

Legend
of the
Five Rings[™]
ROLEPLAYING



WINTER'S EMBRACE

AN ADVENTURE AT THE WINTER COURT

EXTENDING THE ADVENTURE

Courts of Stone is an excellent source of inspiration for GMs who wish to play out the rest of the Winter Court, and the downloadable content for *Winter's Embrace* includes another ploy for the PCs to become involved in. Visit www.fantasyflightgames.com/en/legend-of-the-five-rings-roleplaying-game/ for more information.

CHANGING THE YEAR OF THE ADVENTURE

Game masters should adjust the date of the adventure to suit their campaign. With some changes, the adventure can easily be set at any point in Rokugan's past or future.

A NOTE ABOUT CHARACTERS

We strongly recommend game masters read through the Adventure Overview found on this page and then read through the character profiles starting on page 24 in order to gain a better understanding of the events and motivations of this adventure.

Winter's Embrace

Winter's Embrace is an adventure for the *Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game*. Players should not read material past this point. Over the course of this adventure, the player characters must navigate the dangerous political currents of the Winter Court at Kyūden Doji, lest they find themselves trapped in the whirlpool of competing political schemes of the traditional Crane Clan, the unconventional Mantis Clan, and the allies and enemies of both. The reputations of both clans are at stake, as is the identity of the future Empress.

It is strongly recommended that the game master read through *Winter's Embrace* in its entirety to become familiar with the cast and story lines before running it.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND (GM ONLY BEYOND THIS POINT)

The year is 1122 of the Isawa Calendar. It has been two years since a terrible tsunami struck Crane lands, and one year since a massive typhoon hit the southern coast. The once high-and-mighty Crane have begun to feel the pain of two successive failed harvests, although based upon the beauty and marvels on display at this year's Winter Court, a guest could scarcely guess the Crane had fallen on hard times. For the Crane, it is imperative that they continue to seem unaffected. If the Crane Clan falters, the Lion Clan is waiting to swoop in and reclaim the Osari Plains and the city of Toshi Ranbo, which have been contested for generations.

To that end, the Lion Clan seeks to drive a wedge between its enemy—the Crane—and the Mantis. The Crane and Mantis have strained relations—the Crane suspect the Mantis are behind several pirate attacks on their coast, while the Mantis are frustrated with the Crane's traditionalism. The Lion's Ikoma family, namely Ambassador Ikoma Ujiaki, knows the Lion Clan can benefit from inflaming tensions between the Crane and Mantis Clans. To foster hostilities, an Ikoma *shinobi* forged an invitation for the Mantis Clan to attend the Winter Court at Kyūden Doji, the Esteemed Palaces of the Crane. The Imperial Herald—who issues invitations on the host's behalf and received the Mantis' acceptance letter—convinced the Emperor to add the Mantis to the guest list rather than publicly shame them. With the Mantis' presence at the court secured, the Lion hope things will naturally fall apart between the Mantis and Crane. What they do not realize is the extent of the Mantis' opportunism.

To further complicate these tensions, the crown prince will soon achieve his *gempuku* and be betrothed. That the Emperor has chosen to winter with the Crane this year is a favorable sign toward the Doji family, who hope one of their own will become the future Empress. However, the Crane are not the only clan seeking to install one of their daughters in the house of Hantei.

The Mantis hope to seize the stage at the Winter Court to put forward one of their own for that role.

ADVENTURE OVERVIEW

Spring is for sowing, summer is for waging war, fall is for the harvest, and winter is for politics. While travel is treacherous or impossible, the samurai of Rokugan winter in their mighty castles and continue their political gamesmanship. Countless provincial and family *daimyō* host a winter court at their stronghold to honor their vassals and ensure their loyalty. At a winter court, official business is conducted, promotions and betrothals are announced, treaties are negotiated, and disputes are resolved. The true Winter Court, however, takes place wherever the Emperor attends, and each year a different palace is selected for the honor. This year, Kyūden Doji hosts His Imperial Majesty and his retinue, in part to celebrate the recent ascension of Doji Hotaru to the role of Crane Clan Champion. More in-depth information on the Winter Court can be found on page 18 in *Courts of Stone*.

This adventure represents a two-week span of time during the months-long proceedings, and only one of the many schemes being played out. If the GM wishes to run a full Winter Court, this could be used as an introductory intrigue for the player characters, leaving many more plots to unravel after the conclusion of *Winter's Embrace*. If GMs wish to add in an additional story line to this adventure, they can find a free, downloadable supplement entitled *The Scroll or the Blade* at <https://www.fantasyflightgames.com/en/legend-of-the-five-rings-roleplaying-game/> to expand upon the intrigue of the Winter Court.

The adventure begins with an invitation to tea with the venerable Kakita Ryoku, a courtier of the Crane. Ryoku humbly requests that the PCs determine why and how the Mantis were invited to the Winter Court, as they were not on the original guest list as far as she knows. If the PCs do this for her—and track down the invitation used to invite the Mantis—they will curry great respect with the Crane Clan, and Ryoku will owe each PC or their *daimyō* a favor. As they conduct their investigation, the PCs must decide whom they can trust and whom they should avoid. In the process, the PCs are forced to balance the fine arts of negotiation, subterfuge, and even potentially romance.

At the end of **Act II**, the PCs discover the real game being played—that of determining the future Empress. In a bold move that could further their ambition to become a great clan, the Mantis put forth their own candidate for the future bride of the crown prince: none other than Yorito-mo's niece, the Lady Magami. At the same time, Kakita Ryoku is working to secure the betrothal of Doji Chiyoe,

ROMANCE AND PLAYERS

This adventure presents opportunities for PCs to engage in romantic relationships with NPCs. Before play begins, the GM should gauge each player's interest in roleplaying a romantic relationship by asking directly whether they would be interested in doing so during this adventure. Only players who express clear interest should be presented with the opportunity later in the adventure to have their PC enter such a relationship; players who are unsure or hesitant should not be pressed. The GM should be sure to emphasize that the players can change their mind at any time for any reason, and without needing to supply a reason to the GM or group. The GM should check in with players who are pursuing courtships every other session to make sure they are still interested, okay with the tone of the courtship at the table, and having fun. Additionally, the GM should touch base with the group to see if they are comfortable with romance being roleplayed at the table.

If NPC-PC romance would be awkward to discuss with the group, the GM should not assume any of the players are interested in or comfortable with pursuing romantic subplots. If one of the PCs begins to pursue an NPC romantically, the GM can take the player aside and ask them privately if they would be comfortable with roleplaying the courtship at the table or not. Even if the players answer yes, the GM should continue checking in with the group throughout the adventure to ensure everyone's comfort. Please note that all romance options can be easily replaced with platonic friendships to avoid any player discomfort, especially if any players are experiencing discomfort from being at the table where a romance scene is taking place.

second cousin to Doji Hotaru, to the Emperor's heir. The very suggestion that the Mantis are trying to betroth Lady Magami to the crown prince is scandalous, since the role of Empress is considered far above their station. The PCs can expose the Mantis' ambitions to the court and humiliate their contender during the Kabuki production of *The Tale of the Fisherman's Daughter*, set to be performed during the second week. Alternatively, the PCs can shake up the current cast and improvise, instead persuading the Emperor to consider Lady Magami—or another—for the role of Empress. A duel erupts over the casting of the play's central female character, Doji Mioko, and the PCs may find themselves with new friends or enemies.

THE ADVENTURE STRUCTURE

The adventure is divided up into two weeks of in-game time. A quick guide to the main events of each day can be found as a free download at www.fantasyflightgames.com/en/legend-of-the-five-rings-roleplaying-game/. Certain days feature an intrigue or challenge for the PCs to overcome, while other days are quieter, allowing the players to pursue leads and relationships in their own fashion. The group can make use of downtime activities in combination with narrative scenes as desired (see page 248 of the core rulebook for more information on downtime scenes). Each day or set of days also includes side events for the PCs to witness and rumors for the PCs to uncover. However, GMs should feel free to remove, add, or merge days as it fits into the rhythm of their group.

CHARACTER GOALS

While *Winter's Embrace* has plenty of intrigue, the stakes rise when the PCs are drawn into the plot because of their personal interests and clans' goals—and the prospect of Kakita Ryoku taking care of those matters for them. Each player should work with the GM to choose one of the clan-based goals listed under their clan's delegation (see **The Delegations of the Winter Court** "The Delegations to the Winter Court" on page 3 through "Informal Delegations" on page 7), or invent one based on their character's *ninjō* and *giri*. These goals can also be used to present complications (see page 39 in the core rulebook).

The Delegations to the Winter Court

A delegation is a collection of samurai sent to the Winter Court to represent the wishes of their clan champion and their clan as a whole. In cases where the clan champion is not in attendance, authority to conduct business on behalf of the clan has been delegated to these individuals: they are able to make and break promises, sign treaties, declare duels, and arrange marriages without first having to write to their champion to receive permission. While the delegations present a unified front, they are often internally divided regarding what should be done and prioritized.

Delegations to the Winter Court typically comprise one or two dozen samurai and two to three times as many servants and guards who work behind the scenes. Delegation members are not all detailed here, but the GM is encouraged to flesh out the personalities as needed, keeping in mind that each family in a clan has at least two to three representatives. Diplomats typically make up a third of any delegation, with artisans, shugenja, bushi, magistrates, and

EMERALD INVITATIONS

In addition to the invitations sent out to the major families of the Great Clans, the Emerald Champion is also permitted a number of invitations to distribute however they wish. Doji Satsume, the current Emerald Champion (if being played before the events of the Legend of the Five Rings Beginner Game), is presently responsible for such matters, as well as his duty to protect the Emperor during the event.

INTERPARTY ALLEGIANCES

If the group is composed of samurai from different clans, they may find their loyalties divided. As a group, the players and GM should decide whether they want to play a cooperative or competitive game. In a cooperative game, the players do not act against the other players, and they come to a consensus before moving forward if they are divided. In a competitive game, the PCs may become antagonists for one another and may even work behind each other's backs. The group should decide which is the most fun for them.

**ADORNING
GUESTHOUSES**

Each guesthouse is built with a particular Great Clan in mind.

For example, the Unicorn have large stables, the Crab are able to quickly turn their accommodations into a small fortress in the case of an attack, and the Phoenix enjoy several dozen shrines.

daimyō making up the remainder. Samurai are selected to attend based on their skills as well as their positions—if the ownership of a specific parcel of land is to be discussed at court, the lords of that land are likely to be included in the delegation. Monks may be included in a delegation, although they generally serve as counselors only.

**ACCOMMODATIONS AT THE
WINTER COURT**

Accommodations are provided for the delegations in majestic guesthouses just outside the Fantastic Gardens of the Crane. Guests who are not part of a formal delegation—such as Minor Clan samurai, *rōnin*, or monks—do not have the luxury of their own private guesthouse and

must share a single building. Although a map of the grounds of Kyūden Doji is provided, GMs and players are encouraged to further flesh out important guesthouses and include special qualities and furnishing as interests them (see the **Adorning Guesthouses** sidebar on the left). These houses include a reception room that doubles as a place to take meals, a library or study, a chamber for worship, extra rooms for private meetings, an armory/training space with ceremonial armaments, an interior courtyard with a garden, a kitchen with adjoining servants' quarters, and sleeping quarters on the second story.

THE CRAB CLAN DELEGATION

The Crab Clan is always looking to supply its war effort. As attacks on the Wall increase in frequency and intensity, food, armaments, jade, and warriors are becoming even more precious. The Crab's focus is to secure as much material and as many warriors as possible. Any quantity of koku would be a boon: 20,000 would go a long way, but 50,000 would help them tremendously. They have little to spare in exchange, relying instead on other samurai to grasp the importance of their cause.

Possible individual goals for Crab characters:

- ✧ The personal battle standard (*sashimono*) of one of your ancestors fell into the hands of the Crane during a border skirmish between the Yasuki and Daidoji families. Your lord refuses to waste precious resources retaking the standard through battle, but you received a vision from your ancestor that they cannot cross over to the next life until the standard is returned to their grave.
- ✧ The River of Gold, which runs between Crab and Crane lands, has been flooding since the fall monsoons, disproportionately affecting the Crab lands, which lack any wetlands to absorb the extra rainfall. The Crab shugenja are too busy dealing with the danger at the Wall, so it falls to you to enlist the Crane's Asahina to help quell the angry river *kami*, either by direct intervention or by teaching you or other Crab how to soothe the spirit.

THE CRANE CLAN HOSTS

As the clan hosting the court at Kyūden Doji, the Crane Clan has the largest delegation, with an entire palace of servants and guards at their disposal. Ostensibly, their aim is to provide a comfortable place to stay for the Emperor and his guests, while at the same time impressing all with their fine arts, their delicate performances, and the magnificent beauty of their gardens. In reality, the Crane Clan's primary goal is to preserve the appearance that they are influential in Rokugani politics and are important allies for the other clans to



have, despite their failing fortunes. This year, the Crane have only 50,000 koku to trade for alliances and other boons, which is less than half their usual supply.

Possible individual goals for Crane characters:

- ✧ You seek to share your art with the rest of Rokugan and earn fame for yourself and your school. Your lord has given you permission to petition another clan for the chance to perform in its courts in the next year.
- ✧ Doji Chiyoe, apprentice to Kakita Ryoku, must make a good impression at this Winter Court in order to be considered for a high position in the Forbidden City. Wherever possible, she must be put in a position to succeed and capture the notice of important Imperial dignitaries.

THE DRAGON CLAN DELEGATION

The winters have grown longer and harder, and there are fewer people in the Dragon lands to cultivate the fields. What the clan needs most this year is rice: 10,000 koku's worth to feed its samurai, or 30,000 total to feed the peasants as well. In exchange, the Dragon can accept students to the Mirumoto and Kitsuki schools, and they can spare a few Mirumoto-trained *yōjimbō* and monks of the Togashi Tattooed Order to serve in a court for a year.

Possible individual goals for Dragon characters:

- ✧ At Kyūden Doji, the Crane Clan has in their possession a fan whose silk was made from the robes of a great prophet and is said to possess miraculous healing abilities. You, or someone you know, could be fully healed of a lasting injury if they could be touched by this legendary *nemuranai*.
- ✧ You, or one of your relations, needs to find a spouse—preferably one of lower status with many children from a previous marriage. The Dragon Clan desperately needs more samurai to protect its borders.

THE IMPERIAL FAMILIES

The Imperial contingent pursues the same agenda that it usually does during Winter Courts: to keep the Great Clans' attention focused on each other so that no clan can rise to pose a threat to the Hantei line, and to dole out enough boons to the Great Clans that they continue to see the Imperial families favorably. The Imperials must play the game of appearing exclusive enough that their attention seems special, while at the same time remaining approachable. For the most part, they get to enjoy the entertainments of the host clan as well as the goodwill of the clans seeking to curry favor with the Emperor.

A QUICK GUIDE TO THE MAIN ACTORS

Asahina Takako: Daughter of the Asahina family daimyō, up-and-coming artificer, and priest overseeing the ceremonies of the poetry competition (page 30).

Doji Chiyoe: Second cousin to Doji Hotaru, candidate for betrothal to the crown prince, apprenticed to Kakita Ryoku (page 30).

Doji Hatsuina: Deputy seneschal of Kyūden Doji, bitter courtier, Otomo Koryusai's ex-lover (page 24).

Doji Shigeru: Crane Clan director and performer who moonlights as the legendary Lady Shike, currently slated to star in the role of Doji Mioko in *The Tale of the Fisherman's Daughter* (page 30).

Ikoma Rumiko: Famed Kabuki actor cast as the island spirit in *The Tale of the Fisherman's Daughter*, and secretly an Ikoma Shadow shinobi of the Lion Clan and forger of the Mantis invitation (page 26).

