traveling players, or storytellers. In this case the guard is likely to take a closer look at them before allowing them entry, and they must be prepared to prove their status. A **TN 3 Performance (Air) check** convinces him and having a musical instrument or demonstrable skill reduces the difficulty of the check by 1.

BY FORCE

Whether or not the guard opens the gate at any point, he may ultimately forbid admittance to the PCs. In this case, they might decide to gain entry by force. They must forfeit honor equal to their current honor rank to attempt to overcome the guard. Unless they do so stealthily, another guard rings the alarm bell in the nearest tower, and the PCs are considered enemies by all the inhabitants of the castle. To get even close to the daimyō, they have to fight their way past more guards, and somehow navigate the maze of corridors and trick doors to find the lord in his chambers.

BY A SECRET WAY

There is a secret way into the castle through an escape route, but finding it without a guide requires a **TN 4 Skulduggery (Fire 3) check**. If the PCs fail to gain entry to the castle or wait nearby, unsure of how to approach, they might see the servant Shaki exiting through the escape route, and can take that route into the castle, emerging in the Derelict Tower.

BY STEALTH

The PCs might wait in the forest until night falls and attempt to sneak into the castle. They must forfeit honor equal to half their honor rank to do this. The first challenge to this approach is crossing the dry moat that surrounds the castle. Scrabbling down the steep walls and through the weed-ridden moat is physically challenging even without trying to do so silently. Safely descending and crossing the moat requires each PC to succeed at a **TN 3 Fitness check (Air 4, Fire 2)**. A character who fails suffers 3 fatigue. Unless they used the Air approach, a PC who succeeds on the check must also spend ☼☼ to cross without alerting the guards.

The stone outer walls slope slightly inward but have been plastered smooth, so climbing is difficult. A successful **TN 3 Fitness check (Water 2)** allows the PCs to find an area where the plaster has worn away, and they can gain purchase. This route leads the PCs into the training courtyard, where they see the servant Atsuko

NEW RECRUITS

If the PCs accept the taisa's offer and enter the castle as mercenaries, there is a strict routine they are expected to keep to. Following the lead of the other mercenaries, they know when to train, when to eat, and when to sleep. Though successfully inside the castle, they won't be given much time to themselves to explore or get close to Jikai.

Whether they accept the job or not, the fact that the daimyō is hiring mercenaries and swearing rōnin into his service raises a number of questions. Is the daimyō expecting an attack, or intending to attack a rival? Perhaps more importantly, has he gained permission from his own daimyō, or is he keeping these activities secret? The truth is, Nobu has persuaded Jikai to secretly take on mercenaries by fueling his paranoia, and Nobu has deliberately chosen those he considers easily corruptible.

CASTLE GUARDS

The castle guards are part of a small force who were charged with protecting the castle while it had no daimyō. Most are from Otomo holdings, and currently feel more loyalty to Nobu than anyone else. They had hoped to return home when a new daimyō was appointed, but since Jikai has so few samurai in his service, they were told to remain.

There are fewer guards than the castle requires, and they are generally sullen and as lax as they can get away with. The guard at the gate enjoys the power he holds over potential visitors to the castle however, so he does not make entry easy for newcomers.

For this and other guards in the castle, use the Trained Ashigaru profile from page 314 of the core rulebook.

flitting from shadow to shadow on a secret errand (see page 15). If the PCs pause to investigate, she sees them too, and drops something from a bag she's carrying before disappearing inside the servants' quarters. On a successful **TN 2 Labor (Water) check**, using Labor as a Scholar skill, a PC might recognize salt crystals reflecting the moonlight from the cobbles where she stood. She has been sowing salt in the Water-Flower Garden in order to ensure nothing grows there.



CASTLE INHABITANTS

The following character descriptions can be used to give life to some of the inhabitants of the Castle of the Closed Shell.

THE GARRISON

Closed Shell Castle hosts a dozen Otomo guards under the command of Reju Masaru. To bolster this small force, Jikai has instructed Masaru to enlist mercenaries, doubling the castle's defenders. You should feel free to modify these numbers as needed to suit your game.

In addition to the guards and mercenaries under Masaru's command, Jikai has samurai vassals in his direct service. As well as Rin and Genzo, Jikai may have additional vassals, at your discretion.

REJU JIKAI

Reju Jikai, daimyō and celebrated poet, once lived in Otosan Uchi, taking promising youths under his wing and teaching them composition. One day he took a young student called Daidoji Eisaku out of the city to see peasants at work in the fields, to find beauty in hard work and common places to inspire his art. Unfortunately, Jikai charged a peasant with caring for their horses while they walked among the workers. When Jikai and his student returned to ride home, a horse startled, knocked the student down, and trampled his right hand. The peasant fled, avoiding execution, further angering the child's father, Daidoji Gombei, who held Jikai accountable for the accident. Gombei challenged Jikai's honor, and Jikai's wife, Seppun Azusa, stepped forward to defend him. Gombei, highly skilled in the art of iaijutsu, deliberately injured her by slicing the nerves in one wrist, rendering her right hand useless—just like his son's. Jikai and Azusa were disgraced, but as the Crane's actions were not considered honorable either, the poet and warrior received merciful sentences, sent away to rule an insignificant tract of land. Jikai is now bitter, lonely, and ashamed of his position and his past, which none speak of in his presence. He no longer finds any joy in poetry, his own or that of others. If this changed, he might find beauty in his new remote, rural situation after all.

The profile for the daimyō of Closed Shell Castle is on page 16.

SEPPUN AZUSA

The profile for the lady of the castle is on page 21

REJU UME

The profile for the daimyō's heir (and niece) can be found on page 18.

OTOMO NOBU

The scheming steward's profile is on page 24.

REJU TOSHIO

The profile for Nobu's accomplice, the malicious shugenja, is on page 16.

THE REJU FAMILY

The Reju family is a vassal family of the Otomo, but rather than serving the Emperor as courtiers or ambassadors, the Reju family serves as teachers. Their mon consists of a wisteria flower hanging over a teal background, as the flower represents sensitivity and support, the Reju family virtues. The Reju descend from Otomo Reju, who sought to improve the virtue of samurai by improving their early education, and his family continues his work by teaching the children of the Imperial families. Some of Otomo Reju's opinions on education bordered on heretical; he claimed he could take any child, even peasant-born, under his tutelage and raise them not only to be intelligent and wise, but virtuous and honorable. His family does not give credence to such radical ideas, at least not publicly. Most Reju reside in Otosan Uchi, where they educate the children of other Imperial families. However, even clan samurai sometimes seek out a Reju teacher for their children, particularly those known to be accomplished philosophers or wordsmiths.

REJU DAIHACHI, SENSEI

Daihachi is a small, lean man who is polite and soft-spoken, except when barking orders to the mercenaries he trains. As well as the daimyō's growing army, he teaches martial arts to Ume. He is either in the dōjō, or shadowing Ume. In the way of the Reju family, Daihachi believes lessons do not stop when the bokken are put aside, and seizes every opportunity to teach Ume. Use the **Loyal Bushi** profile (page 312 of the core rulebook) with the **Sage** template.

REJU JINZABURŌ, YŌJIMBŌ

Jinzaburō protects Jikai. When the disgraced Lord Jikai needed a yōjimbō, Jinzaburō volunteered, because the role allows him to catch glimpses of Ume, whom he has loved from afar since childhood. To represent Jinzaburō, use the **Loyal Bushi** profile.

REJU TSUGUMASA, MAGISTRATE

When he is not journeying to or from Twin Blessings Village with demands from his lord, Reju Tsugumasa may be found in the audience chamber, walking the castle grounds, or in his bedroom. Reju Tsugumasa's profile can be found on page 10.

REJU MASARU, TAISA

The taisha, or captain, came to the castle with Reju Jikai and was given reluctant Otomo guards to organize and newly sworn rōnin samurai to train. Jikai trusts Masaru, but he is easily bought, and Nobu pays him for each task accomplished. To represent Masaru, use the **Loyal Bushi** profile (page 312 of the core rulebook).

OTOMO NIKO, RIVAL COURTIER

Niko represents her lord, Otomo Osamu, the nearest landholding daimyō to Reju Jikai. Outwardly, her presence is a mark of trust and friendship between the two daimyō, but she relays everything she sees to Osamu, who intends to seize the castle for himself and appoint her the new steward. Nobu is attentive to her, hoping to gain help from Osamu, unaware of the daimyō's intentions. To represent Niko, use the **Seasoned Courtier** profile (page 313 of the core rulebook) with the **Socialite** template.

