

Legend of the Five Rings™

ROLEPLAYING



GAME
MASTER'S KIT



Dark Tides

*The tide slowly washes in. The harbor is quiet.
There are only the sounds of inhaled smoke and
exchanged coins, of deals made and crimes excused.*

What happens here, we keep as secrets.

The tide slowly washes out. The stains remain.

Dark Tides sends the player characters to the strange and obscure town of Taimana Choryū—more commonly known as Slow Tide Harbor—that the peculiar Tortoise Clan governs. The PCs are there to investigate the disappearance of opium-addicted samurai.

As they delve into the sordid world of Slow Tide Harbor, however, they find themselves uncovering forbidden magic and a blasphemous cult. The vanished samurai are actually being kidnapped and sold to Kitsu Sokori, a *mahō-tsukai* who is conducting sacrifices to boost her supernatural power. She has been using kidnapped peasants; however, actual samurai, honorable followers of the Emperor, would make for even greater offerings. In order to rescue the kidnapped samurai, the PCs have to ferret out which of Slow Tide's dishonorable smugglers and schemers are helping her.

This adventure is designed to challenge the player characters socially and emotionally, as well as with action and detective work. They rub shoulders with commoners and criminals, dig into smuggling and the drug trade, and meet with gaijin. Moreover, they must resist the temptation to simply cut down everyone who offends their sensibilities. The Tortoise, who govern the town, do not appreciate outsiders disrupting the fragile peace of their settlement. All of this provides interesting opportunities for the game master and players to explore the problems of composure and emotional stress, both in roleplay and with game mechanics.

Dark Tides does not have one designated villain. Instead, there are three different villainous individuals within the town—Tortoise samurai Kasuga Yumiko, crime lord Boss Yaguro, and gaijin smuggler Azif the Smooth—any one of whom could be working for Kitsu Sokori. The game master is free to choose which of the three is the “true” villain, or even to let the players' choices and preferences dictate the truth. Moreover, all three of them are thoroughly bad people, so the PCs can potentially pursue legal sanction against any of them—albeit at the risk of causing disruptions in Slow Tide Harbor and thus earning the Tortoise Clan's enmity.



Part One: Gazetteer

"In order to conduct activities that are not allowed, we must create places that do not exist."

—Agasha Kasuga

This section provides the GM with historical background and cultural information on the Tortoise Clan (one of the most obscure and scandalous of all minor clans), as well as a guide to the town of Slow Tide Harbor.

THE TORTOISE CLAN

Of all the minor clans of Rokugan, the clan of the Tortoise is perhaps both the most obscure and the most bizarre. Founded in the aftermath of the Battle of White Stag in the fifth century, the Tortoise Clan is—officially—merely a tiny clan charged with maintaining the ancient walls of Otsan Uchi. It was granted land in a modest territory northwest of the Imperial City, and has established small holdings across that area. The Tortoise are known to be quite eccentric, living alongside peasants and following an individualistic ethos that most samurai would consider odd and even shameful.

In actuality, the Tortoise Clan has a secret and unique duty: it is tasked with monitoring and covertly trading with the gaijin, in order to ensure the tragedy of White Stag is never repeated. Tortoise ships sail across the Sea of Amaterasu, visiting gaijin ports, where their crews learn about (and keep watch on) foreign cultures and trade for exotic goods to bring back to Rokugan. As a result, the Tortoise Clan more closely resembles a smuggling cartel than a proper clan. The Tortoise do not have a conventional program of training for their samurai in the manner of other clans. On the contrary, the second Tortoise Clan Champion, Kasuga Genjiko, told her people to each follow their own path as they saw fit.

Although the Tortoise Clan has been in existence for almost seven centuries, it remains quite small, with only a few hundred samurai and a single tiny province. Small groups of Tortoise may be found in many other parts of the Empire, however, running holdings that range from merchant stores to bonsai gardens—all the while maintaining the smuggling routes the clan relies on for its revenues. The Tortoise also control a secret offshore holding, a remote island called Kameyama Jima, where much of their covert trade with the gaijin actually takes place.

Unsurprisingly, the Great Clans view the Tortoise with contempt when they bother to think about them at all. The curious might ask how the Tortoise survive while routinely breaking the Empire's laws and customs. There are two answers. The first is that when this Tortoise Clan was established, it was done under the direct

authority and protection of the Emperor; this impedes any samurai who might otherwise cut them down or lead an army to exterminate them. The second is that it is a small clan whose members avoid notice and keep their worst activities well out of sight. Many Rokugani do not even know the clan exists, and most have never met a Tortoise samurai. The Tortoise Clan's true purpose—to keep watch on the gaijin—is known only to its members and to the Emperor. Most Emerald Magistrates are unaware of the deal, although the Emerald Champion might be.