Kakita Ryoku: Legendary courtier and writer of the famed novel *Winter*, still heavily involved in Rokugani politics (page 25).

Lady Magami: Niece of Yoritomo and candidate for betrothal to the crown prince (page 30).

Miya Satoshi: Imperial Herald with a hidden agenda and daimyō of the Miya family (page 27).

Otomo Koryusai: Imperial bureaucrat the Ikoma attempted to bribe and ex-lover of Doji Hatsuina (page 28).

Susano-o no Izen: Trusted captain in the Mantis' Storm Fleet and one of Lady Magami's retainers (page 29).

Lord Yoritomo: Mantis Clan Champion and leader of the Storm Fleet, as well as Lady Magami's uncle (page 31).

Possible individual goals for Imperial characters:

- ✧ Otomo Koryusai—a childhood friend of your lord or relative—is distracted, longing for his former fiancée, Doji Hatsuina. They will both be in attendance at the Winter Court, and this represents the best—and possibly only—opportunity to help them patch things up, reunite as lovers, or move on.
- ✧ The Miya Cartographers have the most extensive map collection in all of Rokugan. Copies of the clan's historical maps of the Osari Plains would be invaluable in resolving the dispute between the Lion and the Crane over this region. You are asked to acquire copies of those maps and ensure their authenticity.

BONDS IN WINTER'S EMBRACE

For groups that wish to add mechanical incentives to the relationships formed during the course of the Winter Court, the GM can utilize the rules for bonds as described on page 136 of *Courts of Stone*.

FREE SUPPLEMENTAL CONTENT

Winter's Embrace includes free downloadable content available at www.fantasy-flightgames.com/en/Legend-of-the-Five-Rings-Roleplaying-Game that offers GMs another storyline to incorporate into their Winter Court.

In this supplement players find themselves in the middle of a decision that could mean war for the relatively peaceful Dragon and Phoenix.

USING THE MAP

Winter's Embrace includes a fold-out map of Kyūden Doji and its surrounding holdings. This illustration includes important castle locations, but the poster also includes a useful map of the Crane and Mantis lands so GMs and players may more easily plan out their future adventures.

SUBSKILLS IN WINTER'S EMBRACE

Players and game masters who are interested in using the optional rules for subskills on page 143 of the core rulebook are encouraged to do so for this adventure. The subskills for skills in the Artisan and Social skill groups, particularly those for the Culture skill, are well suited to this adventure. Adding subskills in the midst of an ongoing campaign is not recommended. If the GM wishes to use subskills in this adventure, they should make sure the players know before they begin the character creation process.

THE LION CLAN DELEGATION

The Lion Clan wants nothing more than to see their rivals, the Crane, brought down. Anything that can set the Crane on their back foot—or better yet, see them humiliated before the esteemed company of the Winter Court—only strengthens Clan Champion Akodo Arasou. If the opportunity arises for the clan to regain the city of Toshi Ranbo in the north or the Osari Plains on their southwest border shared with the Crane, they will stop at nothing to seize it. In the meantime, the Lion are seeking 40,000 koku to supply their war effort.

Possible individual goals for characters:

- ❁ After an embarrassing incident, your lord has recommended the end of the Winter Court as the time to embark on a *musha shugyō*—a warrior's journey—to restore your honor, and the omens agree. This may be your chance to visit a part of Rokugan you've never visited before, or beyond—the Sand Road, the Islands of Spice and Silk, or the boundless seas. However, receiving permission to complete the journey through another clan's land requires negotiations during this Winter Court.
- ❁ The peasants of the Crane have taken to fishing in the Lake of Sorrows, which shares a border with the Lion Clan and is sometimes haunted by the spirits of the nearby Red Lake. This sacrilege cannot be borne silently, and the Crane must forbid their vassals from continuing to disturb the sacred waters. The Lion Clan would gladly take stewardship of the lake shore villages to ensure these peasants are properly supplied, so they no longer need to fish for themselves.

THE MANTIS CLAN DELEGATION

The Mantis want to be considered equal in status to the Great Clans and to be recognized for their contributions to the Empire. In the pursuit of this goal, Yoritomo is attempting to install a Mantis as Empress, but the only members of the delegation who know this are Lady Magami and Susano-o no Izen. (PCs belonging to the Mantis Clan are not be privy to Yoritomo's plans unless they are very highly placed in his household.) In addition, the Mantis have 30,000 koku's worth of silk, spices, and other luxury goods to trade with the other clans, which they hope to trade for koku to use toward funding the continuous buildup of their Storm Fleet navy.

The Mantis Clan delegation is half the size of those of the Great Clans, and the Mantis have left some of their servants and crew on the ships docked in the nearby harbor, including Izen's ship, the *Susano-o*, and

Yoritomo's flagship, the *Bitter Wind*.

Possible individual goals for Mantis characters:

- ❁ One of your crew or relations was mistakenly arrested in Wall above the Ocean Village. It is imperative that you receive a pardon on their behalf, lest they be locked in the magistrate's dungeons—or worse, executed for their crimes.
- ❁ The Mantis seek to establish an embassy along the Crane coast—a small parcel of land where they can abide by their own authority and be governed by their own laws. Lonely Shore City and the Port That Never Sleeps are prime locations for this outpost.

THE PHOENIX CLAN DELEGATION

The Phoenix wish to learn whether other clans have been suffering from elemental imbalances of the kami without alerting the others to the imbalances affecting Phoenix lands. (Sometimes, the Isawa shugenja have been unable to commune with the kami of one element, while the kami of another element have responded forcefully and violently.) The Phoenix usually have surplus koku to trade, but this year, it is seeking to raise 20,000 koku to restore its shrines in an attempt to placate the disquieted kami. The more it can raise, the grander the renovations can be.

Possible individual goals for Phoenix characters:

- ❁ Your immediate family has safeguarded a small, gemlike egg for generations. Recently, the iridescent shell has begun to shine like sunlight reflecting off waves. You have been tasked with communing with the spirit within the egg and then taking it to hatch beneath the watchful gaze of the statue of Suitengu, the Fortune of the Sea, at the sunken Sea-King's Palace, but such a place is taboo to samurai from outside the Crane Clan.
- ❁ In a recent fire at a shrine to Kaze-no-Kami, the Fortune of the Wind, rare scrolls from the fourth century were lost and must be replaced. The Crane's Asahina family should have copies, as its founder was Isawa Asahina, a Phoenix Master of Air in the fourth century. However, like most shugenja families, the Asahina are reluctant to let others into their libraries—much less to allow them to transcribe copies.

THE SCORPION CLAN DELEGATION

Newly ascendant in the Forbidden City, the Scorpion are interested in maintaining and expanding their influence, and Winter Court offers them an unparalleled opportunity to do so. For the first time in living memory, the clan has more surplus to offer in trade and gifts than even the Crane: 60,000 koku's worth. Besides brokering alliances, the Scorpion's primary purposes at the Winter Court are to gather intelligence (especially bases for blackmail) and to act swiftly to counter any immediate threats to their political hegemony—such as a rise in Crane Clan fortunes.

Possible individual goals for characters:

- ✧ One of your relatives wishes to make a bold fashion statement in the coming year. They have asked you to obtain a unique robe tailored by the silk weavers of the Mantis Clan, but they do not have enough personal funds to cover the expense.
- ✧ Kakita Ryoku has been laid low, but she must not be allowed to rise to prominence in the Imperial Court again. You must prevent her from achieving any public success, and thwart her private schemes as well.

THE DARKEST TIMELINE

If the GM feels that a more forceful hook is needed to bring together a disparate party, or if a darker tone for the adventure is desired, the GM might substitute Kakita Ryoku with Bayushi Kachiko. In this version of the Winter Court, either the PCs must fulfill a favor their lord owes to Kachiko, or they or their lord are being blackmailed by Kachiko. If the PCs are all Scorpion, then they can be pursuing their normal duty. Kachiko still wants to discover how and why the Mantis were invited, but armed with that knowledge, she asks the PCs to support Lady Magami against Doji Chiyoe. Surely a backwater girl will be easier to manipulate than someone who has benefited from Kakita Ryoku's tutelage—and Ryoku's connections. She also wants Magami to know the Scorpion can help her.

THE UNICORN CLAN DELEGATION

The Unicorn seek allies and, more importantly, acceptance of their ways. Unicorn khans are tired of being treated like outsiders, especially when their hordes could easily defeat many of the armies fielded by the other Great Clans. At the same time, the Unicorn Clan has suffered too-hot summers and too-cold winters for many years now, and although great wealth pours into Khanbulak from the west, 20,000 extra koku's worth of grain would help ensure the health of their stable hands and herds. The Unicorn delegation has 20,000 koku's worth of luxuries from the Ivory Kingdoms and beyond available to trade, including wool, calicoes, and saltpeter (used for preserving food on the Sand Road and, less commonly, in alchemical experiments).

Possible individual goals for characters include:

- ✧ You (or one of your close friends) is the illegitimate child of a samurai of another Great Clan, and your lord has granted you leave to attend Winter Court to try to gain your parent's recognition—and forge a renewed alliance with your family. Work with the GM to pick an appropriate NPC to serve as an estranged parent or create a new NPC to add to a Great Clan delegation.
- ✧ A band of criminals has fled into the Seikitsu Mountains to escape justice. Winter is only beginning, and they will inevitably journey to the mountainside villages to restock their supplies. You are asked to secure the Lion Clan's assistance in capturing these fugitives and delivering them to your clan.

INFORMAL DELEGATIONS

If a PC does not belong to one of the aforementioned delegations but has nonetheless been invited to the Winter Court, they might be pursuing one of the following goals:

- ✧ Your sensei was traveling in Crane Clan territory when they went missing. You seek permission to conduct an investigation in those lands, and possibly seek the help of the local magistrate in finding them—or the nemuranai they possessed.
- ✧ You (or one of your comrades) seek to begin or continue your studies at another clan's school. You must prove yourself worthy of the clan's teachings, or put it in your debt, to gain an invitation to train at its dōjō.

EXTRA GM CONTENT

A quick guide to NPCs and a calendar of this adventure can be downloaded for free at www.fantasyflightgames.com/en/Legend-of-the-Five-Rings-Roleplaying-Game-to-enhance-the-play-experience.

FAVORS FROM KAKITA RYOKU

If a PC is invited to work for Kakita Ryoku as part of the adventure, the GM should play to the PC's individual goals. Regardless of her motives, Ryoku should have something the PC wants or have the means to get it for them. The GM should make her a little more manipulative if a Mantis is part of the party: she doesn't have to reveal her true plans, for example, and she could emphasize that she is only trying to "help" the Mantis enjoy their stay more.

DAY TO DAY

Winter's Embrace is designed to be played over a two-week period in the Winter Court, but GMs should feel free to remove, add, or merge days and events when appropriate to keep a good flow for their group.

HAPPENINGS AT COURT

Each Happenings at Court sidebar offers optional rumors and hooks for expanding the adventure. GMs should feel free to use as many or as few of these as they see fit in order to add flavor to the Winter Court.

During the evening meal, Miya Satoshi—the Imperial Herald—announces that Asahina Takako's auguries say that in four days, the wind will be fairest, the pond gentlest, and the stars most auspicious for holding their waterside poetry competition. He invites all aspiring poets to enter into the competition and to pray to Lady Doji for eloquence.

RUMORS SWIRLING

"Lady Kakita Ryoku invited [name of guest-of-honor PC] to the floating teahouse. Do you know of what they spoke?"

"They say Lord Otomo Sorai is meeting with various matchmakers on behalf of the crown prince."

"In the castle town, a group of pirates have been arrested and paraded around for all the people to judge their crimes! The pirates will face Emma-O's judgment next."

Act I: Storms Roll Ashore

In the first act of the adventure, the PCs are tasked with finding out who invited the Mantis to the Emperor's Court at Kyūden Doji. However, very few people know how the invitation got sent, and those who do want to keep the truth hidden. If the PCs fail, they will lose their opportunity to raise their standing with Kakita Ryoku and the Crane Clan. As the PCs begin to navigate the political currents of the Winter Court, they find themselves swept into an even greater intrigue than the controversial invitation of the Mantis Clan.

DAY 1: A TEA CEREMONY
FIT FOR AN EMPRESS

The PCs have received a formal invitation to a midday tea ceremony with the venerable writer and legendary courtier Kakita Ryoku. Such an invitation is an honor in and of itself, and the PCs are awarded 1 glory for being recognized by a courtier of such high station.

At the start of the adventure, each PC receives a letter that bears Kakita Ryoku's personal chop at the bottom, identifying her as its sender (see **Kakita Ryoku's Letter** sidebar). If desired, the GM can modify the first paragraph to suit the PC recipient. The GM may wish to reference their previous adventures and current goals, as well as any fame advantages or infamy disadvantages. After they have read the letter, the players each have a chance to narrate what their character does to prepare, but this should not be treated as a full-blown downtime activity.

TEAHOUSE DECOR

Connoisseurs of culture and artistry may recognize and remark upon the significance of the decorations in the teahouse. A PC who does so gains a momentum point toward the Be a Model Guest objective (see page 9).

Characters who scrutinize the painting may attempt a **TN 3 Culture check** to determine that it depicts Lost Daughter Inlet, the island where the first Empress was hidden by her father. A **TN 2 Culture check** reveals that the asters in the alcove represent remembrance in the language of flowers. Looking closer at a pottery bowl requires a **TN 1 Aesthetics check** to recognize the style as *kintsugi*. The cracks in the bowl have been repaired with gold, which highlights the beauty in what would otherwise be imperfections.

MORE THAN A SIMPLE BOWL OF TEA

The wording of the letter indicates that this is one of the most formal types of tea gatherings that can be arranged, which are typically reserved for members of the *kuge*

KAKITA RYOKU'S LETTER

Fallen leaves blanket the ground. The sea breeze brings the chill of winter, and the nights grow long. Despite the cold, this season is a gift, as is the chance to forge new friendships.

I wish to serve you a simple bowl of tea in an intimate gathering in the tradition of Lady Doji. I am greatly looking forward to receiving you at the floating teahouse on the fifteenth day of the Month of Togashi, at the Hour of the Horse.

Please refer to the enclosed map to locate this humble teahouse. My apprentice, Doji Chiyoe, will receive you in the gardens.

class. The ceremony is a grueling, three-hour ritual of manners, but if done correctly, it can also lead the participants to realize deep insights about themselves. It also presents an opportunity for the PCs to try to learn more about Ryoku through *shūji* and the expenditure of ✨.

At the end of this encounter, Ryoku gives the PCs the tasks of figuring out why and how the Mantis Clan was invited to the Winter Court and of acquiring the physical invitation. The PCs have three primary avenues of investigation to pursue: 1) they may try to befriend or blackmail the Mantis Clan delegation to get them to reveal what happened; 2) they may try to gain more insights from their Crane Clan hosts to learn how the Crane accommodated the Mantis after finding out that it had been invited; or 3) they may ask the Imperial Herald or another Imperial bureaucrat why the Mantis were invited. This last option is the most direct, but it is also the most difficult because of the high status of those in the Imperial bureaucracy.

ARRIVING AT THE
FLOATING TEAHOUSE

As punctuality is of the utmost importance for these sorts of ceremonies, the PCs must forfeit 6 honor to arrive late. If a PC forsakes personal pursuits to attend the ceremony, they are awarded 3 honor for their dutifulness. Read or paraphrase the following aloud:

At a distance, the teahouse seems to be floating on a small pond. If you did not know better, you could have mistaken the gentle snowbanks for the clouds of Heaven itself. A worn, wooden bridge arches between the shore and the foyer. A gentle breeze blows, bringing with it the crisp, pure scent of frost.

Across the gardens, you catch a glimpse of an ornate palanquin, and a figure in a many-layered kimono

steps forth. It is the Lady of Winter herself, the poet and storyteller Kakita Ryoku—your host.