ATSUKO, TREACHEROUS SERVANT

Atsuko has toiled in the castle all her life and blames samurai for all the hardships she has had to endure. She performs nefarious tasks for Nobu, and her general discontent has turned into a desire for vengeance since her encounter at the well (see **Kitchens** on page 19). To represent Atsuko, use the **Humble Peasant** profile (page 313 of the core rulebook) with the **Trickster** template.

SHAKI, OBEDIENT SERVANT

One of her main tasks, since the trouble with the well, is fetching water from the river, using the secret exit in the derelict tower as a shortcut. The area around the river is overgrown however, and she fears a bandit, wild animal, or evil spirit will one day take her. To represent Shaki, use the **Humble Peasant** profile on page 313 of the core rulebook.

MIYA SHINAKO, POET

Miya Shinako was Jikai's rival when he was in the capital, but while he was content to teach, she wanted the attention of the court. She has come to the castle to see how her old rival is doing. She knows Jikai is the greater poet; without him she has struggled to have her work noticed. Their rivalry made her words more interesting, now no one wants to hear or read her work. Miya Shinako is awaiting her uncle, Emon, and has no idea he perished in the way station fire set by Rin (see page 8). To represent Shinako, use the **Seasoned Courtier** profile (page 313 of the core rulebook) with the **Artist** template.

SHINAKO'S STORY

If the PCs befriend Shinako or put her in their debt by returning her uncle's lost wakizashi (see page 8), she lets her guard down. Although it is her greatest secret, she is glad to unburden herself after sharing sake, and reveals that she is responsible for Jikai's downfall. She ordered the servant to startle the horses on that day his student was injured, but her intent was to injure Jikai so he would be unable to compete in the poetry contest they had arranged. She feared he was the better poet.

The PCs might want to keep this information to themselves, in order to hold Shinako in their debt. However, if the PCs reveal Shinako's story to the daimyō, he is grateful to the PCs. He sees an opportunity, sending Shinako to Otomo Itsuki, advising her to compose a poem revealing her guilt. He hopes that Itsuki might be moved by his story, encouraging the lord to show leniency.

CASTLE LOCATIONS

Closed Shell Castle is small but unusually fortified, and is designed so that invaders—and visitors—must pass the least important areas before reaching the most important. There are four timber watchtowers at the four corners of the castle, one of which is derelict, with two more flanking the main gate. Beyond this is a narrow courtyard, which leads to the second gate. Behind this lies the training courtyard, dōjō, barracks, and stables. Through the third gate lies the *tenshu*, or main keep, which has its own defenses, including steep staircases, a maze of dead-end corridors, and trick doors to confuse intruders. The audience chamber, court chambers, and guest quarters are all within the keep proper, as are the family quarters, on the topmost floor.

Closed Shell Castle holds many secrets as-yet unknown to the new daimyō. With patience and luck, PCs might uncover some of them.

AUDIENCE CHAMBER

This chamber is on the ground floor of the keep. Its floor is carefully polished, and the wood is cold to kneel on. While the Reju and Otomo mon hang on the walls, this is the only adornment. The room feels empty and little used, and if the PCs are brought here to await the daimyō, they are left long enough that they might think they have been forgotten. If the PCs investigate the room, a successful **TN 2 Labor check (Void 1, Earth 3)** enables them to find

USING THE MAP

Sins of Regret includes a fold-out map featuring both Twin Blessings Village and Closed Shell Castle. You can use this map in whatever way works best for your group. The maps can serve to guide players through the locations in the adventure, or you might reveal parts of the map slowly as the PCs explore.

The maps include a great deal of detail, which you can use to add additional encounters and events of interest during the adventure, or as inspiration for future adventures in and around Closed Shell Castle.

You can also find more information about Twin Blessings Village in *Path of Waves*.

an odd hole in the wall behind a frayed Otomo banner. The secret space behind here is sometimes used to spy on those within the chamber, though the space is empty now. It can be accessed via the corridor outside.

Jikai doesn't know about the secret space and might be grateful for the information if the PCs think of a tactful way to inform him. Alternatively, they might like to keep the knowledge to themselves, in case they might use the space to hide or spy from later.

NAMES AND MARRIAGE

The question of who takes whose family name in a samurai marriage is a highly important one, with many considerations. For prestigious marriages, negotiations on this matter can be fraught and extensive. In the case of Reju Jikai and Seppun Azusa, one might expect that Jikai would take Azusa's name—the Seppun family is more prestigious than its vassal Reju family, after all. In the interests of best fulfilling their Imperial duties (and no small part of familial pride, certainly), the negotiators agreed that Jikai and Azusa would each retain their family name.

REJU JIKAI, DAIMYŌ

ADVERSARY

CONFLICT RANK: 3 5

Reju Jikai was once an idealist, but his recent turn of fortune and subsequent troubles have made him bitter and angry—largely with himself. Recognizing his own inexperience in governing, he defers to the steward in most things, showing little interest in the lives that depend upon his every decision. Nonetheless, the art of falconry still holds interest. Although he generally conceals the fact, Jikai has always been fascinated by gaijin cultures.

See **Meeting the Daimyō** on page 22 for more information.

Jikai suffers from the Exhausted condition and is unable to remove it unless the PCs resolve his sleeping problems (see **Family Quarters** on page 18).

SOCIETAL		PERSONAL			
32 HONOR		ENDURANCE 10	2 3 4		
57 GLORY		COMPOSURE 12			
58 STATUS		FOCUS 5			
+1, +1, -2 DEMEANOR - IRRITABLE		VIGILANCE 4			
ARTISAN 4		MARTIAL 2	SCHOLAR 4	SOCIAL 3	TRADE 0
ADVANTAGES		DISADVANTAGES			
Poetic Soul: Scholar; Mental		Fatalistic: Social; Mental			

FAVORED WEAPONS & GEAR

Wakizashi: Range 0-1, Damage 3, Deadliness 5/7, Ceremonial, Razor-Edged

Gear (equipped): Ceremonial robes (Physical 1, Ceremonial, Resplendent), calligraphy set, personal chop

ABILITIES

SELECTIVE HEARING

The first time another character makes a Social skill check targeting Jikai each scene, if there are 3 or more rolled dice containing or , that character must reroll those results.

BARRACKS

The barracks consist of communal, bare rooms with worn tatami mats—more suited to students than mercenaries—and an adjoining mess hall. Some of the daimyō's own sworn samurai sleep here, including the bushi Rin and Genzo, though in a room separate from rōnin. The whole place is perpetually cold, as though the wind blows right through the walls. The servant Atsuko (see page 15) serves the rōnin their food.

Now that he's sober, Genzo apologizes for his behavior. If the PCs make a successful Social check and encourage him to talk, he answers questions but refuses to speak ill of his daimyō. He complains about the ruffians Jikai has sworn to his service. If the PCs convince him to speak his mind, he reveals there are no arrows left in the armory, as a store went missing, which means that the yumi are useless. (See the **Lost Arrows** sidebar, opposite.)

COURT CHAMBER AND GARDEN

The court chamber is where the court meets in its entirety, and when the daimyō has something to discuss he takes his place on the dais. Jikai calls the court together irregularly, but the courtiers naturally gather here in times of crisis.

If the PCs come to the chamber without a summons, they find the steward, Otomo Nobu, and priest, Reju Toshio, talking quietly together before the court convenes. The manner of these two is furtive, and when they see the PCs, they cease their conversation.

Large sliding doors at one side of the chamber are always kept closed. If the PCs open them or ask about them, they learn about Water-Flower Garden. This is a garden that runs alongside the court chambers, for the use of the court. However, this garden died as soon as Jikai took up residence, and despite the best efforts of the gardeners, cannot be revived. Toshio claims this is due to the elemental imbalance, but it's actually because Atsuko has been salting the earth (see **By Stealth** on page 13). No one uses the garden now, and it is deemed ill-mannered to talk about it in the daimyō's presence.

REJU TOSHIO, EMBITTERED SHUGENJA

ADVERSARY

CONFLICT RANK: 4 4

Toshio is the daimyō's spiritual advisor. He traveled with Jikai from Otosan Uchi and resents being compelled to live in this remote castle. He insists that the castle would have to be leveled and completely rebuilt to please the kami, but this is a falsehood. Rather than attempting to right the elemental imbalance, Toshio has deliberately worsened it, ensuring the kami of the land are offended. This is at the suggestion of Nobu, who has promised

Toshio wealth and autonomy if he helps Nobu gain power. If the PCs discover what Toshio has been doing and prove this to the daimyō, Toshio attempts to flee rather than admit what he has done or implicate Nobu. Deliberately angering kami not only goes against the Celestial Order, as he's hindering the very lord he should be helping, but is an affront to his status as shugenja. It is a serious spiritual crime against the land itself.