A GUIDE TO SLOW TIDE HARBOR

Taimana Choryū, Slow Tide Harbor, is a thriving port town that is nonetheless one of the most obscure settlements in Rokugan. Although it is located only a short day's ride north of the Imperial City of Otsan Uchi, its existence is unknown to the vast majority of Rokugan's samurai. The Tortoise prefer to keep things this way, since Slow Tide is their major holding and the primary nexus for their smuggling activities. Those of other clans who visit or dwell in Slow Tide have sought it out deliberately, usually because they desire the illicit goods and services it offers.

Slow Tide is built on a peninsula in a swampy, irregular lagoon that is itself an offshoot of the Bay of the Golden Sun. The town boasts about three thousand residents, making it by far the largest single Tortoise settlement (although quite small compared to the nearby metropolis of Otsan Uchi). The majority of those living here are peasants and Tortoise samurai, and the difference between the two can sometimes be hard for outsiders to notice. There are also gaijin here, whose presence the Tortoise authorities accept for the sake of improving their trade and smuggling networks.

Many aspects of the Empire's laws are largely ignored within Slow Tide Harbor. Gaijin goods are freely available (and gaijin themselves are a not uncommon sight), and so are illicit domestic products such as opium. Even gaijin pepper (see the sidebar on page 7) can be acquired, though as this substance is so powerful and dangerous, even the Tortoise crack down on anyone involved in its trade—unless, of course, they themselves are behind it.

Unsurprisingly, Slow Tide Harbor is home to a powerful criminal class, which operates in a sort of mutual truce with the Tortoise (whose own activities are, after all, almost equally illegal). So long as certain lines are not crossed and suitable bribes are paid, the Tortoise look the other way. Any direct challenge to their authority, however, draws a sharp response.

THE BATTLE OF WHITE STAG

In the middle of the fifth century, Rokugan had one of its worst gaijin encounters. Foreigners to Rokugan had been encountered before, but when ships from a distant kingdom sailed into the Bay of the Golden Sun and attempted to open trade and diplomatic relations with the Empire, it ignited a terrible conflict.

At first, the Empress welcomed these visitors and gave them permission to reside in the capital and conduct trade, but after two years she abruptly—and for reasons known only to a select few—declared an edict outlawing such trade. The gaijin refused to accept this and attacked Otsan Uchi, the Imperial Capital. The initial attack was horrific, though history has obscured the exact losses.

The city's defenders rose to avenge the Emerald Empire and managed to defeat and drive off the gaijin ships. Oddly, a Dragon Clan shugenja named Agasha Kasuga helped the surviving gaijin to safely escape. Later, in private audience with the Emperor, Kasuga was pardoned, again for reasons not shared. Kasuga and his followers were granted minor clan status, and so the Tortoise were born as a secret defense against further gaijin activities that might imperil the Empire.

THE GOVERNOR'S NEIGHBORHOOD

The Tortoise Clan as a whole makes few pretensions to nobility. In Slow Tide Harbor, most of their samurai live scattered through the town alongside the common folk. However, the governor does maintain an official residence, a large two-story estate with a walled garden and attached stables, guard station, and servants' quarters.

The other high-ranking Tortoise samurai and officials all live nearby, forming a neighborhood that is as close as Slow Tide gets to a "Noble Quarter."