The *chaji* (formal tea ceremony) shares some similarities with the *chakai* (informal tea ceremony), but the *chaji* is three hours long and includes a full meal. Before the ritual begins, the PCs are escorted to the teahouse by a freshly minted courtier named Doji Chiyoe. Characters hailing from the Crane Clan recognize her as Doji Hotaru's second cousin—and because of the tragedy of Doji Satsume's death, Chiyoe is second in line to becoming clan champion after Doji Kuwanan. If the GM has set this Winter Court in a different time period and Doji Satsume is still alive, Chiyoe is instead third in line after Doji Hotaru and Doji Kuwanan.

Once she has led them across the bridge, Chiyoe assists them by offering water to cleanse their mouths and hands—and also their souls—much in the same way purification is performed at shrines. She bows and invites the PCs to enter the teahouse before taking her leave. Once the PCs are all inside, the intrigue can begin (see **Running the Tea Ceremony** below). Read or paraphrase the following aloud:

The fire in the sunken hearth in the center of the teahouse is a welcome sight. Hanging in the alcove to your right is a delicate scroll depicting a misty island and a solitary fisherman's boat. In the same alcove, an *ikebana* display featuring aster flowers is a gentle reminder of spring. As you kneel in your prescribed place, the faint sparkling of gold catches your eye—the ceramics set beside the rest of the tea set have faint lines of gold tracing through them.

RUNNING THE TEA CEREMONY

This scene can be handled as an intrigue that runs for three rounds (or four, if there are three or fewer PCs), with the PCs who are actively participating selecting a social objective they wish to complete. Depending on the characters' previous adventures or current goals, they might choose one of the social objectives detailed in **Sample Social Objectives**, on pages 254 through 256 of the core rulebook. They may also choose the Be a Model Guest social objective, which is unique to this scene.

BE A MODEL GUEST

Kakita Ryoku is one of the most highly regarded courtiers in the service of the Crane Clan. Should the PCs embarrass themselves in front of her, Ryoku does not remark upon the misstep. A player who chooses this objective must state their target at the beginning of the encounter. For example, a PC may wish to ensure that a PC other than themselves makes a good impression.

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO COMPLETE?

A character can maintain their composure and avoid disgrace by accumulating 3 momentum points. Additionally, the PC must not become Compromised at any point during the scene. Note that for the purposes of this conflict, Ryoku's vigilance should be treated as 3. She is not actively working against the PCs, and as host, she wants the ceremony to proceed without incident.

WHAT IS ACHIEVED BY COMPLETING IT?

At the end of any round in which a character accumulates 3 or more momentum points, they are considered to have succeeded at their objective. If the intrigue is still running, they may try to complete this social objective another time for a different target.

Should they succeed, the PC is awarded 1 glory for exemplifying the Bushidō tenet of Courtesy in front of a powerful figure. They also gain the Ally [Kakita Ryoku] distinction.

If the character fails at two consecutive checks to achieve this objective, they commit a faux pas during the ceremony, such as handling one of the tea bowls improperly or forgetting the ceremonial words to repeat, and this objective cannot be completed in this scene.

THE EFFECTS OF THE FORMAL TEA CEREMONY

Lady Kakita Ryoku automatically succeeds at the Formal Tea Ceremony ritual (the details of the ceremony are described on page 116 of *Courts of Stone*, though this information is not required for this adventure). As participants in the tea ceremony, the PCs each remove 6 strife and are each granted 1 Void point.



HAPPENINGS AT COURT

Lady Shike makes a surprise appearance after the evening meal is cleared away, dancing a portion of The Lady of Mount Shigama. She vanishes like a yuki-onna snow spirit in a blizzard at the performance's conclusion.

RUMORS SWIRLING

"It is said that there is another member of the Mantis Clan delegation who has not been formally introduced to the rest of the court, and that they will make their debut as part of the poetry competition in two days' time!"

"Do you think Susano-o no Izen will receive an invitation to the Archer's Wager after his performance at the archery demonstration?"

"Last night, when Koryusai was in his cups, he responded with indignation when someone jokingly suggested bribing him or another Imperial official. Apparently, he can't take a joke!"

In addition to the Intrigue actions listed on page 257 of the core rulebook, the PCs have two other intrigue actions available to them during this intrigue:

FOLLOW PROPER PROTOCOL

Description: You participate in the ceremony as custom dictates. This includes reciting the expected lines, handling the bowls properly, and displaying proper deference to the host and other PCs according to status.

Activation: As a Scheme action, you may make a **TN 3 Culture (Earth 2, Air 4)** or **TN 2 Performance (Water 1, Fire 3)** check to properly participate in the proceedings.

Effects: If you succeed, you add one momentum point toward an appropriate social objective, plus one additional momentum point for every two bonus successes. Further, any narrative ramifications of your check resolve.

Consider the Inner Self

Description: You focus less on the protocol of the ceremony than the intent behind it: a conscious consideration of the five elements and one's place in this world.

Activation: As a Scheme action, you may make a **TN 3 Theology (Void 2, Air 4)** or **TN 2 Meditation (Void 1, Fire 3)** check to reflect on the symbolism inherent in the ceremony.

Effects: If you succeed, you add one momentum point toward an appropriate social objective, plus one additional momentum point for every two bonus successes, but only if you declared yourself as the target for the Be a Model Guest social objective. Further, you may also ignore the effects of any one disadvantage you possess for the remainder of the scene.

SOME MATTER CONCERNING TEA

The PCs sit in a prescribed order based on status, with the guest of honor situated opposite the host, and remaining guests seated to the left of the guest of honor. The guest of honor (the PC with the highest status, or the PC with the highest glory if two or more PCs are tied for status) is expected to lead the guests' appreciation of the ceremony by modeling the proper etiquette and remarking upon the quality and seasonal details of the tea and decor. If the ceremony is being run as an intrigue, the guest of honor can take the Follow Proper Protocol Scheme action to represent their participation in and knowledge of the ceremony, or they can attempt a **TN 3 Performance check**.

In the first round, the meal is served, and then the charcoal is changed for the first time. After everyone has had a chance to eat, light sweets are served for dessert as part of the second round, which presents a chance for them to converse with Ryoku. Doji Chiyoe then returns to the teahouse to invite the PCs to explore the surrounding

garden for a time, which also gives them a chance to converse with Chiyoe or confer with each other out of Ryoku's earshot. Chiyoe is particularly eager to speak to any monks or devout-seeming PCs. Finally, a bell is rung to signify the PCs are to return to the teahouse for the third round of the intrigue. A PC can forfeit 3 honor to invite Chiyoe back with them to participate as a guest.

Once they have retaken their seats, Ryoku makes the thick green tea in front of the PCs in a series of elaborate, meticulous steps, each gesture or position passed down to her from tea masters through the ages. Ryoku serves the tea to the PCs, who partake of the same bowl one after another. After the tea has been finished, it is time to change the charcoal beneath the teakettle once again. Now, a thin green tea is served. After the utensils are cleaned and put away, the host leads the guests out of the teahouse in the order they arrived, and final bows and seasonal greetings are exchanged.

Although much of the ceremony is conducted silently and without interruption by servants or other guests, there are opportunities for conversation during the meal, and some of Ryoku's possible responses are listed below. If the PCs do not ask, Lady Ryoku begins the conversation in the first round by supplying her answer to "Why have you gathered us here?"

Why have you gathered us here?

Read or paraphrase the following aloud, adding any flavorful moments from the PCs' backstories or accomplishments of which Ryoku may be aware. If one of the PCs belongs to the Mantis, she directs some of her remarks concerning the clan to them.

"Word of your accomplishments precedes you. Though I would not seek to impose upon you, my clan and I would be greatly indebted to you if you could help me with a simple matter."

"It is not often that we have the pleasure of hosting our southeast neighbors, the Mantis Clan. I wish to ensure that Lord Yoritomo and his retinue feel most welcome and at ease during their stay here—as their attendance was not wholly expected."

"It would please me greatly to understand their wants and needs while they spend time as our honored guests. Would you be able to see to that for me, honorable samurai?"

The PCs should get the sense that Kakita Ryoku is politely suggesting that the Mantis were not initially invited. Moreover, she desires to know the Mantis' motivation—what do they aim to do here at the Winter Court? Even if a PC is a part of the Mantis Clan delegation, they do not know of Yoritomo's gambit concerning Lady Magami.

Excepting any PC whose player has made it clear that their PC's goals are a closely guarded secret, Ryoku will politely hint at the PCs' goals and suggest she would be able to assist them.

Where do you suggest we begin looking?

"Lord Yoritomo, leader of the Mantis Clan, is unlikely to reveal his hand so lightly, but you might gain the trust of his loyal captain, Izen of the Susano-o. Otherwise, you might speak with Doji Hatsuina, who has been fastidiously assisting the seneschal in securing lodging for all of our guests. If you can gain an audience with the Imperial Herald, Miya Satoshi, you could discuss the matter with him. He is presiding over the poetry competition in the next few days and may be in a position to accept assistance.

"If you could convince the Mantis to produce the invitation—that would lend us great insight into this matter."

Although Kakita Ryoku does not say so aloud, the PCs realize there must be reasons why she doesn't ask these individuals herself. She is also hinting, subtly, that she would like them to bring the invitation to her to review. Ryoku seems to suspect its authenticity.

What do you know about the others in attendance?

Kakita Ryoku and her protégé, Doji Chiyoe, are well acquainted with the samurai composing the delegations of the Great Clans. If the GM wishes, these rumors can instead arise while the PCs are gathering information on their fellow guests during the tea ceremony.

- ❁ "Otomo Koryusai once had it all. Now, he throws himself into his work in the Imperial bureaucracy under Miya Satoshi, lest he have time to remember his loss."
- ❁ "Asahina Takako is young but shows great promise. As the daughter of the Asahina daimyō, she has been honored with the task of assisting Imperial Herald Miya Satoshi as head priest overseeing the upcoming poetry competition."
- ❁ "Doji Hatsuina has served as the palace seneschal's right hand, and she personally oversaw the lodging arrangements for our guests."
- ❁ "Izen of the Susano-o belongs with the rest of the Mantis Fleet, far from our shores. I pray he does not mortify himself or his people before this court is adjourned."

- ❁ "Ikoma Rumiko is well suited to the garish stage of Kabuki. Soon we shall all see her acting skills for ourselves in the upcoming performance of *The Tale of the Fisherman's Daughter*."

DAY 2: THE GAME OF LETTERS

Early in the morning, an anonymous letter arrives for one of the PCs. The GM may choose between the two sample letters (see page 12) or craft their own. This letter represents the first overtures of flirtation or friendship, and it comes with an unwritten invitation to respond as part of the Game of Letters (see the **Optional Rule: Letters and Techniques** sidebar on the right and the **A Political Game** sidebar found on page 11). Since the letter can be sent by any NPC, it is up to the GM to determine which character would be most appropriate—or most dramatic—for engaging the PC. For more information on the motivations of the NPCs, as well as on some of the ways PCs can identify one NPC as the letter writer, see **Appendix A: Non-Player Characters**, on page 24 through page 31.

In response, a player may choose to draft a letter of their own (which means they can add ❁ ❁ to the results of their check) or to summarize the contents of their reply. Replying requires a **TN 1 Composition or Games check**, and the player may spend ❁ on shūji or invocations if desired (see **Optional Rule: Letters and Techniques** on the right). Letter writing requires a calligraphy set and 1 *bu*'s worth of *washi* paper. If a letter is not replied to, the game is considered over, and the last person to have sent a letter "wins." The GM may choose to summarize letter contents instead of writing out a full letter for subsequent replies.

The presumption of anonymity in the game is a conceit: the letters are never sealed, meaning that their contents are known by all the servants who have passed them along and, by extension, by their masters (although they only know the identity of the recipient—not the sender, as the recipient often must leave their responses in locations where the sender might find them). When a letter is sent as part of the Game of Letters, all players have a chance to read it, and all NPCs are aware of its contents as well. To determine the identity of the sender, PCs can make **Aesthetics checks** to gain clues via the quality of the ink, paper, attachments, and fragrances; **Composition checks** to gain clues via turns of phrase or handwriting; or **Culture checks** to gain clues based on the subject matter referenced. Generally, these should be TN 1 checks, with higher numbers of bonus successes yielding more specific clues. Although it would be gauche to directly confront a suspected letter writer, PCs can attempt to question NPCs more indirectly.

OPTIONAL RULE: LETTERS AND TECHNIQUES

Words exchanged between individuals on paper have as much weight as the words spoken to each other aloud. At the GM's discretion, the letters exchanged between the PCs and the NPCs may be a vehicle for using any shūji technique. Exchanging letters may be instrumental in determining the identity of a PC's secret admirer or potential ally, and in swaying them to the PC's side.

Shugenja may also inscribe invocations into their letters using the rules for wards on pages 189 and 190 of the core rulebook.

HAPPENINGS AT COURT

Attached to the bathhouse is a greenhouse that features countless flowers in bloom.

There, a Kakita artisan leads a lecture and workshop on ikebana. Servants are available to deliver the final arrangements as gifts. At the end, the artisan unveils the masterpiece ikebana arrangement they've been working on since the previous Winter Court.

A gathering of one hundred weird tales (hyakumonogatari kaidankai) is held as night falls. One hundred candles are lit in a room, and as each storyteller finishes their ghost story, one candle is extinguished, until the room is consumed by darkness.

RUMORS SWIRLING

"The pirates being held in the castle town were freed before their execution was carried out. How did they escape? Surely they must have had some help."

"I heard that poor Doji Chiyoe shut herself in her quarters and wouldn't receive anyone all day after she witnessed a hare snatched up by a hawk right in front of her!"

"Rumiko apparently almost made Doji Hatsuina faint in surprise! Hatsuina hadn't realized Rumiko was behind her when she turned around. The poor thing."

"Have you noticed that Otomo Koryusai and Miya Satoshi have been avoiding each other? I wonder if there's some disagreement within the bureaucracy."

After the player has had a chance to read the letter and take downtime actions (see page 248 of the core rulebook for examples) as available, the GM should run the scene described in the letter as an afternoon or evening scene (see **The Cliffside Archery Demonstration** on page 12 for the first letter or **The Snow Lantern Celebration** on page 13 for the second). If the GM is running the afternoon scene (the archery demonstration), the PCs have one downtime activity to use beforehand. If the GM is running the evening scene (the lantern celebration), the PCs have time to undertake two different downtime activities if they would like. The downtime activity may be run as a narrative scene if desired. Note that it doesn't matter whether the archery demonstration or lantern celebration scene is run first. The unused scene can be used later in the adventure during what would otherwise be downtime or a lull in the action, with the second letter arriving for a different PC.

THE FIRST LETTER: CLIFFSIDE WARNING

Drawn from a quiver
Sent to strike the quarry true
Messengers of peace
Hide dreadful tidings of war
Tempests brew dark overhead

THE SECOND LETTER: A SUDDEN SQUALL

Suddenly we find
This world cast in ghostly white
Cold like the graveyard
As night falls, the lanterns glow
Alighting the way forward

THE CLIFFSIDE ARCHERY DEMONSTRATION

This scenario appeals to martially inclined characters, who may otherwise find themselves restless during the early, intrigue-heavy portion of the adventure. As merely a demonstration of the Asahina archers' skills, it attracts fewer attendees than the poetry competition. However, critiques on the archers' form and technique, as well as of the craftsmanship of their bows and arrows themselves, allow martial PCs to shine in conversation. If the GM wants to run the spectator conversation as an intrigue, PCs may make a **TN 2 Martial Arts [Ranged] check** using one of the approaches for the Scholar skill group (see **The Art of Investigation** on page 170 of the core rulebook) to yield momentum points (1 per success, plus 1 per two bonus successes) to achieve the Appeal to a Person or Group social objective. Otherwise, any conversations can be run as part of a narrative scene, without conflicts, instead.