SOCIETAL	PERSONAL
10 HONOR	ENDURANCE 10
32 GLORY	COMPOSURE 12
35 STATUS	FOCUS 5
+2, -2 DEMEANOR - FIXATED	VIGILANCE 3

ARTISAN 2	MARTIAL 1	SCHOLAR 3	SOCIAL 2	TRADE 0
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ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
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Obsessive Learning:

Scholar; Mental

Ingratitude:

Social; Interpersonal

FAVORED WEAPONS & GEAR

Wakizashi: Range 0–1, Damage 3, Deadline 5/7, Ceremonial, Razor-Edge

Gear (equipped): Sanctified robes (Physical 1, Supernatural 3, Ceremonial), scroll satchel, enough offerings for 3 earth invocations

ABILITIES

MANIPULATOR OF KAMI

Each time Toshio attempts an invocation he uses a material offering, but still suffers spiritual backlash if he generates 3 or more . This becomes 1 or more without offerings.

TINY TREMORS (INVOCATION)

As an Attack action, Toshio can make a **TN 1 Theology (Earth) check** to *summon* a small vibration in the floor or ground at a chosen position at range 0–3.

+: Each character at range 0–2 of the chosen position suffer 1 physical damage per spent this way.

GARDEN-VIEWING ROOM

On the far side of the empty garden there is a garden-viewing room, where Miya Shinako often spends her time, contemplating the dead space. She claims to have written haiku for the emperor himself, but needs inspiration, so has come to this quiet, melancholy place. She brings a brush and parchment and sits with a flask of sake beside her.

LOST ARROWS

There are few arrows left in Jikai's armory, the rest are hidden in the Derelict Tower. Atsuko and the taisa concealed the arrows here on Nobu's orders. If the taisa is discovered and accused he turns Atsuko in, but both are afraid to implicate Nobu, whose status is superior to theirs (and whose testimony, therefore, holds more weight). Nobu has convinced Jikai that bandits stole the arrows, and so no one has been looking for them. If the PCs discover the arrows, restoring them to the armory and informing Jikai gains them his favor.

DERELICT TOWER

The entrance to a secret passage is in this tower: a dark opening partially hidden by the barrels stored here. All but one of the barrels are sealed, protecting the contents despite the damp conditions of the tower. The barrels aren't supposed to be here, and if the PCs examine the open one, they find it full of arrows. These have been deliberately hidden here so Jikai cannot defend his castle. If the PCs inform the taisa, he thanks them and has the arrows placed in the armory where they belong, but the PCs might notice he does not seem genuinely surprised.

THE FATE OF THE WAY STATION

If the PCs have not yet learned who was responsible for the murders at the way station, the PCs' time at the castle represents an opportunity to learn. Even if the PCs don't speak with Rin and Genzo directly, they could pick up some information from the other samurai or mercenaries in Jikai's service. After a few cups of sake, Rin is more than willing to tell the story of how she "dealt with" the problem of the way station, which she finds grotesquely amusing. In turn, this might lead to other warriors gossiping about the event and Rin's troubling behavior.



Dōjō and Training Courtyard

If the PCs are recruited as mercenaries, they are expected to spend a lot of time performing drills in the training courtyard under the watchful eye of the *taisa* or practicing *kata* with the *sensei* in the *dōjō*. When they take their morning and evening meals in the mess, Reju Ume, the *daimyō*'s heir, appears at the *dōjō* for her own lessons. She is a skilled duelist, trained by a *Kakita* master, and often grumbles that the *sensei* is her only opponent.

If any PCs spend a lot of time as dutiful mercenaries, the GM may allow them to purchase a Rank 1–2 *kata* regardless of their school's available techniques. Ume may also challenge one or more of them to an *iai*jutsu duel. If they best her, they earn her respect, and she is willing to speak to *Jikai* on their behalf.

There is tension between the lord's sworn samurai and the mercenary *rōnin*, though they must train together and live side by side. Rin in particular would like to make trouble for the PCs, and if she notices them sneaking off when they should be training, she immediately reports them to the *taisa*.

If the PCs do not attempt to move on from their training and reach the *daimyō* in some way, one of the samurai picks a fight with them. Regardless of the fight's outcome, all involved end up dragged before the *daimyō* for judgment and punishment.

REJU UME, DUELIST AND HEIR

ADVERSARY

CONFLICT RANK: 3 2

Ume is *Jikai*'s niece and heir. A tall girl who lacks grace except when she has a sword in her hand, she performs *kata* beautifully. In *Otosan Uchi* she trained with a *Kakita* *sensei*, and she misses her training with *Kakita* *Chisato*. Though the sword is her art, the capital also contained other pastimes she enjoyed, and she resents her uncle for dragging her down with him.

SOCIETAL		PERSONAL	
56	HONOR	10	ENDURANCE
49	GLORY	10	COMPOSURE
45	STATUS	6	FOCUS
+2, -2	DEMEANOR · AMBITIOUS	3	VIGILANCE
ARTISAN 2	MARTIAL 2	SCHOLAR 2	SOCIAL 2
TRADE 0			
ADVANTAGES		DISADVANTAGES	

Dedicated:

Martial, Scholar; Mental

Restless:

Social; Mental

FAVORED WEAPONS & GEAR

Bokken: Range 1, Damage 3, Deadliness 3, Mundane

Gear (equipped): Training clothes (physical 1), katana, wakizashi

ABILITIES

DRAMATIC DUELIST

When performing an Attack action, Ume may spend 2 as follows:

- 2: If she succeeds, Ume inflicts no damage, and her target receives strife equal to her weapon's base damage plus her bonus successes.

FAMILY QUARTERS

The family quarters on the topmost floor of the keep should be the most comfortable, but the *daimyō* and his family always look tired and agitated. This is because the nightingale floor—built to creak loudly as a security measure—sings constantly all night, even when *daimyō*'s room lies empty, and strange noises can be heard on the roof above. The first few nights the family heard the sounds, the *daimyō* sent his *yōjimbō*, *Jinzaburō*, onto the roof to investigate, believing *shinobi* were inside the castle. However, the *yōjimbō* found nothing, and now *Jikai* accepts the disturbance as one more unpleasant feature of his new home.

If the PCs gain access to the *daimyō*'s room, a successful **TN 3 Labor check (Void 2)** allows a PC examining the nightingale floor to confirm there is nothing physically wrong with it. If they question *Jinzaburō*, a successful **TN 2 Social skill check** reveals that when he investigated the roof, he saw no sign of intruder and naturally assumed there was a supernatural cause for the noise. He is frustrated because *Toshio* failed to take him seriously. On a bonus success, he also reveals he has seen a shadowy figure outside the *daimyō*'s room at night but has been unable to apprehend them. *Jinzaburō* is ashamed to have failed.

If the PCs help him at night, a **TN 4 Skulduggery check (Void 3)** allows them to find Toshio in an empty room below the daimyō's. The shugenja then attempts to flee.

HOLDING CELLS

In the basement of the castle, some small rooms exist to hold prisoners. These cold, windowless rooms currently contain nothing but empty sacks and a few rats, having been used primarily for storage through the years. With Jikai's current troubles however, he might return them to their original use, assigning the already overworked castle guards the task of keeping prisoners.

The furthest room from the stairs has a trapdoor hidden in the floor, leading to a crawlspace. It does not contain an escape route but could be used to fool guards into thinking a prisoner has escaped.

KITCHENS

The food for everyone in the castle is cooked here, family and mercenaries alike. Servants working in the kitchens spread gossip as the other servants come and go, and Shaki is often here. There's a kitchen garden outside where herbs grow, tended by Atsuko (see page 15 for details on both servants).

There is a trapdoor in the kitchen that leads down to the cellars and the well. This was once the main source of water for the castle, but since Jikai took up residence the servants must rely on the other wells, straining the castle's water supply.

The Well

Though the servants tell the daimyō that the well has dried up, a successful **TN 2 Social skill check (Fire 1, Air 4)** persuades Shaki to reveal the servants are afraid to use it. It emits odd moaning sounds, and Shaki swears she once saw a skeletal face peering from within.

HANDLING THE REMAINS

Once the kyōkotsu is defeated, the bones must be cremated in proper funerary rites for Nahoko's spirit to find rest. If none of the PCs know the Cleansing Rite ritual, they might enlist the aid of Michi or Toshio, both to conduct the funeral and to ritually cleanse the PCs.