The Governor: Kasuga Mugatsu

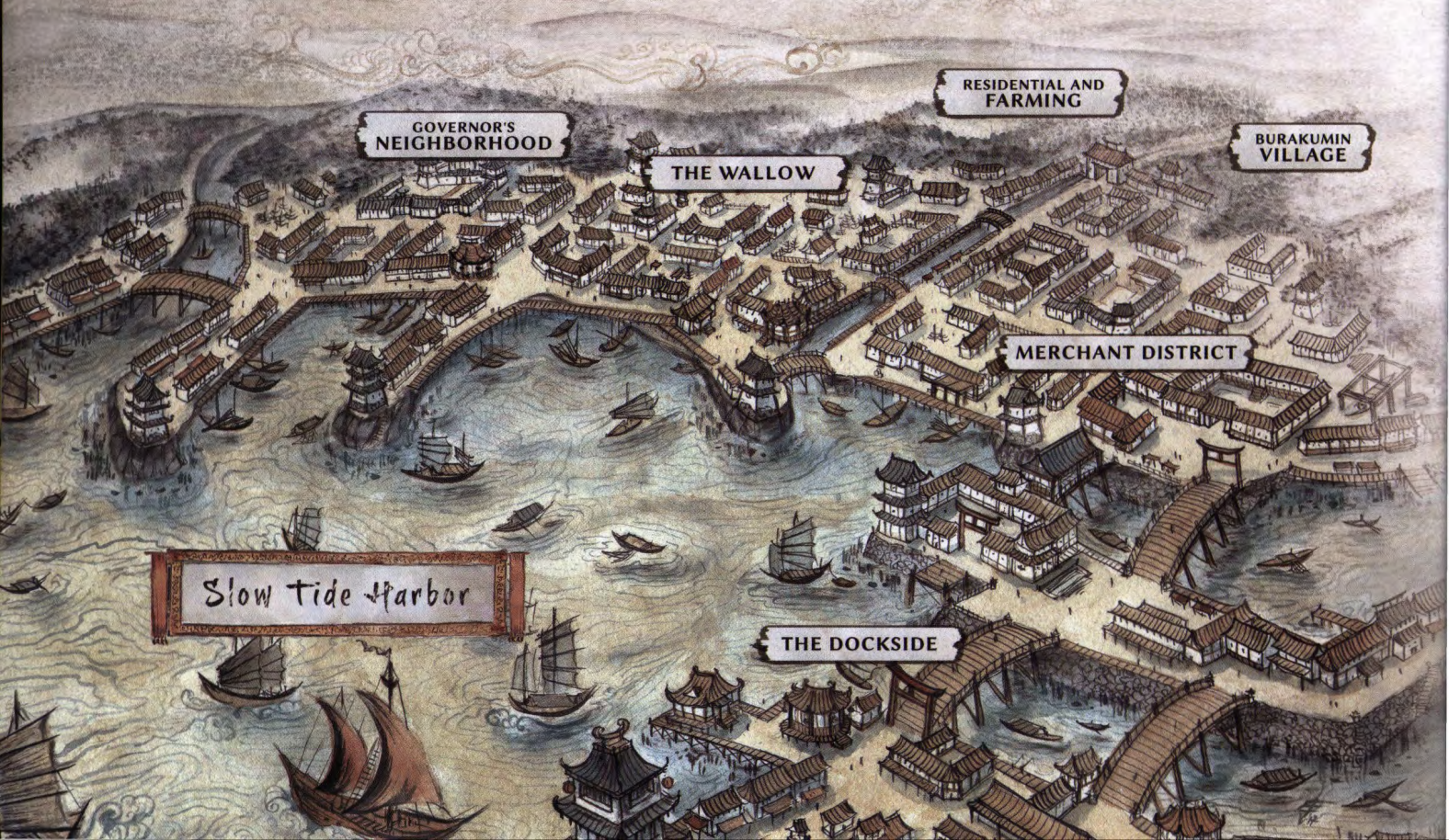
The governor of Slow Tide Harbor is a lean, almost bone-thin man in late middle age, past the normal age of retirement but holding on to power because he has no heirs. He is not a particularly refined man—in that regard being little different from lower-ranking Tortoise—and he indulges regularly in opium. He prefers not to be troubled by the work of governance; so long as the taxes (and bribes) come in and there is no fighting in the streets, he is content. Lower-ranking individuals such as Kasuga Mikoto take their cue from him.

The Magistrate: Kasuga Mikoto

The Tortoise Clan magistrate for Slow Tide Harbor resides in a rather nice single-story dwelling, built in a rectangle around an interior garden. The front entrance leads into an office where at least one of the magistrate's *yoriki* (assistants) can always be found.

The Tortoise Clan magistrate for Slow Tide Harbor is a pouch-faced woman in her late thirties named Kasuga Mikoto. She is a widow, having lost her wife to a duel with a Crane almost a decade ago, and has two children, Chisa (age twelve) and Tokko (age ten). Mikoto gives the appearance of being less intelligent—her lower lip tends to droop, and she speaks vaguely, sometimes losing the trail of a conversation. However, this outward behavior is more act than reality. She finds using this behavior to fool others makes it easier for her to get through life in Slow Tide Harbor.

Mikoto generally takes a leave-well-enough-alone attitude, avoiding stirring up trouble as long as everyone avoids disruptions and pays their bribes on time. Serious crimes, such as murder, are still investigated, though she chafes at having to deal with such interruptions to her routine. This keeps the clashes between the three major crime bosses at a nonlethal level, and it means she'll be thoroughly unhappy if the PCs start killing people as part of their investigation. She is also hostile to any PCs from the Crane Clan, although she knows better than to provoke a duel.