The Asahina archers are arranged atop the bluffs, overlooking the Sea of the Sun Goddess, whose ice-cold



A POLITICAL GAME

The Game of Letters is a traditional Winter Court "game" involving the exchange of correspondence. Courtiers send poems to one another to flaunt their poetic skill and communicate hidden messages. Usually, the letters are thirty-one syllables long, using a 5-7-5-7-7 pattern, but other poetic forms may also be featured. The letters are used to threaten, entice, tease, and entrap other distinguished guests of the court. Importantly, none of the letters are sealed, and half of the game comes from the fact that contents of the letters are relayed from the couriers to their masters. The identity of the sender remains hidden, but the recipient is known to all the court. This is achieved by the sender leaving the letter in a public space, or having a servant do so. If the recipient chooses to respond, they must leave their letter in the open.

By virtue of the letter being public knowledge, the letter writer will hear about or read the letter themselves eventually. This continues the game until the sender is discovered or one of the participants concedes. Beyond the contents of the letter, the weight and quality of the paper, the color and scent of the ink, and the nature of any attachments all combine to send an indirect message to the recipient. Game masters should flavor each letter to correspond with the NPC they have chosen as the author. Failing to respond to a letter is tantamount to forfeiting the game, as it concedes the other letter-writer's superior wit and writing skills.

waves crash against the cliffs. The masts of a trio of vessels crewed by Daidoji sailors are topped by *nobori* banners of different colors: one blue, another cyan, and a third white. These are the archers' three targets, which are set at an impressive 100, 150, and 200 yards away. The ocean breeze is steady and relatively tranquil for the air kami, and the banners bob up and down with the waves.

The archers must hit each of the flags in turn, starting with the blue, proceeding to the cyan, and ending with the white banner. The arrows are tipped with soft pouches of different-colored powdered inks that mark the landing spot before the shaft pierces the cloth and is lost into the depths below.

The scene features the following NPCs, but the GM should feel free to add characters as desired, especially to ensure that the letter sender makes a cameo appearance. For easy reference, see **A Quick Guide to the Main Actors** on page 5.

❁ **Otomo Koryusai** is an Imperial bureaucrat who works in the office of Imperial Herald **Miya Satoshi** and has access to the Herald as part of his duties. He appears forlorn and melancholy, as though he were looking out to the horizon instead of at the targets. Doji Hatsuhina is conspicuously absent from the audience.

❁ As the demonstration nears its end, **Susano-o no Izen** stands up and approaches the archers, startling the entire audience in the process. A hush washes over the gathering as the wind picks up. Izen announces that he shall demonstrate the skill of the Mantis Clan. Not wanting to cause any more of a scene, the Asahina archers gladly welcome him to try his hand at the challenge. A PC who successfully discerns his desire learns that he is trying to prove that his clan is on the same level as the Crane in terms of skill. Izen succeeds by default, though the GM may choose to roll for him if they desire.

After Izen has taken his shots, to help mitigate potential embarrassment for Izen, the Asahina archers extend their invitation to anyone else who would like to test the draw and craftsmanship of their bows. Any participating characters may stake 3 glory on succeeding at successive **TN 3, TN 4, and TN 5 Martial Arts [Ranged] checks** to hit the three flags. Anyone who succeeds at all three earns the attention and admiration of Susano-o no Izen and gains 2 glory.

What Susano-o no Izen Knows

Susano-o no Izen (or another highly placed Mantis samurai NPC) is aware the Mantis received their invitation relatively late, but given the variability of shipping times across the Sea of the Sun Goddess, such a delay was not wholly unexpected. It was delivered by Captain Kuzo aboard the *Hurricane*. The ship was ferrying a troupe

of Ikoma family Kabuki actors to Gotei City for a performance. In fact, the troupe included Ikoma Rumiko, who is also attending the Winter Court. Izen doesn't conceal the fact that the Mantis were surprised but extremely pleased to receive an invitation, although he does not share information about Lady Magami's presence or her purpose at the court until he trusts the PCs.

What Otomo Koryusai Knows

Otomo Koryusai maintains the official line of the bureaucracy if questioned by the PCs: that the Mantis were always on the guest list for this Winter Court, and of course the Emperor is pleased to have his vassals in attendance. However, if the PCs have already spoken with Doji Hatsuhina, they know this is not the case. If Koryusai is confronted with Hatsuhina's conflicting testimony, or if the PCs are able to use some other leverage on him—such as the prospect of repairing his relationship with Hatsuhina, or Koryusai's own feelings for a PC who has been pursuing him romantically—he corroborates her story.

Koryusai admits he was instructed to deliver the news to Hatsuhina personally that a delegation from the Mantis Clan were being added to the list of guests. He does not want to reveal who gave him this instruction, saying only that it was his duty. In truth, Miya Satoshi himself ordered Koryusai to relay the news to the Crane. Koryusai won't admit, unless blackmailed or compelled, that a secretive official tried to bribe him to invite the Mantis Clan, but he refused to entertain the offer.

THE SNOW LANTERN CELEBRATION

The letter the PC received references the previous night's storm, which blanketed the Fantastic Gardens of the Crane in drifts of snow. These are taken to be a blessing of Miyuki, a minor Fortune of snow. The Asahina Artificers



and Kakita Artisans have spent the day honoring her by transforming her snow and ice into works of art.

The Fantastic Gardens have become a lantern-lit labyrinth. Lovers, friends, and acquaintances may walk through the labyrinth and marvel at ice sculptures of bonsai trees, *yukitōrō* lanterns made of snow, and even sculptures of miniature castles and heroes of legend. The works of art seem to glow in the moonlight.

Because of the twisting and turning paths, the PCs can “run into” any NPC the GM desires. For additional drama, the GM can have a PC literally bump into an NPC (how embarrassing!). The following NPCs are featured in this scene, but the GM should feel free to add characters as desired, especially to ensure that the letter sender makes an appearance.

- ❖ **Doji Hatsuhina** makes the rounds among her guests, playing the gracious host and providing winter coats and shoes for any who do not have winter attire. She is slightly offended by any suggestion that the PCs want to help her ensure the comfort of the guests because it implies she cannot do her job herself, although a **TN 2 Courtesy (Air) check** let a PC avoid causing irritation or can salvage the conversation.
- ❖ The PCs might congratulate **Asahina Takako** on her, her family members', and the Kakita's work on the ice sculptures. One or more PCs may offer to assist her with her work during the poetry competition, which she will accept after demurring twice. She requests that they meet with her at dawn on the competition day in the small shrine to Lady Doji in the Fantastic Gardens.
- ❖ **Ikoma Rumiko** is up to her usual antics and is playfully mocking some of the snow figures. Mostly, this is in good fun, and she elicits sincere laughter from her audience. If any of the PCs look upon her with derision (Doji Hatsuhina certainly does), she puts on a show of pretending to be them instead. If any of the PCs join her in her role as jester, they earn some of her goodwill at the expense of some of their dignity (but they must forfeit 3 honor to ignore the precepts of self-control).

If the group is comfortable making use of the bathhouse location, the PCs might retire to the bathhouse to warm up after a cold winter's walk, where they can encounter more of the same or other NPCs to converse with, at the GM's discretion.

What Doji Hatsuhina Knows

Lady Hatsuhina is very wary of giving the PCs information, since what they are asking about is the privileged knowledge of the Crane. If the PCs can convince her they

are serving Kakita Ryoku, she does not hesitate in telling them everything they need to know. Lady Hatsuhina was informed by the Imperial Herald's office of the Mantis Clan's “acceptance” of an invitation to the Winter Court roughly one month later than the rest of the guests. Otomo Koryusai personally informed her of the addition. As a result, there was some last-minute wrangling to refit a guesthouse for the use of the Mantis during their stay. As the Crane like to decorate each guesthouse in honor of the guests staying there, she grudgingly admits that her clan incurred a great expense in quickly procuring some furniture and decorations from the Islands of Spice and Silk.

What Ikoma Rumiko Knows

Ikoma Ujiaki, the Lion Clan's ambassador to the Imperial Capital, charged the spies of the Ikoma family with arranging for the Mantis to be invited. After bribery and negotiating with the Imperial bureaucracy failed, Rumiko's master ordered her to forge an invitation and deliver it through an acting troupe traveling to the Islands of Spice and Silk aboard the *Hurricane*. Rumiko doesn't know why the Mantis needed to be invited, but she suspects that the Lion saw an opportunity to pit the Crane and Mantis against one another. In order to uncover this knowledge, the PCs will have to get Rumiko drunk, blackmail her in a way that threatens the honor of the Lion, or enlist the aid of the kami to compel her to speak.

DAYS 3–4: POETRY CRAMMING

The PCs each have three downtime activities per day (for a total of six) available to pursue the leads they have so far, to prepare for the upcoming poetry competition, or pursue their own desires. Examples of downtime activities can be found in **Chapter 3: Skills** and **Downtime Scenes** section of **Chapter 6: Scenes and Conflicts** in the core rulebook. The major NPCs can be found in their default locations as detailed in **Appendix A: Non-Player Characters** on page 24 through page 31. The PCs may exchange downtime activities for narrative scenes on a one-for-one basis.

DAY 5: SAKE AND VERSE IN SNOWFALL

The morning of the poetry competition is bright and crisp, and not too cold, with a fresh dusting of snowfall. Any PCs who volunteered to assist Takako join her at the shrine to Lady Doji at dawn (see **Preparations and Performances** on page 15). Otherwise, the PCs do not need to arrive at the Fantastic Gardens until later that morning, giving them time to perform one downtime activity before the competition begins in **The Contest** on page 15.

PCs who are participating in the Game of Letters each receive a letter early in the morning on Day 5, inviting them to meet with the letter writer at the competition to spectate together. If a PC accepts, they can attempt to approach the NPC they believe is corresponding with them. If the PC does not approach any NPCs, or guesses the wrong NPC and is rebuffed, the letter writer eventually approaches them. If the PC ends up missing the rendezvous, the letter writer sends them a disappointed letter, which awaits them in their quarters!

PREPARATIONS AND PERFORMANCES

PCs who offered to help Takako prepare may assist with the mundane aspects of the ceremony, including cleaning and decorating the pavilion in the Fantastic Gardens, by making a **TN 2 Labor check (Earth 1, Fire 3)**. The competition begins with an opening prayer and sacred dance performed by Asahina Takako to awaken and thank the lake spirit. Player characters who are willing to dance alongside her in honor of the lake spirit may attempt a **TN 3 Performance check (Water 2, Fire 4)**. Shugenja PCs may spend 2 on the Performance check to receive the lake spirit's blessing for their earnestness even if they did not succeed. The lake spirit's blessing allows them to importune one Water invocation without making an offering as long as they remain on the grounds of Kyūden Doji, where the lake spirit holds power. (See page 189 in the core rulebook for information about importuning invocations.) If the PCs succeed at either check, they are granted an audience with Asahina Takako and Miya Satoshi after the competition, along with the winners and runners-up. See **The After Party** on page 17.

THE CONTEST

After the prayer and dance, each of the contestants is led to a point on the lakeside where a blanket, calligraphy set, and umbrella awaits them. They have an hour to compose their poem, during which time the kami of the lake float cups of sake to them to provide them with symbolic inspiration. See the **Running the Competition** on page 15 for more information about adjudicating the contest.

Surprising everyone is the appearance of the Mantis Clan guest who has only been talked about up until now. This is Lady Magami, Yoritomo's niece, whose hand is about to be offered—in secret—to the crown prince. Her appearance at the Winter Court is her debut into society. She wears a colorful multi-layered kimono in the distinctive style of the Islands of Spice and Silk, and she appears to all a vision of tropical summer set in stark contrast to the muted tones of the wintry garden.

RUNNING THE COMPETITION

The GM may wish to run the competition as an intrigue, with each of the PCs who are actively engaging with others selecting a social objective they wish to complete. Depending on a character's goals or previous adventures, they might choose one of the social objectives detailed in **Sample Social Objectives**, on pages 254 through 256 of the core rulebook. If they are participating in the

BEST DRESSED

The poetry is only one element of the competition—the spectators compete against each other to see who is best dressed. The PCs may participate by engaging in a competitive **TN 1 Design check**. The character with the highest bonus successes is awarded 1 glory for standing out among their peers and reflecting well upon their lord. The character with the highest number of 1 attracts the attention of Doji Hatsuina, who notices the unique and distinctive elements of their outfit.



ABOUT COMPETITORS

Game masters can include or exclude Otomo Koryusai or Doji Hatsuina or add other NPCs as is appropriate for their group's interests.

However, Ikoma Rumiko, Doji Chiyoe, and Lady Magami should be present. This is Lady Magami's debut, after all.

ORIGINAL COMPOSITIONS

If a player specifies what the aspect of the poem is or even composes an original poem, the GM may award them 1 or more momentum points automatically for effort, even if they failed the check.

competition, they also have the option of pursuing the **Win the Poetry Competition** objective, detailed below. The intrigue lasts five rounds.

Win the Poetry Competition

Poetry is one of the most highly regarded arts in the Empire. The ability to compose a beautiful poem is essential for courtiers looking to subtly send a political message or court a romantic interest. Lady Doji—founder of the Crane Clan—is renowned as one of the Empire's greatest poets, and so it follows that the Crane would highlight poetry at a Winter Court they are hosting.

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO COMPLETE?

At the end of the fifth round, each of the contestants will have accumulated a number of momentum points. The contestant with the highest total number of momentum points is the winner, with the second- and third-highest scorers being considered runners-up. If there are ties, the character with the highest status wins, with glory being used as the next tiebreaker if necessary. In Rokugan, the caliber and reputation of the person writing the poem is as important as the quality of the poem itself.

WHAT IS ACHIEVED BY COMPLETING IT?

A PC who manages to win the poetry competition receives 10 glory, second place receives 5 glory, and third place receives 2 glory. The winner and any runners-up are also invited to the after party. Finally, all of the contestants have created a poem with a rarity equal to the number of momentum points they scored, along with any other qualities they imbued in it using ✨ (see **Other Skill Examples of ✨** on page 329 of the core rulebook).

In addition to the Intrigue Actions listed on page 257 of the core rulebook, the PCs have one other action available to them during this intrigue: Compose a Poem.

Compose a Poem

Description: To create a truly deep and meaningful poem, the creator must use each of the elements in harmony. A

great poet requires an understanding of seasonal words, expansive knowledge of other poems to allude to, creativity to find new descriptive word combinations, subtlety to weave together multiple layers of meaning, and sensitivity to craft a poem whose meaning stirs the hearts of listeners and reveals a deeper truth about the universe.

Activation: As a Scheme action, you may make a **TN 2 Composition check** to compose a part of a poem. Each aspect of the poem has a particular element and approach, as follows:

- ✨ Nature Metaphor (Earth, Recall [Scholar Approach])
- ✨ Pleasing Meter (Water, Charm [Social Approach])
- ✨ Novel Ideas (Fire, Invent [Artisan Approach])
- ✨ Layered Meanings (Air, Refine [Artisan Approach])
- ✨ Deep Resonance (Void, Attune [Artisan Approach])

You may choose an approach you have already succeeded at, but the effects of doing so are not cumulative (see below).

Effects: If you succeed, record your score for the aspect of the poem you were working on, which is one momentum point, plus one for every two bonus successes beyond the first. If you have already scored for that aspect of the poem, you must choose which of the two scores you want to keep (the scores are not cumulative).

SCORING THE CONTEST

The following chart shows various NPCs' momentum points for each aspect of the poem. At the end of the fifth round, compare these to the PCs' total results (the sum of their scores for the aspects of the poem they completed).

If status and glory values are needed to compare the PCs' performance against Doji Chiyoe's and Lady Magami's, Chiyoe's are status 55 and glory 49, and Magami's are status 65 and glory 44.