Castle legends tell of Nahoko's untimely fate and improper burial (see page 12). The most reliable way to learn the truth is through the Commune with the Spirits ritual.

A vengeful kyōkotsu spirit inhabits the well, as Nobu took Nahoko's bones, unearthed during construction of the new shrine, and threw them into the water. The bones must be retrieved, and the spirit appeased, to enable the servants to use the well again. If the PCs resolve the issue with the well, Shaki is willing to reward the PCs by finding out information for them or performing some other task, such as delivering a message. In addition, the servants are grateful and take special care of the PCs; each PC increases their Composure by 1 for the duration of their stay at the castle.

The first person to encounter this kyōkotsu was Atsuko, whose own vengeful thoughts were inflamed by the spirit's rage. If the PCs appease the spirit, Atsuko's fear of possible punishment eclipses her anger, so she flees the castle.

KYŌKOTSU (REMAINS OF NAHOKO)

ADVERSARY

CONFLICT RANK:  5  1

The kyōkotsu manifests as a horrific spectral figure, containing the decayed and unarticulated bones of Otomo Nahoko. It screams with rage at any who draw near, a wail that bursts ears and shrives the very soul.

		ENDURANCE 14	FOCUS 6
		COMPOSURE 6	VIGILANCE 2
		 +2,  -2 DEMEANOR - VENGEFUL	

ARTISAN 0 MARTIAL 4 SCHOLAR 1 SOCIAL 2 TRADE 1

ADVANTAGES DISADVANTAGES

Feels No Pain:

 Martial; Physical

Lost and Confused:

 Social; Mental

FAVORED WEAPONS & GEAR

Mournful Wail: Range 0–3, Damage 3, Deadline 3, inflicts supernatural damage

Gear (equipped): Infused bones (Physical 5, Supernatural 2)

ABILITIES

ANIMATED BONES

A kyōkotsu is an Otherworldly being of silhouette 1. A critical strike of any severity scatters the bones and renders them inanimate for one round. It is only defeated when its fatigue exceeds its endurance.

VENGEFUL TOUCH

Anyone who comes within range 0 of the spirit or otherwise directly touches it suffers the Enraged condition (see page 272 of the core rulebook).



ROOFTOP

After the daimyō sent his yōjimbō onto the roof, the story became a favorite among the courtiers, who took it as a sign that Jikai, like the first daimyō of the castle, was growing paranoid.

If the PCs speak to the yōjimbō, Jinzaburō, however, he assures them there was no sign of shinobi, but that there was a strange atmosphere, and he felt like he was being watched.

Jinzaburō is glad to take the PCs onto the roof, as long as it remains a secret. He does not want to further embarrass Jikai. Therefore, he takes them up at night, climbing carefully up the tiered, tiled roofs of the keep. The yōjimbō warns the PCs to be quiet. A **TN 2 Fitness check (Air 1, Fire 3)** determines whether the PCs make the climb successfully and quietly. Characters who fail the check fall prone upon reaching the roof, while those who fail with a shortfall of 2 lose their balance and fall to the roof of the story below, a range 2 fall. PCs may spend ♣ from their check to remain quiet; otherwise, they awaken the *shachihoko*.

If the PCs are able to investigate the roof, they find dark stains around the mouths of the shachihoko, and markings around the statues' bases. The shachi have grown ever more paranoid and ferocious over the years, to the point that they perceive any unfamiliar person as an intruder to be destroyed. The PCs may attempt to calm them with a **TN 3 Theology check** or **TN 3 Labor check (Fire 2)**. There are a number of shachihoko with a threat rating equal to the PCs' party rank.

SHACHIHOKO

MINION

CONFLICT RANK: 3 1

Carp with the faces of tigers, these fierce carvings were added to the roof to protect the keep from both evil spirits and fire. These particular shachihoko, like so much of Closed Shell Castle, were deeply influenced by the castle's troubled origins and history. The guardians were influenced by Otomo Nahoko's paranoia, and throughout the years, castle shugenja have taken pains to pacify the shachihoko. Reju Toshio, however, has neglected the shachi.

In conjunction with the increasing spiritual turbulence of the area, the highly paranoid guardian spirits are on-edge and ready to attack any perceived intruder without warning.

When the PCs emerge onto the roof, the shachi spring to life, swimming through the air and snapping their sharp teeth. They can either be fought and defeated, or a shugenja might be able to dispel the corrupt spirits from within them.

		ENDURANCE 11	FOCUS 5
		COMPOSURE 8	VIGILANCE 3
		+2, -2 DEMEANOR - ASSERTIVE	

ARTISAN 0 MARTIAL 2 SCHOLAR 0 SOCIAL 0 TRADE 1

ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Wood and Stone: Martial; <i>Physical</i>	Quick to Attack: Social; <i>Mental</i>

FAVORED WEAPONS & GEAR

Tiger Teeth: Range 0, Damage 6, Deadliness 9, Razor-Edged

Water Torrent: Range 0–3, Damage 5, Deadliness 7

Gear (equipped): Wooden scales (Physical 1)

ABILITIES

PROTECTIVE SPIRIT

A shachihoko is an Otherworldly being of silhouette 1 that can fly. It can move vertically and ignore the negative effects of terrain.

FAMILY MATTERS

The daimyō worries for his wife, who speaks to him less every day, but he has so many other concerns that he has given up trying to talk to her. Before his downfall she was a very different woman, a fierce bushi whose companionship strengthened him. If someone could find a way to reconcile them, the daimyō might be a more reasonable man.

The cause of Azusa's distress is her injury. Her damaged hand cannot grip a sword strongly enough to lift it, let alone wield it. Either Michi (page 11), Daihachi (page 14), or a bushi PC might be able to teach her to fight with her left hand. The difficulty is in persuading her this is a viable option. A **TN 3 Social skill check (Air 2, Water 2, Void 4)** encourages her to try. A PC may get her started training with her left hand as a downtime activity, making a **TN 3 Martial Arts check**.

SHRINE TO SHINSEI

Soon after her arrival, Seppun Azusa had a shrine to Shinsei built. A small marble statue of Shinsei stands at one end of the room, and a copy of his *Tao* is kept on a table before the statue. A monk from the brotherhood was invited to visit and bless the new shrine, but did not stay long. Azusa spends much time here meditating. She burns a pungent incense provided by Toshio, which is supposed to help clear her mind. Instead, it thickens and darkens the air, and the servants have to clean residue off the statue each night.



SEPPUN AZUSA, LADY OF THE CASTLE

ADVERSARY

CONFLICT RANK: 6 4

Seppun Azusa is married to Reju Jikai. A powerfully built bushi, she has given up her martial duties since her hand injury (see page 14). She has always been devoted to Shinsei's teachings, but recently her reverence has become an obsession, and she often meditates at the shrine to Shinsei. Although her station means she should be accompanied by a yōjimbō, Azusa forgoes a bodyguard in part out of pride and in part as a display of her newfound piety.

Although the damage cannot truly be healed, Azusa's Disabled Hand disadvantage is removed if the PCs help her learn to compensate for her injury (see the **Family Matters** sidebar).

SOCIETAL		PERSONAL	
61	HONOR	3	ENDURANCE 14
56	GLORY	3	COMPOSURE 12
58	STATUS	4	FOCUS 7
+2, -1, -1 DEMEANOR · OBSSSSIVE		4	VIGILANCE 3

ARTISAN 1 MARTIAL 4 SCHOLAR 3 SOCIAL 2 TRADE 0

ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Formidable: Martial; Mental, Physical	Resentful: Social; Mental Disabled Hand: Martial; Physical

FAVORED WEAPONS & GEAR

Wakizashi: Range 0–1, Damage 3, Deadline 5/7, Ceremonial, Razor-Edged

Gear (equipped): Ceremonial robes (Physical 1, Ceremonial, Resplendent), unpleasant incense, prayer strips, katana

ABILITIES

HARNESSED ANGER

Once per round, Azusa may receive 3 strife to treat the deadline of her readied weapon as 3 higher. Azusa loses this ability if she both learns to overcome her injury and reconciles with Jikai.

CASTLE INTRIGUE

Many objectives the PCs might hold require them to convince an important personage in the castle—Jikai, Azusa, Nobu, or another—to take a certain action, accept the PCs' viewpoint, or otherwise agree with their goal. Such activities are best handled with the use of intrigue conflicts. The possibilities for intrigues are far too many to detail in this text. The guidance for social objectives on page 254 of the core rulebook, together with the NPC profiles presented here, should provide all the information you need to resolve any intrigues the PCs might initiate.

OBJECTIVES INSIDE THE CASTLE

Where the PCs begin their exploration of the castle depends on how they entered, but their main objective should dictate what they do next.

- ✱ If the PCs intend to persuade the daimyō to treat the villagers more fairly, they must not only obtain an audience with him, but find a way to earn his trust so that he listens to them.
- ✱ The daimyō is more willing to listen to warnings that the villagers plot an uprising, since he expects the worst. However, if the PCs warn him in the hope of entering his service, they still have to earn his trust.
- ✱ If the PCs wish to assassinate or overthrow the daimyō, they need not gain an audience with him at all, but might explore the castle to find an opportunity. See **Assassination** on page 25.
- ✱ If they uncover the plot against the daimyō, they must decide whether to aid in that plot, interfere with it, or continue to work alone.

The adventure comes to a climax with an attempt to seize control from the daimyō, orchestrated by Nobu, the angry villagers, or the PCs themselves. The GM should keep in mind that everything that occurs inside the castle leads up to this **Final Conflict** (see page 27).

MEETING THE DAIMYŌ

The location and circumstances of the PCs' initial meeting with Lord Reju Jikai depends on how they gained entry to the castle, how they approach the daimyō, and their intentions. While it is important that the PCs do eventually interact with Jikai, they might explore the castle and meet other members of the court, or even work in his service, before they encounter Jikai himself. As the lord's appointment and attitude is the subject of much conversation among courtiers and soldiers alike, they may learn much of Jikai before this meeting.

- ✱ If shown to the audience chamber, the PCs are kept waiting for hours. Jikai and his yōjimbō eventually appear, but Jikai's greeting depends on how the PCs acted in the village. If Jikai has heard they are troublemakers, he is unwelcoming. Otherwise, he acts with courtesy.
- ✱ If the PCs are admitted as entertainers, they are presented to the court. In this case, all courtier NPCs are present and the daimyō wishes only to be entertained. He discourages the PCs if

they attempt to talk to him and grows angry if they insist.

- ✱ If the PCs are dragged before the daimyō as criminals or troublemakers, they must obtain 8 momentum points from relevant Social skill checks to convince him to let them stay in the castle and redeem themselves.
- ✱ If the PCs enter the daimyō's presence unannounced, he is angry and suspicious; the GM should raise the TN of Social skill checks accordingly until they earn his trust.

Regardless of the situation, the PCs are not permitted to bear their weapons when meeting with Jikai. If a meeting is arranged properly, a servant politely offers to clean and sharpen the PCs' weapons while they meet with the daimyō. If the PCs attempt to force a meeting with Jikai, this could lead to a tense confrontation with his guards.

When the PCs meet the daimyō for the first time, read or paraphrase the following:

The daimyō, Reju Jikai, wears fine teal robes with purple wisteria embroidered at the hems, and the handle of his wakizashi shines gold. He holds his head stiffly, as though every movement requires effort of will. Deep frown lines mar his otherwise-expressionless face, and dark circles surround his eyes. He looks at you with indifference, and speaks haltingly, as though his attention is elsewhere.

Whether the PCs hope to help the villagers or swear into Jikai's service, they must gain his esteem first. This initial meeting should get that point across, as well as allowing the PCs to learn about the lord and his castle. Jikai's likely responses to some possible questions are listed below.

We have come to speak on behalf of Twin Blessings Village...

Jikai is not pleased to have his management questioned. A successful **TN 3 Courtesy check (Water 1, Air 4, Fire 4)** persuades him to discuss the matter, in which case he explains that he had to increase the rice tax because he has taken on mercenaries and has more mouths to feed. ✱ might be spent to encourage him to reveal that his steward, Nobu, has overseen the choice and training of new recruits himself.

We come to enter your service...

Jikai already feels he has sworn too many samurai into his service, and the shortage of rice makes him reluctant to take on any more. However, a successful **TN 2 Courtesy check (Water 1, Air 3, Fire 3)** persuades Jikai

to allow the PCs to stay in the castle—a common courtesy extended to traveling samurai, but one which may also allow the PCs an opportunity to prove themselves worthy. Otherwise, he simply tells them he has no need of their services and extends his hospitality for a single night only.

We come to warn you...

Jikai knows his position is precarious and is very willing to listen to warnings. Whether the PCs warn him of the villagers' unrest, bandits in the forest, or even of rumors of the Perfect Land, he thanks the PCs and invites them to stay as guests in his castle. He sends his own bushi to investigate and awaits their reports before taking further action.

Whether the daimyō sends bushi to investigate or not, Tsugumasa the magistrate soon returns to the village to give the villagers their last chance to provide the rice tax, but the villagers still cannot pay, and may attack Tsugumasa and the bushi. See **News from the Village** on page 25.

A RURAL COURT

The court at Closed Shell Castle is small and provincial, a far cry from any court in the capital. The enmity between the courtiers who've been in Jikai's service a long time and those local to the castle creates a divided

court. The PCs might be able to exploit either this rivalry, or the discontentment of the courtiers used to city life. It is possible the whole court may turn against Jikai.

RŌNIN AT COURT

Rōnin rarely receive invitations to attend court, but having entered the castle, the PCs might find ways to ingratiate themselves with the resident courtiers and receive an official invitation. Rōnin who gain a reputation for excellent storytelling or poetry recitation, or those who demonstrate particular skill with a musical instrument or other form of entertainment, are a welcome addition at court. If the PCs gained entry to the castle by posing as players, they are summoned before the court to perform, and given this chance to shine. Otherwise, they may spread rumors of their skill among the rōnin or samurai or happen to play as a courtier passes by.

Skill with the blade can be as valuable an asset, particularly as these minor courtiers lack yōjimbō. Reju Ume seeks opponents for iaijutsu duels (see page 18), or the PCs might challenge another rōnin to a warrior's duel (see page 258 of the core rulebook).

THE STEWARD'S PLOT

Otomo Nobu grew accustomed to running the castle and its territory by himself. He resents having this disgraced lord forced upon him as a master, and rather than helping his new lord with good advice, has delighted in Jikai's failures and encouraged him to make mistakes. Jikai lacks the experience to successfully run the castle and oversee its territory, and relies greatly on his steward. The daimyō does not realize the steward has caused more problems than he has fixed. If this is proved to him, Jikai is grateful for the information and takes immediate action to remove this destructive influence (which may spur Nobu to put his coup into action early).

If left to continue his campaign against the daimyō, Nobu makes his move within two days of the PCs' arrival. Already the castle guards are mostly on his side, as is the *taisa* training the rōnin. He is communicating with Jikai's neighbor and rival Lord Osamu, and has encouraged Jikai to take on mercenaries, partly to overstretch Jikai's resources, but also to create his own army of vagabonds. He intends to take the castle by force, delaying only to ensure he has enough support. He is confident that Otomo Itsuki, Jikai's master, will not take offense, and may even reward his actions by allowing him to remain as the castle's lord.

However, if Jikai were redeemed in Lord Itsuki's eyes, the situation may change, so any hint of a reconciliation could prompt the steward to act sooner rather than later and lead directly to the **Final Conflict** (see page 27).



If the PCs find a way to undermine Nobu and foil his plot before it begins, they should receive 3 XP. However, in this case the GM has two options to bring the adventure to a climax. If the players want a final battle, the village finally rises up against the daimyō. Then the **Final Conflict** can be played with a village mob at the gates and dissatisfied servants and low-born rōnin in the castle, rather than the rival lord's troops at the gates and treacherous mercenaries inside. When confronted with his traitorous actions, Nobu might call on the guards and rōnin to assist him, effectively triggering his coup early.

The Rival Daimyō

Because Otomo Itsuki holds no respect for Reju Jikai, he ignores any threatening action from Otomo Osamu. Finding a way to earn Lord Itsuki's respect might change this (see **Shinako's Story** on page 15), but in the short term the PCs might speak to Osamu's representative here, Otomo Niko. Through her, the steward has been attempting to persuade Osamu to send troops to aid Nobu's cause. However, while Nobu hopes Osamu will support him by sending troops, Osamu has already promised Niko the steward's position if and when he takes the castle.

OTOMO NOBU, CASTLE STEWARD

ADVERSARY CONFLICT RANK: 1 5

Nobu is ruthless and ambitious but hides it well. He was in charge of the castle for months before the new lord's appointment and grew accustomed to power. He knows Jikai's superior thinks little of the daimyō, and has convinced himself that if he gets Jikai out of the way, he will be made daimyō in his place. The PCs might ally with him to help the villagers in the short term, but the steward reveals his true nature as soon as he gains the power he desires.