The GM may remove characters from the competition or replace them with a PC if desired. NPCs who are removed should remain in the scene as spectators. Additionally, the GM should tabulate results for any additional NPCs they wish to include in the competition. The GM may also raise or lower the scores of

COMPETITORS' SCORES

CHARACTER	RECALL (EARTH)	CHARM (WATER)	INVENT (FIRE)	REFINE (AIR)	ATTUNE (VOID)	TOTAL
Ikoma Rumiko	0	2	1	1	0	4
Doji Chiyoe	1	1	1	2	1	6
Lady Magami	1	3	2	0	1	7
Otomo Koryusai	1	0	2	1	0	4
Doji Hatsuina	1	2	1	2	0	5

NPCs to accommodate their specific campaigns. It is mainly important that Lady Magami and Doji Chiyoe shine, although they need not take first and second place.

THE AFTER PARTY

At the end of the competition, a light picnic is laid out for everyone in attendance. If the PCs distinguished themselves by assisting Takako or placing in the top three in the competition, they are invited to a pavilion set apart for important and high-ranking guests. If the party is split, the PCs who received an invitation have the option to bring along the other PCs as guests.

The after party provides the first real opportunity to question Miya Satoshi regarding the invitation of the Mantis Clan. It also provides an opportunity for the PCs to be introduced to Lady Magami, provided she placed in the competition. Lady Magami brings Yoritomo and Susano-o no Izen with her to the after party as guests.

The Emperor and his royal retinue are being hosted in an even more exclusive pavilion, with such dignitaries as Doji Hotaru, Bayushi Kachiko, Kakita Ryoku, and Ryoku's apprentice, Doji Chiyoe.

What the Imperial Herald Knows

The Imperial Herald, Miya Satoshi, is also serving in the role of Master of Ceremonies for this Winter Court. In that role, he was the person in charge of sending invitations on behalf of the hosts, pursuant to the Emperor's wishes. In truth, he did not send a letter to the Mantis, but he will lie to save face, claiming that of course the Mantis were invited. PCs of a lower status than Satoshi cannot challenge his word without forfeiting 10 honor and glory.

If the PCs attempt to scrutinize him, they can tell he seems to be holding something back. If the PCs manage to trade favors with the Herald or otherwise cajole or threaten him, he finally admits that the Mantis were not originally invited, but they were added to the guest list at a later date after the Imperial bureaucracy received a letter from Yoritomo indicating his acceptance of "an invitation." It does not matter now, he adds, as the Emperor is happy to have them at his court.

DARKEST TIMELINE

If the PCs are working on behalf of Kachiko instead of Ryoku, then they are invited to a luncheon with Kachiko and Otomo Sorai, the Otomo family daimyō. The scene runs the same, except that Kachiko reveals that Ryoku will feel it necessary to secure the betrothal now. Kachiko's main tactic is to delay—Magami needs more time to shine before the Mantis will be able to secure her place, which gives the Scorpion plenty of time to more formally

offer their assistance. In the meantime, the PCs must contrive to put Chiyoe in the role of Mioko in the upcoming play and make her look foolishly unsuitable.

THE TRUE ALLEGIANCES OF MIYA SATOSHI

A different Imperial Herald may not have been so forgiving as to accommodate the Mantis Clan after receiving an unexpected letter of acceptance. Satoshi would have been within his rights to reply and inform them of their error, but he chose not to, risking the Emperor's wrath in the process. The reason stems from Miya Satoshi's membership in for a far-reaching conspiracy group known as the Kolat. As a Kolat member, he has sympathies for those who earn themselves status, as opposed to deriving it from the Heavens. In fact, the Miya are descended from a mortal, not a Kami, and while past Miya daimyō have been glad to serve the Hantei, Satoshi has become disillusioned. He operates under the alias "Master Chrysanthemum" to monitor and subvert the government when he can. However, he realizes that he is playing a long game that requires him to delegitimize the rule of the Hantei—he cannot simply kill them.

DAY 6: DOWNTIME

Once again, the PCs have a day without anything planned for them in advance, leaving them free to pursue their own interests. They can perform three downtime activities, again exchanging downtime activities for narrative scenes on a one-for-one basis. If the PCs make plans to visit the Mantis on this day, the GM should refer to the events detailed in **Day 7: A Not-So-Subtle Warning**. If the second letter has not yet been sent to a PC (see **Day 2: The Game of Letters** on page 11), then it arrives on the morning of the sixth day.

HAPPENINGS IN COURT

Additional celebrations continue long into the evening, and eventually, subtle jabs turn into outright insults between two samurai of rival clans. A duel challenge is issued for the next day.

RUMORS SWIRLING

"I've never heard of Lady Magami before—do you think it's possible she's a trickster spirit who's bewitched Yoritomo and the others?"

"Did you see the way Kakita Ryoku was sneering at Bayushi Kachiko? What if Ryoku comes back as a yūrei to haunt Kachiko for stealing her place as Imperial Advisor?"

"Did you see that [two characters determined by the GM] attended the poetry competition together?"

"Did you hear about the confrontation between [two characters determined by the GM] after the poetry competition?"

HAPPENINGS AT COURT

The previous night's challenge is taken up in a duel at dawn.

A river excursion from the castle town to Prosperous Plains City leaves after breakfast and returns before dusk. Geisha sponsored by the Iwasaki, a vassal family of the Kakita, provide entertainment in the city. The barges will be fully heated and provide a spectacular chance to view the snow-covered countryside.

RUMORS SWIRLING

"I wonder what juicy tidbits the Iwasaki gleaned on behalf of the Kakita family during the excursion to Prosperous Plains City?"

"Lady Magami is supposedly the niece of Lord Yoritomo and is not yet officially betrothed. Are the Mantis looking to strike a match for her while they are here?"

"Do you think that as a former Bayushi, Otomo Koryusai's wife Mikuru is resistant to poison? I wouldn't be surprised if Koryusai tried to get her out of the way to make Hatsuina his wife after all."



DAY 7: A NOT-SO-SUBTLE WARNING

Regardless of whether the PCs were able to successfully find out the truth behind the invitation sent to the Mantis, a mysterious letter arrives for the PCs on the morning of the seventh day. Read or paraphrase the following aloud:

If you value your safety and reputation, abandon your current line of inquiry. We are watching.

By now, the PCs should suspect the authenticity of the invitation and seek to acquire it. They may choose either to try to visit the Mantis Clan's guesthouse outside of the Fantastic Gardens of the Crane or to make a trip to the ship *The Bitter Wind*, docked in the castle town harbor. Whichever location they wish to investigate, the forged invitation should be there to help further the plot and drama. If the PCs split up, it is located on the ship. The PCs may try to surreptitiously get their hands on the invitation (see **Sneaking Their Way to the Invitation** on page 18), or they can simply talk their way into seeing it (see **Talking Their Way to the Invitation** on page 19). If there are any Mantis Clan PCs in the party, the surreptitious route is simple—they have free access to their own quarters.

SNEAKING THEIR WAY TO THE INVITATION

PCs trying to sneak their way into the Mantis delegation's guesthouse find themselves faced with a twofold challenge. The Crane Clan provides security for all the guesthouses in the gardens, on top of the Mantis Clan's servants and guards who are constantly minding the foyer to receive guests or send them away. Slipping past the posted guards requires a successful **TN 4 Skulduggery check**, but the TN can be reduced if other PCs attempt to distract the guards. A PC can evade servants' notice if they use any entryway besides the front door, but moving around the guesthouse without waking any samurai or running into servants requires a **TN 3 Skulduggery check**. Mantis PCs may enter the guesthouse without issue.

If the PCs try to sneak their way onto the ship instead, fortune favors them. The Mantis sailors assigned to guard the ship don't consider trespassers a real threat, and they spend their nights drinking and gambling. They usually assign their most junior deckhand to keep watch over the gangway, and even then, the deckhand is focused on getting their chores done, whether that's cleaning the decks or repairing ropes and netting. Slipping past the deckhand and infiltrating the ship requires a successful **TN 2 Skulduggery check**. From there, evading the notice of the other sailors is a relatively easy matter. Mantis PCs may board the ship without much difficulty, though

bringing their companions may prove difficult as the Mantis are skeptical of strangers on their ships. Any checks required are subject to the GM's discretion.

GETTING CAUGHT

If the PCs are caught by a Mantis samurai or servant, Izen or Yoritomo is summoned and tries to intimidate the PCs into revealing everything they know by threatening to disclose their shameful behavior to the rest of the court. If the PCs are caught by the Crane Clan guards, they are escorted back to their rooms. Kakita Ryoku sends them a letter the next day warning them to be careful.

TALKING THEIR WAY TO THE INVITATION

If the PCs have been fostering friendship or a relationship with Izen or another Mantis Clan character, then they may be able to request that he show them the invitation. There's really no harm in showing the PCs the document, as the Mantis Clan are already in attendance and their schemes are already underway. There is little chance that the Mantis will be being expelled from the court now. At this point Lord Yoritomo might suspect the invitation was forged, but the Emperor welcomed the Minor Clan regardless, and His Imperial Majesty's word is law, so its authenticity is of no concern to the Mantis. See also **What Susano-o no Izen Knows** on page 13, if the PCs haven't had a chance to discuss matters with him yet.

Still, even if they have a good relationship with Izen or another Mantis samurai, he is wary of the PCs' intentions in asking to see the letter. The PCs can earn his trust by telling him the truth: that Kakita Ryoku wants to know how and why the Mantis were invited to the court. In this case, Izen gladly produces the letter. Izen isn't surprised at Ryoku's meddling, but he does worry what it means for his clan's chances at securing the trade deal and the betrothal.

If Izen believes the PCs are sympathetic to him and his clan, and he can gain assurances from them that they will not bring word back to Ryoku, he requests their help. Specifically, he needs help with a Kabuki play depicting the legend of the first Emperor's courtship of Doji Mioko. The play is due to be performed in six days' time. Lady Shike is slated to star in the role of Mioko, but the Mantis desperately want Lady Magami to have that role instead. Requesting Lady Shike remove herself from the position will be extremely difficult, as she is notoriously hard to find and has a lot to gain from the performance. However, Doji Shigeru, the director of the production and casting, may be able to relay a message. It is up to the PCs to investigate ways to replace Shike with Magami—Izen doesn't have much advice to offer.

Savvy PCs might realize that they can agree to Izen's offer even if they still plan on working for Ryoku, as this affords them an unparalleled chance to spy on the

Mantis and discern more about their motives. Sincere PCs might be curious about the Mantis' intentions and genuinely want to help the underdog clan. The choice is up to the players, but either decision comes with heavy consequences for them personally and for their clan.

For extra dramatic effect, Lady Magami could interrupt the meeting and sweetly apologize. She seems genuinely earnest, compliments the PCs on any accomplishments they've been able to achieve during the adventure so far, and wishes them luck in their future endeavors.

SO IT IS WRIT

The handwriting on the forged invitation matches that of the mysterious letter the PCs received earlier in the day. It appears that whoever invited the Mantis Clan is also the entity invested in preventing the PCs from locating the letter. More importantly, there are imperfections in the seal of the Imperial Herald used to notarize the document, which any PCs with ranks in a courtier school can discern. Kakita Ryoku or another high-status character can also identify the falsehood of the seal.

MIDNIGHT RENDEZVOUS

While the PCs are on their way back from their excursion, or during their travels any night after they receive the threatening letter, they are ambushed by a shinobi. Ikoma Rumiko shadows the PC carrying the invitation to take it out of their possession and destroy it. If no PCs possess the invitation, Rumiko still means to frighten them by attacking them in order to keep them from investigating further. Though she does not want to kill the PCs, she is willing to do them harm in the pursuit of her goal.

A PC with a vigilance of 5 spots the shinobi following them after she breaks away from the group she was blending in with. A PC with a vigilance of 4 senses the shinobi's presence once she is within range 1 of the PC. A PC with a vigilance of 3 notices that the forgery is missing within a moment or two of its being taken—the shinobi is within range 2 of the PC. A PC with a vigilance of 2 or less does not notice the loss of the invitation until the shinobi is at range 3 from the PCs.

Ikoma Rumiko's profile can be found on page 26. If a skirmish erupts, Rumiko tries not to kill the PCs, but rather to incapacitate them long enough for her to flee. If the PCs are not defeated, they can reveal the shinobi's identity. Rumiko will try to take her own life rather than confess to what she has done. Only if the PCs assure her they are working against the Crane will she permit herself to live. (Rumiko's death makes it easier for the PCs to place Magami in the role of Mioko—Lady Shike is far more suited to take up Rumiko's role as the spirit of the island than Magami is, allowing Magami to fill in as Mioko. See page 21 for more information about the Kabuki play.)

HAPPENINGS IN COURT

A sumai competition is to be held before the Emperor. Most of the court will be in attendance to view the proceedings and cheer for famous wrestlers who have traveled from across the Empire to compete.

Lady Magami is hosting a party at the Mantis Clan guesthouse. All have been invited, including the PCs, and the party is so well attended that it spills out into the Fantastic Gardens of the Crane.

RUMORS SWIRLING

"Is it true that [name of PC] was out at the docks late last night? Do they have a Mantis Clan paramour?"

"I hear Rumiko frequents Momo's Place—a peach wine house in an alley off the main road in town—where she gambles and drinks with merchants and doesn't return until sunrise. Good riddance! We don't need her kind in the palace."

"I heard Lady Magami can't swim! Are we sure that the Mantis didn't kidnap her from another clan to raise as their own?"

A NOTE ABOUT
DOJI SHIGERU

Doji Shigeru is a gender-fluid character who uses he/him pronouns when he is not in the persona of Lady Shike. When he is presenting as Lady Shike, she/her pronouns are used instead.

HAPPENINGS IN COURT

A fire breaks out in a storage room of the palace, causing all of the residents and visitors to evacuate into the cold winter's night for a time.

RUMORS SWIRLING

"Last night, some of the guests overheard strange chanting coming from Lady Magami's room in the Mantis guesthouse. Something seems off about her."

"Ikoma Rumiko and Lady Shike can't stand each other! That's why Lady Shike refuses to rehearse with the rest of the cast."

"I heard that Susano-o no Izen approached Lady Shike and petitioned her to give the role of Mioko to Lady Magami. Can you believe his nerve? What an upstart!"

Act II: The Tale of the
Fisherman's Daughter

Depending on what the PCs achieved in the first week of the adventure, they may have uncovered the truth behind the Mantis' invitation and their current motives. The PCs have another few days to try to wrap up their investigation before the point becomes moot. Kakita Ryoku is savvy enough to understand the play the Mantis are making in introducing Lady Magami at this Winter Court, so her new goal becomes shaming Magami to undermine the Mantis' attempts to secure the betrothal. No matter whether the PCs side with Ryoku or betray her, relations between the Crane and Mantis will be soured for a generation.

DAY 8: IMPRESSING
THE IMPERIALS

Kakita Ryoku sends a letter to the PCs the morning of the eighth day. If the PCs try to sleep in, they are roused by a servant upon the arrival of the letter. If the PCs did not get a full night's rest, they do not remove fatigue as they normally would (see **Recovering from Fatigue** on page 269 of the core rulebook).

In exchange for the PCs' service to her so far, Ryoku has arranged for them to be invited to a luncheon with her and Otomo Sorai, an old friend and ex-lover of hers. As the daimyō of the Otomo family, Sorai is among the most trusted matchmakers when it comes to arranging a royal match, and Ryoku intends to exploit her connections with him to achieve this. Although the Mantis could still find a way to influence the Emperor, Sorai is happy to grant his old friend's request and advise the Emperor to marry the crown prince to Doji Chiyo. In addition, the ear of the Otomo daimyō could be a major boon for the PCs in pursuing their clans' goals.

If the PCs have reported to Ryoku the Mantis' plot to marry Magami to the crown prince, Ryoku has them describe their findings to Otomo Sorai, who keeps his expression decidedly neutral. If not, Ryoku explains what she suspects to Sorai, informing the PCs in the process. Sorai already knows about the Mantis Clan's machinations, as they have already approached him with their request. At this time, however, he has no reason to favor the Mantis over Ryoku, whom he regards fondly. Ryoku tries to subtly convince Sorai that with the Mantis looking to put Magami forward, it is time to move ahead with Chiyo's betrothal. If the GM wishes, this scene can be run as a three-round intrigue, including the optional social objective Be a Model Guest, from page 9. The Intrigue action Consider the Inner Self, on page 10, is not available for use during this intrigue.

After the luncheon, Kakita Ryoku has a new request for the PCs: could they arrange with Doji Shigeru for Lady Magami to take the leading role of Mioko in the upcoming Kabuki production? Since the Emperor himself will be attending the production, Magami's performance will be the Emperor's chief impression of her. For all intents and purposes, this looks like Ryoku wants to help Magami, but there's an undertone to her words: set Magami up, but set her up to *fail*.

DAY 9: LEADING ROLES
AND PLEADING SOULS

Whether the PCs are working on behalf of Izen or Ryoku, their next step is to replace Lady Shike with Magami (or another character, at their option) to play the role of Mioko in the upcoming play. The PCs should approach Doji Shigeru (as both Izen and Ryoku have suggested) to request a change in the cast. Like Rumiko, Shigeru spends most of his time in the theater, practicing his own performances, directing the rehearsals, and teaching students the art of acting. Shigeru is known for being difficult to spot because he shifts between different appearances and genders and can look quite different from day to day. However, any of the stage hands or other actors can direct the PCs to him without difficulty.

If Ikoma Rumiko is dead or has stepped down from the role of the island spirit, then Lady Shike is forced to play that role, leaving the role of Mioko open for Magami to take. At the PCs' suggestion, Magami can be officially installed as the replacement Mioko. Alternatively, the PCs may have devised another way for Magami to ascend to that role.

If they explain to Shigeru that the swap is in Kakita Ryoku's interest, the director is open to potentially passing along the request to Lady Shike, but he is still hesitant, explaining that "Lady Shike is a lady of pride, and the chance to perform in a leading role before the Emperor is a tremendous honor." The PCs will need to do more than just namedrop Ryoku: they must offer a compelling reason or succeed at a **TN 3 Courtesy check** (or both, at the GM's discretion). If Ikoma Rumiko is still alive and sympathetic toward the PCs, she is happy to support them in pleading their case, which reduces the TN by 1. If the PCs reveal that they are acting in the Mantis Clan's interests, Shigeru flatly refuses, citing his creative authority over the casting.

The PCs might be able to tell that Shigeru and Shike are the same person by uncovering Shigeru's motivation (to remain in the role of Mioko), or by studying one of Shigeru's practice performances over the course of the day (he shares much in common with what is known of Lady Shike's signature style). If instead questioned outright, Shigeru deflects by saying that he is an admirer of Lady Shike, nothing more. If the PCs can discern that Shigeru is Lady

Shike, through shūji or 書置 expenditure, they can threaten to destroy Lady Shike's mystique by revealing that she and Shigeru are the same person. If the PCs make this threat, they automatically succeed at convincing Shigeru to cast Magami (or whomever else) in the role. Note that the fact that Shigeru is gender fluid is well known and that gender fluidity is not looked down upon in Rokugan. Revealing that Shigeru is gender fluid would seem nonsensical as the basis of a threat; the threat here is to Lady Shike's aura of mystery, which Shigeru is heavily invested in maintaining.

If Shigeru accedes to the PCs' requests, he charges them with bringing Magami in right away so that she can learn the part in the three days they have left before the performance. At this point, the PCs have a choice to make: they can either relay this message to Magami so that she can begin practicing, or they can sabotage her performance by waiting until shortly before the performance to reveal to her that she has been cast in the role until the last minute. In order to sabotage Magami, they must violate the Bushidō tenets of Honor, Courtesy, and Righteousness, and forfeit 10 honor for their role in defaming an innocent woman. If they refuse to humiliate Magami and help her secure the role of Mioko, the PCs are awarded 5 honor for their efforts.

DAYS 10–11: DOWNTIME ACTIVITIES

Once again, the PCs have time to put Ryoku's plan into motion or aid and abet the Mantis Clan. They can pursue three downtime activities per day, again exchanging downtime activities for narrative scenes on a one-for-one basis.

DAY 12: THE TALE OF THE FISHERMAN'S DAUGHTER

The Tale of the Fisherman's Daughter is a famous Nō play that recounts the legend of how the first Hantei met his bride. For this Winter Court, a *kogaki* version of the play is to be presented, meaning that this is a special interpretation of the play and may never be performed again. The lyrics, costumes, characters, and plot may vary compared with the original work, and in this case, it is being translated into the Kabuki style. Further, Winter Court attendees are welcome to participate. It is thanks to the play's designation as *kogaki* that the player characters and others may manipulate the play to try to sway the Emperor one way or another: Are Lady Magami's humble beginnings a non-issue, in the same way that the common-born Doji Mioko proved more authentic than all the other ladies being paraded before the Hantei at court? Or does the play emphasize the facts that Mioko and her family belong to the Doji and that Mioko's son Genji would marry Doji Oborozukiyo, thus establishing the tradition of the Imperial line mixing with the Doji?

The play follows the general structure of the tale, as described in the sidebar **The First Empress** on page 22. It is up to the PCs in consultation with Doji Shigeru, Ikoma Rumiko, and Lady Magami to decide how the tale differs, if at all, from the original plot. At the very least, this play is different because it makes the spirit of the island a character. The spirit is a literary device that allows Mioko's internal monologue to be spoken as dialogue instead. The island spirit is a wry, experienced old woman who simultaneously warns Mioko against the folly of love but encourages her to follow her heart, if "this beggar" has indeed won it over.

If the PCs have actively worked toward helping Magami play Mioko well, she makes a good impression on the audience and the Emperor in particular. If the PCs have sabotaged her efforts or made a point of letting her succeed or fail on her own merits, the performance comes off as flat or worse: embarrassing. If Magami

HAPPENINGS AT COURT

A Doji Go master hosts a two-day Go tournament open to all. A Go set with stones made of jade (giving it the Resplendent quality) is used in the tournament and gifted to the winner.

RUMORS SWIRLING

"Several precious kimono were ruined in the recent fire. Is it possible the blaze was set on purpose, and if so, who would do such a thing?"

"What if it was Susano-o no Izen who staged a daring escape for the prisoners? I wish he would rescue me from this dull affair!"

If the PCs succeeded at convincing Lady Shike to step aside for Magami, the court is rife with rumors of a last-minute shakeup in the cast for the upcoming Kabuki play. Everyone speculates as to the reason, with mundane to extraordinary explanations running rampant.



HAPPENINGS IN COURT

After the performance, a great banquet is held in a pavilion on the cliffs of Kyūden Doji, featuring the actors as the honored guests (even Lady Shike makes a quick appearance). From that vantage point, Lost Daughter Inlet can be seen in the bay below, and lanterns have been lit on the island to illuminate it after nightfall.

RUMORS SWIRLING

All that anyone can talk about is the performance of Mioko's actor.

If Magami botched the performance, her disgrace becomes legendary among the court attendees.

Another rumor spreads that she even truly fancied herself a contender to become the future Empress.

If Magami did well, the court is alight with speculation that Magami is the reincarnation of Mioko, returned to wed the Hantei once again. She becomes the darling of the Winter Court, and everyone is hoping for the chance to spend time with her to raise their own standing.

does well, or if Lady Shike performs the role of Mioko as intended, the Emperor stays to the conclusion of the play. If Magami does poorly, the Imperial contingent does not stay for the entire performance.

The PCs are assumed to attend as audience members, with or without NPC guests at their option. Some PCs may have decided to take supporting roles in the production in order to help Magami along or undermine her performance. The reaction of their guests depends on whether their clan or personal goals are being fulfilled by the performance. The reaction of the Crane and Mantis Clan will be borne out in the following day. See **Day 13: A Question of Honor** on the right.

DAY 13: A QUESTION OF HONOR

The next day, the PCs awaken to a courtier with an important message to relay: they have been challenged to a public duel to first blood (see page 258 in the core rulebook). Who issues the challenge depends on whether or not the PCs sabotaged or supported Lady Magami in the previous night's play. If they undermined her performance, then Susano-o no Izen is the challenger; he charges that the PCs conspired to cast Magami in the role of Mioko to publicly humiliate her. If the PCs supported Magami, then their challenger is a member of the Crane Clan; Kakita Toshimoko states that the PCs threatened Doji Shigeru into casting Magami at the last minute. Such

THE FIRST EMPRESS

In the early days of the Empire, Hantei-no-Kami was in search of a bride. He would not wed any of his siblings, though they were of equal status, and so had to look among the mortal populace for a suitable wife. His sister, Lady Doji, attempted to find the best young women in the Empire, but to no avail. None of her selections were able to impress His Imperial Majesty.

The samurai of the Doji family set out to aid their leader and searched for someone suitable to marry their Emperor. At one fishing village, they found no one eligible to bring back to the court. However, Doji Mioko, daughter of a local fisherman who had been adopted into the Crane Clan, had been sent away to a nearby island to keep her from being taken away. Such was her voice and kindness that she could sing the very fish of the ocean to her side, and her father was made wealthy by the catch that she brought to his boat. He would not lose his livelihood—and his daughter—to a far-off nobleman, Emperor or no.

The Emperor spent his days in solitude, forlorn for his lack of a companion. Eventually, he ventured forth among the Crane lands with his retainers and rode to the open sea. The Hantei heard a song borne aloft on the ocean breeze, and he was instantly enchanted.

When he returned to the fishing village, he commanded the sailors to take him to the island in search of the song's source. Finding no singer, the Emperor asked after the voice that seemed to come from an island. "It is naught but the wind blowing through the coral," Mioko's father replied. When her father returned to Mioko that evening, she inquired as to the identity of the man in his boat with him, to which the fisherman replied that the passenger was but a beggar.

Mioko had already fallen in love with the handsome young "beggar," and tying a haiku to the foot of her pet bird, she prayed to Amaterasu that the goddess would deliver the poem to the beggar. When the bird reached the Hantei and he read the poem, he declared that he would marry its writer. Yet, none of his samurai knew who had sent the poem, and a great search went out across the lands. The Emperor declared, "The maiden who has written these words—her alone will I marry, in all the lands of Rokugan."

The fisherman relayed this proclamation to his daughter, but she was deceived, believing the Emperor had stolen the words that were intended for the beggar. She agreed to relay her poem to another woman in the village so that the Emperor would marry her instead. But when the Hantei asked the woman to write more poetry for him, he could tell that she was not the author of the original poem. When he confronted her, she revealed that the fisherman had told her the poem, and the Hantei resolved to sail with the fisherman to the island where the coral sang one more time.

Recognizing the "beggar," Mioko ran out to the shoreline and revealed herself. Upon seeing her and hearing her voice, the Emperor realized that it was she he had heard along the cliffs so long ago. He wept at the sight of her and exchanged his crystallized tears as a dowry for Mioko's hand in marriage. Instead of sentencing her father to death for his deception, Hantei agreed to his bride-to-be's wishes and forced the fisherman to live out his days on the island instead. Henceforth, the island became known as Lost Daughter Inlet, and future Empresses have all journeyed there to meditate on what it means to join the Emperor's family before they are wed.

is Ryoku's influence that she can summon Toshimoko—the master sensei of the Kakita Dueling Academy—as her champion. A PC or NPC who accepts the challenge issued by Toshimoki is awarded 6 honor, owing to the courage needed to face such a superior foe.

The PCs can forfeit 10 honor and glory to refuse to answer the public rebuke. Otherwise, one of the PCs, or a chosen champion, must emerge victorious from the public duel staged in the center of the Fantastic Gardens. Asahina Takako blesses the duel ring, then oversees the proceedings to ensure that the fight is conducted fairly. Izen's profile is on page 29. Kakita Toshimoko uses the Venerable Provincial Daimyō profile on page 315 of the core rulebook, adding the *laijutsu* Cut: Crossing Blade and *laijutsu* Cut: Rising Blade *kata* techniques, found on page 179 of the core rulebook.

If the PC wins, they have proven the accusations wrong and are awarded 5 honor and glory. If they PCs loses the duel, they have embarrassed their clan and must deal with the social ramifications of such a dishonorable show, subject to the GMs discretion.

DAY 14: THEIR DAY IN COURT

The final day in this adventure offers a chance for the consequences of the previous days to play out. Each player gets to choose an NPC or PC with whom they can share a final scene as this chapter in the Winter Court closes. In order from lowest glory to highest glory, the players take turns choosing a setting and circumstance for revisiting the relationship or rivalry.

Any PCs who achieved a goal that greatly benefits their clan or lord—such as winning a favor from Kakita Ryoku—is awarded 6 glory. In addition, the PCs gain the following distinctions or adversities based on their allegiances:

- ✧ If the PCs went through with Ryoku's plot to lay the Mantis low, they sour relationships between the Crane and Mantis for the foreseeable future. If the Mantis are aware of the PCs' role in their shame, the PCs earn the Scorn of [The Mantis Clan] (Water) adversity (see page 127 of the core rulebook). The PCs gain the Ally [Kakita Ryoku] (Water) and Support of [The Kakita Family] (Water) distinctions (see pages 101 and 110 of the core rulebook, respectively).
- ✧ If the PCs tried to undermine Kakita Ryoku and she became aware of it, then she will attempt to destroy the PCs' reputation and cast them out of the court as soon as she is able. They gain the Sworn Enemy [Kakita Ryoku] (Earth) and Scorn of [The Kakita Family] (Water) adversities (see pages 129 and 127 of the core rulebook, respectively).
- ✧ If the PCs ended up allying with Ikoma Rumiko and preserving her secret, they gain the Ally [Ikoma Rumiko] (Water) and Support of [The Ikoma Family] (Water) distinctions (see pages 101



and 110 of the core rulebook, respectively).

- ✧ If the PCs failed to lay the Mantis low (or chose not to humiliate the Minor Clan), they gain the Ally [Lady Magami] (Water) distinction (see page 101 of the core rulebook).
- ✧ If the PCs were working on behalf of Susano-o no Izen, they gain the Support of [The Mantis Clan] (Water) distinction (see page 110 of the core rulebook). The Crane Clan suffers further loss of influence in the courts, is forced to go through with a disastrous trade deal, and loses footing against the Lion in the battles to come. Moreover, relations between the Crane and Mantis are soured because the Crane are resentful of the Mantis' fortunes, and they are fearful of the Minor Clan's desires to ascend to greater status. The Crane will stop at nothing to keep the Mantis from further climbing the social ladder.

Depending on whether Lady Magami performed well in her role as Mioko, the Emperor may be willing to consider her as a potential bride for his son. Nothing is announced publicly at this time, but the matter can be explored by the group in subsequent Winter Court adventures, or further along in their campaign.

PLAYER REWARDS

With the curtain closing on this chapter of the Winter Court, the GM should reward each player for their character's actions and successes:

- ✧ 4 XP: Disgracing or elevating the actor cast as Mioko in *The Tale of the Fisherman's Daughter*
- ✧ 2 XP: Replacing Lady Shike with another actor for the part of Mioko

RUMORS SWIRLING

The challenge and duel dominate the whispers of the court. If the PCs cleared their names by overcoming the duelist, the court is alight with amazement. If the PCs were defeated and disgraced, then their fates are discussed with great zeal, but only their closest allies are willing to speak with them at the evening meal.