SOCIETAL		PERSONAL	
10 HONOR		ENDURANCE 8	
32 GLORY		COMPOSURE 12	
45 STATUS		FOCUS 7	
+2, -2 DEMEANOR - SHREWD		VIGILANCE 4	
ARTISAN 1 MARTIAL 1 SCHOLAR 3 SOCIAL 4 TRADE 0			
ADVANTAGES		DISADVANTAGES	
Flatterer: Social; <i>Interpersonal</i>		Ambitious: Scholar; <i>Mental</i>	

FAVORED WEAPONS & GEAR

Wakizashi: Range 0–1, Damage 3, Deadliness 5/7, Ceremonial, Razor-Edged

Gear (equipped): Concealed armor (Physical 2, concealable) under robes

ABILITIES

CONTROLLER OF THE CASTLE

During any intrigue conflict taking place within Closed Shell Castle, Nobu begins with one momentum point toward his objective.

SERVING THE DAIMYŌ

If Jikai allows the PCs to remain in the castle they may find ways to ingratiate themselves with him. These include reconciling him and his wife (see **Family Matters**, page 21), solving his sleeping problems (see **Family Quarters**, page 18, and **Roof top**, page 20), recovering the missing arrows (see page 17), or uncovering the truth about his downfall (see **Shinako's Story**, page 15). Once the PCs assist with at least two of these tasks, the daimyō trusts the PCs enough to grant them the honor of accompanying him on a hunt with his falcon.

TAKAGARI (FALCONRY)

The daimyō has few pleasures left, but *takagari* still brings him some joy. Riding out from his hated castle, he finds a freedom in the forest and wilderness that he cannot feel behind the castle's walls. His favorite bird is a falcon he trained himself. Affectionately called Toppi, it wears the Reju colors of teal and purple in ribbons on its legs.

If the PCs accompany the daimyō, their task is to ensure his safety. However, once they reach the forest and Toppi is released, an arrow from an unknown assailant hits the bird. Jikai immediately charges the PCs with both retrieving his bird and finding the archer. A **TN 2 Survival check (Void 1, Earth 3)** finds the bird, while a **TN 4 Fitness check (Earth 2)** is required to maintain the chase long enough to catch the archer. Increase the TN of whichever task the PCs attempt second by 1.

The archer is a castle guard, who was attempting to return to the castle unseen. She is carrying a bow and arrows from Jikai's own armory. She acts on Nobu's orders—Nobu was going to blame the bird's death on bandits—but is afraid to reveal his name. If the arrows have not been found (see **Lost Arrows** on page 17), she may reveal their hiding place. Jikai has the PCs drag her back to the castle to be imprisoned and questioned further.

If the PCs retrieve Toppi, who is injured but alive, Jikai is grateful and promises to swear the PCs into his service. However, when they return to the castle there is news from the village, which must be dealt with first.



NEWS FROM THE VILLAGE

Exactly what happens when Tsugumasa returns to the village depends on the outcome of **Collecting Taxes**. However, even if the villagers agreed to wait and Setsuo remained leader, there is no way the villagers can meet the impossible tax demands. Tsugumasa either brings the village leader as a captive to the castle, or the villagers fight back, with or without help from the bandits, and the magistrate flees for his life.

Once this news reaches the daimyō, he may assign the PCs a task before swearing them to his service. The examples below provide the PCs with a way of earning the daimyō's favor but may also conflict with the PCs' other goals or personal sense of honor. The GM should feel free to make more of this, tailoring a task to deliberately challenge the PCs and complicate their objectives.

The following is a list of appropriate encounters, which the GM can tailor to the nature and abilities of the PCs. Any PC promising to undertake a task for Jikai must stake honor equal to their honor rank or glory equal to their glory rank.

- ✿ If the villagers attacked Tsugumasa, the PCs are sent to arrest the village leader and bring them to the castle for interrogation. They find the village abandoned, as the villagers have fled to join the bandits in the forest. If the PCs track them down, the villagers recognize them, and the leader speaks with them. Setsuo is willing to go with the PCs to speak to Jikai and hopefully save the villagers from further reprisals. Natsumi refuses, and fights if necessary.
- ✿ The PCs are charged with finding the bandits in the forest and eliminating them. They find the remaining villagers have joined the bandits,

swelling their numbers. The PCs might inform Jikai of this new development, in which case he negates his earlier order to wipe them out. He cannot let the village stand empty, or there will be no rice at all.

- ✿ A villager exposed Michi. They are arrested as a Perfect Land infiltrator, and the PCs are charged with interrogating the monk. When they arrive, they discover that Michi has escaped from the holding cells. The PCs must inform Jikai of this turn of events and may be tasked with hunting down the fugitive monk.

OVERTHROWING THE DAIMYŌ

The PCs may decide that removing Reju Jikai from power is the best way to help the villagers, or they might fall back on this option if they fail to gain his favor. They might aid Nobu in his plot, and so gain favor with him instead. To aid him, the PCs might weaken Jikai, finding ways to add to his problems and damage his reputation, and then informing Nobu when and how to strike.

Another potential ally is Ume, the daimyō's niece. She is honorable and would never participate in any plot against her uncle. However, if the PCs gain her favor, then find a way to remove Jikai without implicating themselves, they can make her daimyō. She is young and inexperienced, welcoming—and gladly heeding—trusted advisors.

Assassination

The PCs may intend to remove the daimyō by killing him. If so, they must forfeit honor equal to their honor rank to attempt such a dishonorable act, however they justify it. They must also stake glory equal to their glory rank on successfully concealing their part in the deed. Jikai is usually accompanied by his yōjimbō, except when in his family quarters, where Seppun Azusa defends him.

A failed assassination attempt results in the pursuit of any would-be assassins. If caught, they are locked in the holding cells (page 19) to await Jikai's judgment.

A successful assassination results in Ume taking on the role of new daimyō. In this case, Nobu attempts to manipulate her as he did her uncle, but she does not trust him. Depending on Jikai's reputation at the time, Otomo Itsuki might not waste soldiers trying to punish the culprits (whether he suspects the PCs or someone else), and simply accept a new vassal in his place. Ume is keen to find and punish her uncle's assassins, while Nobu is only concerned if there is any chance of the act being linked to him (whether rightfully or not).

Nobu then brings his plot forward in order to seize control of the castle. This leads to the **Final Conflict**, with Ume in the place of Jikai.

RUMORS OF THE VILLAGE

If the PCs do not have the daimyō's favor, they may not be present when he hears the news from the village after Tsugumasa's final visit. In this case, an ally of the PCs—Nobu or a servant if appropriate—might tell the PCs the following:

- ❖ The leader of the village is held captive in the castle. This might finally incite the village to rise up against Jikai.
- ❖ The daimyō's most loyal samurai have been sent to deal with bandits in the forest. This is an excellent opportunity to move against Jikai.
- ❖ The monk has been seized and is being interrogated like a common criminal on the orders of Jikai. If Seppun Azusa discovers this affront to Shinseism, it likely destroys any chances of reconciliation with her husband.

LEADING TO THE FINAL CONFLICT

There are many problems the PCs might deal with while in the Closed Shell Castle, and the GM should feel free to reward honor and glory as appropriate as the PCs tackle each one, though suggestions are given below. Many of these choices also have a consequence to be revealed in the **Final Conflict**.

Choices

While some of the NPCs are certain to stand for or against the daimyō, the PCs might persuade some to change their minds. Many of the choices made by the PCs in the castle affect the coming battle in various ways.

- ❖ If the PCs uncover Reju Toshio's treachery, he may be caught or flee the castle. Either way, he won't be present to assist Nobu with his coup. See **Family Quarters** on page 18. Each PC is awarded 1 honor. Additionally, each gains 3 glory if they think to send word to an appropriate higher authority, such as Otomo Itsuki or an Emerald Magistrate.
- ❖ If the PCs deal with Jikai's sleeping problems, the daimyō can finally get some rest, meaning he is no longer exhausted, and is better able to fight and lead effectively. See **Family Quarters** on page 18 and **Rooftop** on page 20. Each PC is awarded 1 honor.
- ❖ If the PCs help Seppun Azusa to fight with her off hand, she is a powerful bushi to lead her husband's loyal samurai against the steward's forces. See **Family Matters** on page 21. Each PC is awarded 2 glory and 2 honor.
- ❖ If the PCs find the arrows and inform Jikai, this aids the castle's defense. See **Lost Arrows** on page 17. Each PC is awarded 1 honor.
- ❖ If the PCs restored the shachihoko (see **Rooftop** on page 20) or purified the well (see **Kitchens** on page 19), this aids in extinguishing the fires set during the battle (see page 29). Each PC is awarded 1 glory.