HATSUHINA'S LETTERS

The brushwork of Hatsu-hina's letters is elegant and refined, and she artfully arranges the lines on the page. Plum blossom is her hallmark scent, as is the quality of the blue-tinged washi paper she uses. She employs archaic characters in her writing that are usually only found in legends.

ROMANCING
HATSUHINA

Hatsuhina is adept at playing at the game of love, and she is happy to toy with the hearts of unsuspecting PCs to get her revenge against Koryusai. If any of the PCs have especially high status or glory, she will make a point of parading their romance in front of her former betrothed as much as possible, strategically staging dates so that he will walk in just as she gets close to kissing a PC.

At the end of the court, she is more than happy to ignore the PC completely, their purpose having been fulfilled. A PC can potentially melt her icy façade if they can elevate her out of her current position, either through promotion or marriage. Hatsuhina desires success more than anything.

- ❁ 2 XP: Uncovering the identity of the Mantis invitation forger
- ❁ 2 XP: Acquiring a copy of the Mantis Clan invitation, whether they had it stolen from them or not
- ❁ 2 XP: Uncovering the Mantis plot to marry Lady Magami to the crown prince before Day 8
- ❁ 2 XP: Placing in the poetry competition
- ❁ 2 XP: Capturing the shinobi
- ❁ 1 XP: Competing in the poetry competition
- ❁ 1 XP: Participating in the performance of *The Tale of the Fisherman's Daughter*
- ❁ 1 XP: Writing at least three letters as part of the Game of Letters (repeatable)

Appendix 4: Non-
Player Characters

The hosts and guests of the Winter Court are the core of this adventure, as most of the scenes in *Winter's Embrace* are socially oriented, and much of the investigation is conducted by befriending or courting the different characters. In the following section, the GM can find the backgrounds, profiles, and motivations of the major characters in this adventure, as well as descriptions of some of the supporting characters.

DOJI HATSUHINA

Hatsuhina is a courtier who has been passed over, not once, but several times. She was previously betrothed to Otomo Koryusai, but their betrothal was undercut by the Scorpion Clan during its meteoric rise in influence. Having expected to spend her life in the Imperial capital of Otosan Uchi, she has been forced to grapple with a reality she had never anticipated at Kyūden Doji, her childhood home. She is bitter and does little to hide the fact. More than that, she wants to ruin Koryusai's chances of happiness with anyone else—if she cannot have him, no one can. Since he could not preserve their betrothal, she will see to it that he fails at all of his pursuits in the Imperial bureaucracy. Most of all, she wants to ensnare a better catch than Koryusai was and flaunt it in his face to remind him of what he lost when he let her go. They could have been a power couple, once. Now, she is resolved to make him suffer as she has. Hatsuhina may pursue a superficial relationship with one of the PCs to punish and humiliate her erstwhile lover.

Default Location: The most likely place for the PCs to find Hatsuhina is in the main court chamber, where she is seeing to the needs of the guests and helping direct them to the day's activities or entertainments.

DOJI HATSUHINA

ADVERSARY

CONFLICT RANK: 2 5

Hatsuhina has become as manipulative as the very Scorpion Clan she hates. Beautiful and strikingly tall, she wears her long white hair loose during the day, but by night it is styled with extravagant hairpieces to match her ornate and ostentatious wardrobe. Her piercing brown eyes are tinged with malice. She sees people as tools that can be used to serve her purposes and then be discarded as needed. She has a penchant for alcohol, gambling, and other excesses, which she greedily partakes in when she isn't serving in the humiliating role as deputy to a seneschal who is younger—and less politically nimble—than she is. The parties she throws and outings she arranges are legendary, but at the end of the day, the relationships she forms with others are as superficial as her kindness.

SOCIETAL		PERSONAL	
55	HONOR	ENDURANCE	10
60	GLORY	COMPOSURE	10
40	STATUS	FOCUS	7
+2, -2 DEMEANOR - AMBITIOUS		VIGILANCE	4

ARTISAN 3 MARTIAL 0 SCHOLAR 2 SOCIAL 3 TRADE 0

ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Sake Connoisseur: ☞ Social; Material, Mental	Vindictive: ☞ Social; Mental
Karmic Tie (Koryusai): ☞ Martial, Social; Interpersonal, Spiritual	Whispers of Failure: ☞ Social; Interpersonal, Infamy

FAVORED WEAPONS & GEAR

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

Gear (equipped): Ceremonial clothes (Physical 1, Ceremonial, Resplendent), personal chop

Gear (other): Calligraphy set, pillow book

ABILITIES

SPEAKING IN SILENCE

Once per scene when making a check to persuade or influence someone, Hatsuhina may add two kept ■ set to ✨ results.

RUSTLING OF LEAVES

Activation: When Hatsuhina makes a **Social skill (Air) check** to spread a rumor, she may spend ✨ in the following way:

Air ✨+: Increase the TN of any check to trace the rumor back to Hatsuhina by 2 per ✨ spent this way.

KAKITA RYOKU

The honorable and elegant Kakita Ryoku is among the most distinguished—and infamous—courtiers of the Crane Clan. She is perhaps best known for her novel *Winter*, which is allegedly a record of her many romantic affairs and conquests, including the Emperor himself. Until recently, she served the Emperor Hantei XXXVIII as his Imperial Advisor. Before that, she served in the Imperial Capital, where she resided for nearly all of her seventy years. She is known for her mastery of diplomacy and etiquette, but she began as a storyteller in the Kakita Artisan Academy. Now that she has been released from her duties, she has ostensibly returned to her writing. In truth, this has only freed her to meddle further in politics.

Ryoku was tasked by Kakita Yoshi—the current Imperial Chancellor—to help ensure the crown prince is betrothed to Doji Chiyoe. She suspects the Mantis' unexpected arrival has something to do with the crown prince's bachelor status. This is her duty to her clan, her giri. Her personal desire, or ninjō, is to see the Crane returned to their previous position of power and to ruin Bayushi Kachiko in the process. She can trade further favors to the PCs if they are able to assist her with either of these goals in addition to performing reconnaissance for her.

Default Location: The most likely place for the PCs to find Ryoku is in a pavilion in the Fantastic Gardens of the Crane, where she goes to write poetry and prose as well as entertain visitors.

KAKITA RYOKU

ADVERSARY

CONFLICT RANK:  3  9

Lady Ryoku is a complicated woman whose age has only made her more elegant and dignified. On the one hand, she strives for perfect politeness and protocol in everything, having studied as an artisan and served as a courtier in the Emperor's own court for many, many years. On the other hand, she is of such high status and glory that she can essentially say whatever she pleases, and no one can gainsay her without looking a fool. Her speech is laced with euphemisms; she knows just the words to say to avoid offense, but she also dips into a contemptuous tone when she feels it is truly warranted. Avoiding any hint of condescension, she prefers to "kill with kindness" and is willing to help the PCs gain access to people and places they would otherwise not have the status to reach.



ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Famously Successful:  Social; Interpersonal, Fame	Broken Hearted:  Social; Mental
Love of Storytelling:  Artisan; Mental	Whispers of Treachery:  Social; Interpersonal, Infamy

FAVORED WEAPONS & GEAR

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

Gear (equipped): Ceremonial clothes (Physical 1, Ceremonial, Resplendent), personal chop

Gear (other): Pillow book, calligraphy set, *omamori* (a ward against vengeful spirits) given to Ryoku by Emperor Hantei XXXVII

ABILITIES

EBB AND FLOW

Activation: As a Scheme or Support action, Ryoku may make a **Courtesy (Water)**, **Command (Water)**, or **Games (Water)** check targeting one character. The TN of this check is equal to the target's vigilance.

Effects: If Ryoku succeeds (and chose Scheme action), she may choose one of the target's advantages that she knows, and whenever it applies, invert it. This effect persists until the end of the scene. If Ryoku succeeds (and chose Support action), she may choose one of the target's disadvantages she knows and, whenever it applies, invert it. This effect persists until the end of the scene.

I HAVE MET YOUR LIKE BEFORE

When performing a Scheme action, Ryoku may spend  in the following way:

: Learn the target's ninjō or giri, or a single advantage or disadvantage.

 : Learn the target's current goal in this scene.

SPEAKING IN SILENCE

Once per scene when making a check to persuade or influence someone, Ryoku may add five kept  set to .

EVERYTHING TELLS A STORY

When performing an **Artisan skill check**, Ryoku may add one kept  set to an  result.

A QUESTION OF LINEAGE

If any of the PCs have mysterious parentage, one possibility is that they are a bastard child of Kakita Ryoku and Emperor Hantei XXXVII or XXXVIII (depending on the PC's age). GMs who wish to go this route can describe how similar in appearance the PC is to Ryoku and the Emperor over the course of the adventure. The truth may be discerned by consulting with a source of genealogical information or a mystic, at which point the GM and player can decide whether they want this to be true or not—and what the implications are of a PC with the blood of the Hantei running through their veins.

RYOKU'S LETTERS

The beauty of Ryoku's calligraphy isn't pretentious; she opts instead for a minimalistic elegance. Her descriptions and word choices are equally understated, but powerful. She uses a characteristic blue ink, and the parchment has flecks of white, evoking snowfall. She scents her letters with rose essence.

ROMANCING RYOKU

After all her years deeply enmeshed in the intrigues of court, Kakita Ryoku has seen much of what the Rokugani political scene has to offer. Now, she finds herself drawn to stories she has never heard—and characters who have lived dramatically different lives than she has. She seeks a partner with whom she can exchange new stories for what remains of their lives.

RUMIKO'S LETTERS

Big and bold, Rumiko's brushwork is as dramatic as she is. Her poems often incorporate allusions to famous plays and playwrights. Her favored paper has a natural brown look with visible fibers, and she includes different types of grasses or brush as accents.

ROMANCING RUMIKO

Ikoma Rumiko wants someone to appreciate her talent and provide her with new material for her comedies and characters. She is happy to flirt and dally with anyone who approaches her, but she rebuffs proposals of marriage because her "constellations are too inauspicious." In reality, she can't risk the liability of a spouse interfering with her missions. However, as wholehearted as she is, she may agree to a secret marriage for love, in which neither party acknowledges the other publicly. She may even suggest that the PC "retire" and join her troupe as a monk or actor.

IKOMA RUMIKO

Rumiko is a complicated woman who seeks out the simplicity—and veracity—of humor. As an Ikoma Bard, she is happy to carry the hardships and express the emotion that the rest of her clan cannot. She has gained fame as a Kabuki actor who is able to take on any role, whether that of a peasant, hero, supernatural entity, or anything in between.

But this, too, is just another act. As a shinobi trained in the Lion's Ikoma Shadow School, she has been sent to the Winter Court to ensure the Lion's plan is kept safe and secret, and also to help thwart the Crane whenever the opportunity arises. To this, she is absolutely dedicated, no matter how frivolous she appears on the surface. If she senses the PCs are willing to turn against Kakita Ryoku, she enlists their help in feeding her additional information concerning the Crane Clan's plots.

In the upcoming Kabuki rendition of *The Tale of the Fisherman's Daughter*, Rumiko is slated to portray the spirit of the island, an old woman who wears an iconic white headpiece of wildly flowing hair called *shirogashira*. When the maiden Doji Mioko is isolated and has no one to turn to but the kami of the isles, the spirit of the island makes herself known, and offers no shortage of marriage advice. (Rumiko herself is also happy to offer unsolicited counsel concerning matrimony.)

Default Location: The most likely place for the PCs to find Rumiko is in the theater, where she rehearses her role and helps others prepare to present the Kabuki play *The Tale of the Fisherman's Daughter*.

IKOMA RUMIKO

ADVERSARY

CONFLICT RANK:  5  5

Gregarious, playful, and kind, Rumiko is ostensibly an Ikoma Bard who carries the whole of the Lion Clan's emotion in her heart. She has a striking countenance, stout limbs, and a deep voice that can carry even over the din of a room. She wears her brown hair loose in a side ponytail, with layers that curl around her round cheeks and ears. As an actor, she can adopt any emotion or personality at will. Yet, she comes across as genuine in her feelings, and she avoids potential duplicity whenever she can help it. Her roles as bard and shinobi are different enough that she can maintain both personae effortlessly.

SOCIETAL	PERSONAL
25 HONOR	ENDURANCE 10
60 GLORY	COMPOSURE 12
35 STATUS	FOCUS 6
 +1,  +1,  -2	VIGILANCE 4
DEMEANOR - PLAYFUL	

ARTISAN 3

MARTIAL 2

SCHOLAR 3

SOCIAL 2

TRADE 1

ADVANTAGES

As We Say in the Theater...

 Scholar; Mental

Unparalleled Wit:

 Social; Interpersonal

DISADVANTAGES

Dark Secret:

 Social; Material

Disdain for Honor:

 Social; Mental

FAVORED WEAPONS & GEAR

Kiseru: Range 0, Damage 2, Deadliness 2, Concealable, Mundane

Knife: Range 0, Damage 2, Deadliness 4/6, Concealable, Mundane, Razor-Edged

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

Gear (equipped): Concealed armor (Physical 2, Concealable), 10 doses of fire biter poison, script for the play *The Tale of the Fisherman's Daughter*

ABILITIES

HEART OF THE LION

Once per scene, after Rumiko performs a **Social skill check** targeting one or more characters, she may **agitate** or **console**:

-  If she **agitates**, she transfers strife up to 10 strife from herself to her targets (divided among them as she chooses).
-  If she **consoles**, she transfers up to 10 strife from her targets (divided among them as she choose) to herself.

NOXIOUS CLOUD

Activation: As an Attack action, Rumiko may use two doses of any single poison and make a **TN 2 Medicine (Air) check** targeting each other character at range 0–2.

Effects: If Rumiko succeeds, each target suffers 3 physical damage, ignoring their resistance. This damage counts as being inflicted by a weapon envenomed with the poison she chose (see page 244 of the core rulebook).

Air : Move 1 range band.

Air : Until the end of the scene, the area at range 0–2 becomes Obscuring and Dangerous terrain.

VICTORY BEFORE HONOR

Once per scene when performing a check, Rumiko may stake up to 5 honor to re-roll a number of dice equal to twice the amount of honor staked. For each re-rolled die result that does not contain a  or , she forfeits one staked honor.

MIYA SATOSHI

Miya Satoshi is descended from a long line of mortals who chose to serve the divine Hantei line, but he does not share their sympathies for the Emperor. He cannot help but fixate on the Emperor's shortcomings, his failures and foibles, believing that the Empire would be better off if it did not cling so blindly to tradition. Satoshi has succumbed to the beliefs of the Kolat, and this has affected his interactions with the Great Clans and the Imperial line. (See **The True Allegiances of Miya Satoshi** on page 17.)

Satoshi is sympathetic to those who earn status and glory for themselves as opposed to deriving it from their lineage and the unfair Heavens. This is why he was fine with adding the Mantis Clan to the guest list for the Winter Court when they sent in a seemingly unsolicited reply. The Mantis, at least, have had to earn their own place in the world. If pressed, Satoshi is happy to manufacture some scandal and blame his underlings, such as Otomo Koryusai. Due to his high status, all Satoshi needs to do is claim that Koryusai was bribed and abused the powers of his office to accept the Mantis as attendees of this year's Winter Court. In so doing, Satoshi can rid himself of the dutiful and effective bureaucrat while deflecting the blame from himself.

If any of the PCs harbor Kolat sympathies or are Kolat agents, Satoshi sends them secret missives directing them to cause as much chaos at court as they are able and to sow distrust among the clans. This also means propping up the Mantis in their bid to make Lady Magami Empress, as it could help throw the entire Empire into turmoil.

Default Location: The most likely place for the PCs to find Satoshi is in the Imperial guesthouse, as the Herald primarily serves the Emperor. When he isn't serving in his function as Master of Ceremonies, he is dealing with his usual backlog of bureaucratic correspondence.

MIYA SATOSHI

ADVERSARY

CONFLICT RANK:  5  8

Miya Satoshi is generally antagonistic toward samurai of the Great Clans, and he seeks to sow strife as surely as any Otomo family member. Ostensibly, this is to ensure Imperial power, but in truth, he does it to make the Imperial line seem weak and ineffectual. Satoshi knows how to play the political game and is adept at maintaining appearances. He typically wears his long black-brown hair in a simple ponytail and prefers to appear clean-shaven. His stark eyebrows are often all that is needed to convey his disapproval or disinterest, even if his average height doesn't especially inspire confidence or fear.

SOCIETAL		PERSONAL	
29 HONOR		ENDURANCE 14	
85 GLORY		COMPOSURE 12	
75 STATUS		FOCUS 6	
 +2,  -2 DEMEANOR - SHREWD		VIGILANCE 3	

ARTISAN 1

MARTIAL 2

SCHOLAR 3

SOCIAL 3

TRADE 1

ADVANTAGES

Ear of the Emperor: Social; *Interpersonal***Heartless:** Social; *Mental***Dark Secret:** Social; *Interpersonal***Contrary:** Social; *Mental*

FAVORED WEAPONS & GEAR

Satoshi's War Fans: Range 0–1, Damage 5, Deadliness 4, Ceremonial, Concealable, Resplendent

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

Gear (equipped): Imperial robes (Physical 1, Supernatural 1, Ceremonial, Resplendent), scroll cases

ABILITIES

VOICE OF THE EMPEROR

Once per round, after a character at range 0–4 succeeds on an Attack or Scheme action check, Satoshi may cause them to receive 5 strife.

CIVILITY FOREMOST

Activation: As a Scheme action, Satoshi may make a **Command** or **Courtesy (Earth)** check targeting one character to claim protection for an individual of his choice by right of honor. The TN of the check is equal to the target's vigilance.

Effects: If Satoshi succeeds, the target must forfeit 4 honor, plus 1 per bonus success, and suffer that much strife to perform an Attack or Scheme action against the protected individual. This effect persists until the end of the scene, or until the target performs an Attack or Scheme action.

Earth +: Choose one additional target with vigilance lower than or equal to Satoshi's first target's vigilance per  spent this way.

SATOSHI'S LETTERS

Miya Satoshi's letters use honorific, sometimes-stilted language, punctuated by well-placed double entendres. The brushwork is prim and proper, hinting at a classical education. The fine pages are loosely bound with a gold ribbon.

THE KOLAT CONSPIRACY

Like the Empire, the Kolat has origins dating from soon after the Kami fell to Rokugan. Yet, while all others bow to the might of the Heavens, the discontented groups now known as the Kolat chafe at being ruled by those descended from gods. The ultimate goal of these groups is to overthrow the Hantei Dynasty and allow humankind to rule itself. To this end, they have established a cell of spies, saboteurs, and deadly assassins across the Emerald Empire (and perhaps even beyond).

Among the Kolat's most terrible weapons are their sleeper agents, who may operate under an assumed identity for years, even decades, collecting information and awaiting the call to more severe deeds. For their successful deeds, especially the assassination and corruption of prominent Imperial officials, to become exposed would surely weaken the Empire and cause great harm to Rokugan.

KORYUSAI'S LETTERS

Koryusai's calligraphy is uncharacteristically loose, sometimes trailing off with wild abandon. His letters are scented with sandalwood and adorned with embossed images.

ROMANCING KORYUSAI

Koryusai is already married and is primarily interested in rekindling his affair with Hatsuhina. If she is unavailable, as she very much seems to be, perhaps a PC can wade their way into his broken heart and show him that there is more to live for than missed opportunities. He is looking for someone to be his equal and help him execute his schemes—as well as someone who can appreciate the luxuries afforded to him by his caste.

OTOMO KORYUSAI

Otomo Koryusai is overworked and has insufficient resources to do a good job within the Imperial bureaucracy. Moreover, his superiors—such as Miya Satoshi—are happy to blame him for anything that goes awry. This is on top of the humiliation he had to endure after breaking off his engagement with Doji Hatsuhina, his true love and confidant. Since his wedding to Bayushi Mikuru, Koryusai has succumbed to cynicism and sorrow. He wants more than anything to keep Hatsuhina close, to confide his hopes and fears to her. But Hatsuhina will have none of it, for she is too prideful to be merely a lover, not when she was meant to be his equal in marriage. Koryusai would do anything to win Hatsuhina back, but he knows it is impossible. He will approach any Crane, Phoenix, or Unicorn PCs in hopes of soliciting their aid in persuading Hatsuhina to reconsider, as well as any PCs who seem sympathetic to his pain.

Default Location: The most likely place for the PCs to find Koryusai is in an audience chamber in the Imperial guesthouse, where he receives individuals who wish to discuss Imperial legislation or favors.

OTOMO KORYUSAI

ADVERSARY

CONFLICT RANK: 3 6

Koryusai wears his black hair in the high bun of a court functionary and sports a delicately manicured goatee. His angular face matches his tall, lithe figure, and his long fingers have the look of a musician's—or master calligrapher's. He has been through a great deal, and already carries the weight of too many sorrows on his shoulders. He continues to serve and fulfill his duties as best he can, but the whole exercise seems hollow without Hatsuhina at his side. Sensitive PCs can tell that he is broken and is in desperate need of someone who can tell him that his life is still worth living—that he can find happiness amid all the heartache.

SOCIETAL		PERSONAL	
45 HONOR		ENDURANCE 14	
60 GLORY		COMPOSURE 12	
45 STATUS		FOCUS 7	
+2, -2 DEMEANOR · CRESTFALLEN		VIGILANCE 3	

ARTISAN 1 MARTIAL 1 SCHOLAR 3 SOCIAL 3 TRADE 0

ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Bureaucratic Expertise: Scholar; Mental	Cynical: Social; Mental
Karmic Tie (Hatsuhina): Martial; Social; Interpersonal, Spiritual	Insensitive: Social; Interpersonal

FAVORED WEAPONS & GEAR

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

Gear (equipped): Imperial robes (Physical 1, Supernatural 1, Ceremonial, Resplendent), personal chop, scroll cases, unfinished poem (secretly to Hatsuhina)

ABILITIES

FANNING THE FLAMES

Activation: When making a **Social skill (Fire)** check targeting one or more characters, Koryusai may spend in the following way:

Fire +: One target gains the Dazed condition per spent this way.

Fire +: One target gains the Enraged condition per spent this way.

SUSANO-O NO IZEN

Izen is the captain of the Storm Fleet ship the *Susano-o*. He was selected as part of the delegation to Kyūden Doji due to his fierce protectiveness of Lady Magami, a woman he admires greatly for her subtle and soft-spoken strength. If yōjimbō were used by the Mantis Clan, he would come close to being that for Magami. In lieu of such official titles, he is her good friend and her advocate while ashore. Izen is also highly trusted by Lord Yoritomo, which gives him leeway to conduct politics in the name of the Mantis Clan. If he perceives any Mantis sympathies among the PCs, he will seek their aid in supporting Lady Magami before, during, and after her debut.

Default Location: The most likely place for the PCs to find Izen is in the Mantis Clan guesthouse, where he spends his days assisting Lady Magami or receiving visitors who wish to negotiate with the Mantis Clan.

SUSANO-O NO IZEN

ADVERSARYCONFLICT RANK: 64

Of all the Mantis Clan sailors in attendance at Kyūden Doji, Izen is one of the most handsome and personable. His thick black hair and full beard give him a rugged look in contrast to the refinement of the court, and his bushy eyebrows and wide smile convey his zeal for life. His voice is almost too loud for his sturdily built but average-height frame. He encourages everyone he interacts with to express themselves authentically as well. He is an idealist and has a “never-give-up” attitude, which is rare among the usual Winter Court attendees.

SOCIETAL	PERSONAL
35 HONOR	ENDURANCE 12
45 GLORY	COMPOSURE 14
25 STATUS	FOCUS 5
+2, +1, -2 DEMEANOR · PERSONABLE	

ARTISAN 0MARTIAL 3SCHOLAR 1SOCIAL 2TRADE 3

ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Love of the Sea: Social, Trade; Mental	Disdain for Authority: Social; Interpersonal
Gregarious: Social; Interpersonal	Inferiority Complex: Social; Mental

FAVORED WEAPONS & GEAR

Tonfa: Range 0–1, Damage 3, Deadliness 3, Concealable, Durable

Bō: Range 1–2, Damage 6, Deadliness 2, Mundane

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

Gear (equipped): Ashigaru armor (Physical 3, Wargear)

ABILITIES

STRIKING AS WATER

Activation: When Izen make a **Martial Arts [Melee, Ranged, or Unarmed] (Water) check**, he may spend ♫ in the following way:

Water ♫+: Izen's target treats their physical resistance as 1 lower per ♫ spent this way. This effect persists until the end of his next turn.

SPINNING BLADES STYLE

Activation: When Izen makes a **Martial Arts [Melee] or Martial Arts [Unarmed] check**, if he has a second readied weapon he did not use for the attack, he may spend ♫ in the following way:

♫+: Izen must spend ♫ equal to his target's Vigilance to activate this technique. He uses his second readied weapon against one target of his action, inflicting physical damage equal to its base damage. If that target is Dazed, increase this damage by his ranks in the skill he used for the check.



IZEN'S LETTERS

Izen favors simple phonetic characters in his poetry over kanji, and his brushwork betrays an unsteady hand. He enjoys ending his poetry with exclamations and encouragement. His papers are scented with vanilla, which is completely foreign to most Rokugani, and are sometimes bound in silk.

ROMANCING IZEN

Izen wants more than anything for a new crew member to join him on his ship and sail the world in search of adventure—especially if that crew member brings skills rare among the Mantis Clan. In terms of marriage, he is open to a match that would further the relationship between the Mantis Clan and another clan, great or minor. He will attempt to convince his potential spouse to marry into the Mantis regardless of their status, promising an impressive wedding gift in the form of ships, information about trade routes, or maps.

ROMANCING TAKAKO

Takako is a kind and sweet woman who seeks only to bridge the divides between the clans and maintaining the harmony of the kami in her care. Any PC who emulates these values may have the chance to romance Takako, though she is only interested in marriage and will not succumb to love affairs.

ROMANCING
CHIYOE OR MAGAMI

Both Doji Chiyoe and Lady Magami are vying for betrothal to the crown prince. A crafty PC may be able to convince Lady Magami to participate in a secret love affair, but Doji Chiyoe is much too focused on her duties to entertain any such notions.

SECONDARY CHARACTERS

The following characters are less integral to the overarching plot or are less likely to be the characters the PCs interact with in order to achieve their goals, so they do not have full profiles.

ASAHINA TAKAKO

As the daughter of the Asahina daimyō and an accomplished artificer in her own right, Takako is an important member of the hosting Crane Clan. Moreover, she serves as one of the chief priests overseeing religious ceremonies during the Winter Court, including the rites that take place before the poetry competition on the fifth day. Takako is gentle soul and a paragon of pacifism. She strives to represent the harmony of the kami and the elements in her works and words. She holds out hope that the conflict between the Crane and Lion can be resolved without further bloodshed, and she makes sure to treat all of the other guests with the utmost courtesy and respect—even those who are enemies of her clan.

If needed, use the **Scholarly Shugenja** profile on page 314 of the core rulebook.

DOJI CHIYOE

The beautiful, gentle Doji Chiyoe is highly versed in traditional literature, culture, and governance, as would befit a potential Empress. As a highly placed member of the Doji family—and close in age to the crown prince—she has been groomed since birth for this role, and she accepts it as her duty to her clan. As a result, she has lived a highly sheltered life and has not felt any of the hardships that have come in the wake of the tsunami. She is naïve and unconsciously insensitive to the plight of peasants—they are as foreign to her as most Imperials would be to a farmer. Nevertheless, she is concerned for their spiritual state.

Chiyoe is devoutly religious, and she would be glad to join the Brotherhood of Shinsei as a nun if she does not marry well. Unbeknownst to her family, Chiyoe has been exposed to some of the philosophies of the Perfect Land Sect, under the guise of extreme compassion, through her travels to local monasteries. Chiyoe believes that all mortals deserve courtesy and mercy, from the lowliest ant to the noblest Emperor, and that one day, Shinsei will return to save the faithful. As such, Chiyoe is especially interested in seeking out monks and other theologians to discuss cosmology, Enlightenment, and the salvation of the meek through faith in the Little Teacher.

If needed, use the **Seasoned Courtier** profile on page 313 of the core rulebook with the Spiritualist template, except her status is 55 and her glory is 49.

DOJI SHIGERU/LADY SHIKE

Doji Shigeru is a renowned performer in his own right, but his secret persona as the inimitable Lady Shike is the true expression of his art. Shigeru specializes in portraying female characters in all manner of dramatic productions, including Nō and Kabuki. When he is not performing, Shigeru lives with his husband, Masato, a former member of the Matsu family.

Lady Shike's mysterious identity is part of her allure and fame; to receive a letter from the actor is a social coup, a fact that is sure to be talked about at court. Lady Shike is slated to portray the fisherman's daughter, Doji Mioko, in the upcoming Kabuki play. Doji Shigeru is the director and is in charge of casting for the production.

If needed, use the **Seasoned Courtier** profile on page 313 of the core rulebook with the Artist template.

LADY MAGAMI

Although the Mantis Clan is known for their rebuke of tradition, Lady Magami understands the political games most Rokugani play. She is surprisingly demure for a woman raised on the Islands of Spice and Silk, which is even more surprising considering that she was not originally groomed for her current role as potential Empress. In truth, she was a very sickly child, and she was only recently healed through the intervention of a powerful fire spirit from a volcanic island—at great cost to the clan. While most of her family spent their lives at sea, Magami learned to help oversee Yoritomo's household in Gotei City. When she wasn't too ill, she made her way through the Mantis Clan's extensive library of foreign texts, which has made her fluent in not just foreign languages, but foreign literature, customs, and legends. In the three years since she recovered, she's also learned to gut a fish and sail a small boat on her own.

The decision to offer her hand in marriage is as recent as the "invitation" the Mantis Clan received from the Emperor—it is one of Yoritomo's impulsive and ambitious designs. If Magami becomes betrothed to the Heir, she will work with the Unicorn Clan to open Rokugan's borders and establish embassies in the major civilizations to the south and west.

If needed, use the **Seasoned Courtier** profile on page 313 of the core rulebook with the Sage template, except her status is 65 and her glory is 44.

YORITOMO, LORD OF THE MANTIS CLAN

Known as the Son of Storms, Lord Yoritomo is the fearless leader of the Mantis Clan and a feared sea captain in his own right. Married to Linmei of the kōmori people, he honors the roots of his people while forever looking forward to the horizon. Yoritomo is among the only samurai from his delegation with enough social standing to approach the Imperials or other Great Clan leaders, and so he is often busy meeting with other lords. Once Lady

Magami debuts at the poetry competition, he spends the bulk of his time introducing her to as many of the great and good of Rokugan as he can. If the PCs manage to cross paths with him, he is clearly more comfortable navigating a storm than he is trying to weather the politics of the court. Still, the admiration he inspires in his followers is enviable. Best of all, he knows how to nail a punchline.

If needed, use the **Venerable Provincial Daimyō** profile on page 315 of the core rulebook with the Warrior template.

ROMANCING YORITOMO

Only a truly reckless and brave PC would attempt to romance the fearsome and dangerous leader of the Storm Fleet. Though Yoritomo is married, an act of great prowess, cunning, and power might convince the great Son of Storms that a tryst is worth his time. Only a truly impressive act could even gain his attention, let alone his affections. Good luck.

Credits

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GRAPHIC DESIGN MANAGER	Christopher Hosch	HEAD OF STUDIO	Andrew Navaro
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