Consequences

The situation in the castle when the **Final Conflict** occurs is testament to the PCs' efforts and allows them to see the consequences of their choices play out dramatically. Their actions during the conflict also impact upon the daimyō's ultimate victory or fall.

The GM is encouraged to make this clear through their descriptions of the coming battle, including who fights on which side, how each character fares, and where the power ultimately lies.

When the dust settles, the GM can reward the PCs with honor, glory, experience, and even a permanent position, as appropriate. However, if the PCs backed the losing side, they might find themselves with powerful new enemies.



Part Three: The Final Conflict

When the time comes, the daimyō must defend himself within the castle, whether from an invading force, traitors within the castle walls, or both.

Part Three consists of several encounters that can run in sequence, or the GM might pick and choose which ones to use. A number of outcomes are also given, and the GM should adapt these to fit the decisions the PCs have made.

RUNNING THE BATTLE

To ensure a personal experience for all players, the GM can choose to focus on the encounters the PCs can best affect. For example, if the PCs are close to Jikai, the last stand could receive most attention, as the PCs can attempt to protect their daimyō. Or if the PCs are employed as mercenaries, they might take key roles in the battle at the gates.

The extent of PC involvement in this part of the adventure is entirely up to the GM and players. If the PCs stand against Jikai, they might aid the external or internal threat, or take the opportunity to assassinate him, bringing the conflict to an end. If trusted by Jikai, PCs can remain by his side to advise and protect him, or lead cohorts in his army.

If the PCs are not committed to standing with or against Jikai, their goal may simply be to survive the chaos unscathed. In this case, the GM has the option of drawing them into the conflict, and some ways to do this are suggested in the **Out for Themselves** sidebar on page 28.

Depending on the PCs' choices, Part Three may play out through a mass battle or skirmish, or a combination of conflict types.

AN ARMY APPROACHES THE CASTLE...

If the GM concludes that events have transpired to bring an external threat to Jikai's doorstep, Part Three begins at nightfall, with lookouts spotting an approaching army. Read or paraphrase the following:

The peal of a bell echoes through the night, answered by marching feet in the courtyard as samurai and mercenaries assemble. The daimyō appears on the wall, despite his yōjimbō's protestations. He wants to see for himself who marches on his castle...

The GM can make clear what forces are outside and who are their leaders. The total number of cohorts in

the battle should be sufficient for each PC to lead one appropriate cohort. The enemy armies should consist of an equal number of cohorts, unless the PCs' prior actions dictate otherwise. Note that not all armies may be present, depending on prior events.

- ⊗ **Osamu's Army:** Well-trained bushi, with discipline 40 and strength 50. Otomo Kazumi is acting as commander. She is willing to answer a Challenge action, but the TN is increased by 3 if the challenger is not a Great Clan samurai. This army has the following ability:
 - **Tactically Trained:** This army reduces the TN of all Tactics checks its leaders make by 1.
- ⊗ **Bandit Band:** An inexperienced group of bandits with discipline 20 and strength 45. Ichirō acts as commander. This army has the following ability:
 - **Fight Another Day:** If routed, the bandits experience the effects of Moral Collapse instead.
- ⊗ **Village Mob:** An unruly gathering of desperate peasants, with discipline 15 and strength 25, with Natsumi acting as commander. This army has the following ability:
 - **Driven to Desperation:** If panic exceeds discipline, the commander can make one attempt at a **TN 3 Command check** to unite the troops, reducing the army's panic to an amount equal to its discipline minus one. This ability can only be used once.
- ⊗ **Jikai's Army** has discipline 35 and strength 50. This army may contain as many cohorts as attack the castle. This army has the following ability:
 - **Unexpected Fortitude:** At the end of each round, this army removes 2 panic.

The invading army outside does not immediately attack, but waits at the edge of the forest, out of arrow range. Unknown to the daimyō, they are waiting for the gate to open. Jikai must decide what action to take, and if the PCs have earned his trust over the course of the adventure, he asks their advice. Jikai's default choice is to keep the gate closed and make a Reinforce action, but he could be persuaded to make an Assault action, sending his own army out to fight under the command of Azusa, the taisei, or even a PC.

ARMY COMPOSITION

Osamu's Army
Commander: Otomo Kazumi
Leaders: Two Loyal Bushi

Bandit Band
Commander: Ichirō
Leaders: Ichirō, two Desperate Bandits

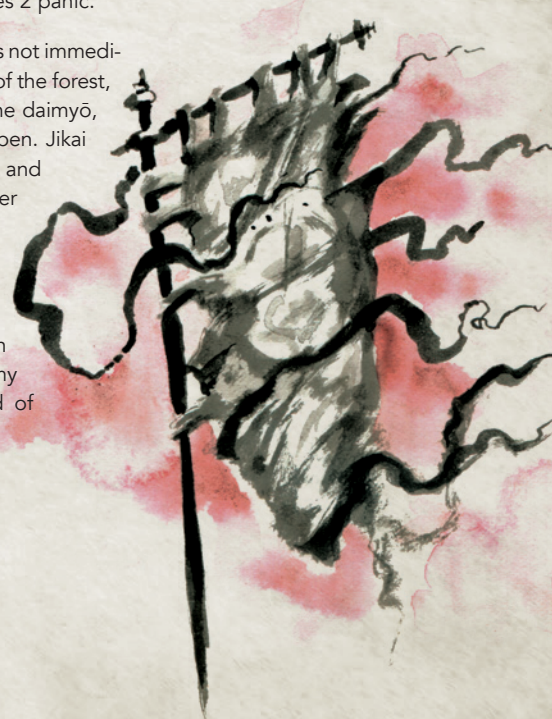
Village Mob
Commander: Natsumi
Leaders: Natsumi

Jikai's Army
Commander: Jikai (or another character if Jikai is persuaded to step down)
Leaders: Rin, Daigo, Daihachi, Ume or Azusa (if healed)

The PCs are substituted for the listed leaders for any army that they join.

The Castle of the Closed Shell is a fortification that reduces attrition by 4 and has a difficulty value of 16 if the gates are closed, but provides no benefit if the gates are open.

Note that Osamu's Army, the Bandit Band, and the Village Mob are allied (at least at the outset of the battle).



OTOMO KAZUMI, COMMANDER

ADVERSARY

CONFLICT RANK: 7 5

Kazumi has been waiting for a chance to prove her skills for a long time, and she is willing to do whatever it takes to claim victory. Her body and mind are as keen as her weapons, and she is determined to test all on the battlefield. She has no fear of death, only obscurity.

SOCIETAL	PERSONAL
50 HONOR	ENDURANCE 14
58 GLORY	COMPOSURE 12
45 STATUS	FOCUS 7
+2, -2 DEMEANOR - AMBITIOUS	VIGILANCE 3

ARTISAN 1 MARTIAL 4 SCHOLAR 3 SOCIAL 2 TRADE 0

ADVANTAGES

Military Historian:

Scholar; Mental

DISADVANTAGES

Untested:

Martial; Mental

FAVORED WEAPONS & GEAR

Tessen: Range 0–1, Damage 4, Deadliness 3, Ceremonial, Concealable

Gear (equipped): Lacquered armor (Physical 4, Ceremonial, Cumbersome, Wargear), katana, wakizashi

ABILITIES

CLAIM THE ADVANTAGE

In a mass battle, each opposing commander treats the TN of their initiative check as increased by 2..

A TRAITOR AT THE GATES...

If Jikai decides to keep the gate closed, at the end of the second round of the mass battle, a traitor inside gives the guards the order to open them. This could be Nobu or Michi if available, appropriate to the invading force. Alternatively, if the PCs are allied with Nobu, he might charge them with opening the gate. There are two castle guards stationed there, and the PCs either have to convince or otherwise deal with them to open it.

If and when the gate opens, all enemy leaders can Assault the now-unprotected defenders, and Jikai calls for his archers to pick them off as they pass through the narrow courtyard. Whether this order is fulfilled or not depends on whether the arrows were found earlier (see **Lost Arrows** on page 17). If the arrows were recovered, cohorts in Jikai's army add 5 bonus successes to their successful Attack action checks for the remainder of the round. Either way, the daimyō retreats to the main keep as the fighting begins.

OUT FOR THEMSELVES

The following encounters are all optional but allow PCs who don't wish to choose a side in the battle to still feel involved in the climax of the adventure.

- ⊗ Courtier NPCs are driven out of the keep by the fire, and fear for their lives. An appropriate courtier character appeals to the PCs to get them to safety. They cannot escape through the gate but might use the passageway through the derelict tower.
- ⊗ Rin spies the PCs and alerts the mercenaries around her that they are the enemy. Before the PCs can protest, the mercenaries attack. Use the **Trained Ashigaru** profile from page 314 of the core rulebook to represent the mercenaries, and include one for each PC.
- ⊗ The PCs encounter a corrupt character trying to flee the battle: Masaru, Atsuko, Toshio, or Nobu himself if the battle is not going his way. The PCs could attempt to aid or prevent their flight.
- ⊗ If the battle goes against Jikai, Reju Daihachi might attempt to get Ume out of the castle for her own safety. He knows about the passage in the derelict tower, but corrupt mercenaries block the way. The PCs have the opportunity to aid or prevent their flight.
- ⊗ An NPC bearing a grudge against one of the PCs challenges them to single combat in the midst of the ongoing battle.

THE ENEMY WITHIN...

If the adventure has unfolded such that no external force is in a position to attack Jikai, **the Final Conflict** still begins at nightfall. In this case, the battle begins in a thoroughly dishonorable act, with Nobu's corrupt mercenaries attacking those loyal to Jikai in the barracks. Read or paraphrase the following:

Fighting erupts in the barracks, and the cries of the dying and the clash of steel echo through the growing darkness. Someone rings the alarm bell, and the daimyō himself emerges from the keep, despite the protestations of his yōjimbō. He wants to see for himself what new trouble afflicts his castle...

At the start of the round, if the gates are open due to traitors or if Jikai's army has suffered attrition equal to half its strength, Jikai's yōjimbō persuades him to retreat to the safety of the keep. If the PCs have gained Jikai's trust, he asks them to stand by him now—when he needs them the most. They can choose to accompany him to ensure his safety or remain in the mass battle and fight alongside his loyal samurai.

Fire!

Before Jikai can take refuge in the keep, flames burst from the windows of the topmost floor. (This may be the direct result of sabotage by one of the treacherous castle inhabitants or even a consequence of the elemental imbalance that plagues the area.) If the PCs successfully cleansed the shachihoko (see **Rooftop** on page 20), a sudden, localized rainfall puts out the fire. Alternatively, if the well is usable (see **Kitchens** on page 19), as an action a PC may make a **TN 2 Fitness check (Water 1, Air 4)** to use the well water to put the fire out, allowing Jikai to safely enter the keep. If the fire continues to burn, Jikai cannot enter, and by the conclusion of the battle, servants have put out the fire but the family quarters are destroyed.

The Last Stand...

At the end of the fifth round of the mass battle (or at the end of any round in which Jikai's army flees or is routed, or all enemy forces are), the last stand begins.

This scene is a skirmish involving two or more forces.

- ✱ **Jikai's Supporters:** Jikai, Two Loyal Bushi plus one or more of the following (if available) Seppun Azusa, Reju Ume, Reju Daihachi, Reju Jinzaburō

NOBU AND OSAMU

Nobu believes Osamu is here to support his coup, and lets his force into the castle. He is content to allow the mercenary forces to fight Osamu's forces however, as this means fewer mercenaries to feed later. As far as he is concerned the battle is a distraction, giving him the opportunity to finally destroy Jikai and take the castle. He does not realize that Osamu considers him honorless and untrustworthy. Osamu has ordered Kazumi to take the castle, then kill or imprison Nobu, and install Niko as steward.

- ✱ **Coup Forces:** Otomo Nobu and two Skillful Rōnin, plus one or more of the following (if available) Reju Toshio, Reju Masaru, Rin, Genzo
- ✱ **Peasant Forces:** Five Humble Peasants plus Natsumi (if available)
- ✱ **Bandit Forces:** A number of Desperate Bandits equal to Jikai's supporters, plus Ichirō (if available)
- ✱ **Osamu's Army Forces:** Otomo Kazumi, Three Loyal Bushi

Additionally, apply the following based on the results of the mass battle and other actions by the PCs:

- ✱ If Jikai's army was not routed and did not flee, Jikai's Supporters are opposed only by the coup forces.
- ✱ If any army flees, its associated forces appear in the final stand, but begin the scene with fatigue and strife equal to half their endurance and composure, respectively.
- ✱ If any army is routed, its associated forces do not appear in the Last Stand.
- ✱ If Jikai escapes into the audience chamber, increase the TN of Attack action checks targeting him by 2.
- ✱ If Jikai is trapped in the smoke-filled courtyard, apply the Dangerous and Obscuring terrain qualities to the area where this scene takes place.



If one side substantially outmatches the other, or there are simply too many NPCs present to handle, consider having a complication drive off some fighters as the PCs arrive (such as the fire spreading and cutting off some combatants, or the movement of an army creating confusion that divides the battlefield).

VICTORY...

The outcome of the battle depends largely on the actions of the PCs, both during the fight and preceding it. Regardless of who triumphs, and whether the outcome is what the PCs hoped for, they should see the results of their actions both in the battle and in the consequences that follow.

The extent of the PCs' own victory depends on whether they remained true to their personal sense of honor during the adventure, the outcome of their objectives, whether they survived or fell, and whether they supported the winning or losing side.

When the battle is over, read or paraphrase the following:

Bodies litter the castle, and though dawn has yet to break, hungry crows already call to one another in excitement. The few servants do their best to pile the corpses onto carts and take them elsewhere to burn on pyres. By the time the sun rises, there will be no sign of the night's gore, just scrubbed stone and air purified with incense.

For Jikai

For Jikai to be victorious, he must survive the encounter within the castle, and his army must not break or be routed. In this case, Jikai gives thanks to Bishamon for giving him a second chance and swears aloud that he will strive to prove worthy of it. Whether this oath is in earnest and leads to real change depends largely on the actions of the PCs and how they influenced Jikai's perception of the battle, directly or indirectly. If the lord and lady of the castle are reconciled, Azusa proves an able counselor, and her Shinseist beliefs lead Jikai to rule with greater compassion.

The GM may choose to play through the events following the battle in game or handle them largely narratively. If the PCs earned Jikai's esteem, or impressed him during the battle, he is likely to listen to their counsel.

Working with Jikai to deal with the aftermath can form the basis of additional sessions. Depending on the nature of the final battle and whether the PCs have fostered self-reflection in Jikai or encouraged his paranoia, they may help restore Twin Blessings Village to its former prosperity or deliver punishment to the treacherous peasants.

For Another

If Jikai's army loses, he intends to commit seppuku to salvage what he can of his honor. The PCs might be able to convince him not to—or at least to first obtain permission from Otomo Itsuki—but this likely results in him instead confined to the holding cells beneath Closed Shell Castle.

If Jikai falls, control of the castle likely passes to Osamu, Nobu, or Ume, depending on who survives the battle. If Osamu's army is intact, Niko claims the castle on Lord Osamu's behalf, installing herself as steward and sending Nobu to the holding cells. Otherwise Nobu takes control for himself. If Jikai himself falls but his loyal forces win control of the castle, Ume becomes the rightful ruler. If the loyal samurai are not victorious, Ume might flee to Otsan Uchi, taking any remaining loyal retainers with her. However, she intends to rally her own support and return for vengeance.



Conclusion & Rewards

The adventure's conclusion depends on the decisions the PCs made over its course. If the PCs helped the daimyō to retain his position, he might reward them by swearing them into his service, and they are rōnin no longer. If this was the particular goal of any or all PCs, they should be awarded 2 extra glory for achieving this.

If the village has been saved, by replacing the daimyō or improving his situation and outlook, or by dealing with the elemental imbalance, then the PCs should receive an increase of 3 or more to both honor and glory. Stories of their deeds will be told in the village for generations to come.

The amount of experience gained at the end of the adventure should depend on how many problems the PCs tackled, how far they explored, and how well they maintained the balance between their ninjō and personal sense of duty. Even if the PCs were not successful in their goals, they may have learned from their mistakes. For advice on awarding experience, see page 299 of the core rulebook.

FURTHER ADVENTURES

However *Sins of Regret* concludes, the adventure does not have to stop here. The downloadable content *Cresting Waves*, available at FantasyFlightGames.com, offers additional encounters in and around Twin Blessings Village and Closed Shell Castle. In addition, the included maps of Twin Blessings Village and Closed Shell Castle have many locations and details that aren't featured directly in the adventure, leaving plenty of room for further exploration and intrigue.

Credits

EXPANSION DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT Tim Cox and Lisa Farrell
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