The Shrine to Jikoku

There are a number of small public shrines to various Fortunes scattered around Slow Tide Harbor. This one, however, is large enough to be considered almost a temple. It is a single-story, pagoda-roofed building with a central worship chamber and smaller rooms to the sides and back, which house the trio of monks who oversee it. These monks also travel through the city daily to tend to the smaller shrines.

This shrine is dedicated to Jikoku, the Fortune of the East Wind. Since the eastern wind comes from over the sea, bringing with it mysteries from beyond the Empire, the Tortoise Clan finds this Fortune singularly important.

The chief priest here (the shrine is too small for him to be called a high priest) is a long-faced man named Ojo. Friendly and welcoming, Ojo is quite acclimated to the town's unusual nature and even socializes with gaijin, hoping to lead them onto the path of Enlightenment.

The shrine does not tie directly into **Dark Tides** but is included for continued adventures in Slow Tide Harbor. Spiritual PCs may wish to visit it during their investigation here, though, and the GM can certainly use Ojo to offer guidance and perhaps even clues if necessary.

THE MERCHANT DISTRICT

Beyond the docks is a network of tangled streets lined with shops, businesses, and warehouses. The local residents refer to the area, somewhat ironically, as the "Merchant District." In truth, it would be more accurate to call it the "smugglers' district," but appearances must be maintained. This place is busy throughout the day and well into the night, and its narrow, irregular streets and central marketplace are always crowded.

The Open-Air Market

Most Rokugani towns have something like this: an open market encompassing a mix of wooden stalls and silk-shaded tables. Here, though, there are a many gaijin items for sale as well—strange jewelry, exotic weapons, peculiar clothing, intense spices, and foreign cosmetics. Opium and other drugs are not sold openly, however, as even the Tortoise tolerate only so much. Many food and herb vendors covertly still sell them or direct customers to opium dens on the Dockside or in the Wallow.

PCs wishing to purchase some of these illicit items generally find they are quite expensive; there are no fixed prices for them, but the GM should set values that are just outside their reach. Most of the merchants serve as conduits between the smugglers and their customers. PCs who ask around at the market can learn a great deal about Slow Tide's covert economy, as long as they refrain from issuing condemnations and making arrests.

The Inn of Many Paths

This two-story inn is probably the town's most "respectable" such establishment, although that is a limited endorsement. It is run by a portly, middle-aged woman named Chiyu. She maintains it with the help of her two teenage sons, who serve as both workers and bouncers. The place caters equally to samurai and peasants. It can get a bit rowdy, but not nearly as bad as the places in the Dockside. Otomo Hiroshige, the first missing samurai of note, stayed here, and it is likely where the PCs begin their investigations in the town.

Splendid Visions and Boss Kizo

One of three major crime lords in Slow Tide Harbor, Kizo maintains a public identity as the humble proprietor of a popular woodblock print shop called Splendid Visions. The shop also deals in sumi-e art, though to a much lesser degree. Kizo appears harmless and normally speaks in a soft, gentle voice. A family man, he is often seen cheerfully walking around town with his grandchildren.

Beneath this charming façade, however, is a cold and calculating criminal. Kizo runs an assortment of protection rackets against the other businesses in this district. With the support of Kasuga Yumiko, he has also been making inroads into the opium racket as well. So far, his gains have been at the expense of Boss Yaguro in the Wallow; it is likely that if he continues to expand, though, he will also come into conflict with Boss Hana.

The Upstart: Kasuga Yumiko

This Tortoise samurai is officially a merchant patron, sponsoring several ships that call Slow Tide Harbor their home port. In reality, of course, this means she is a smuggler—one of the most powerful here. She has been steadily and relentlessly building up wealth and influence through secret commerce in illegal drugs (both opium and exotic foreign ones), gaijin items, and stolen goods—the latter usually bought cheaply from pirates or bandit gangs. She is allied with Boss Kizo but she also has extensive and growing networks elsewhere in Rokugan. Her long-term goal is not just wealth, but political power, both within her clan and in the Empire as a whole. She nurses secret dreams of her clan becoming far more powerful, perhaps even ascending to the ranks of the Great Clans.

Yumiko is a petite woman in her mid-twenties with a dueling scar along one cheek, her eyes glittering with ambition. In contrast to many of her fellow Tortoise samurai, who tend to dress little different from the peasants around them, she always wears proper samurai garb in the clan colors of green and black. She is unmarried and has no intention of changing that, an eccentricity that would be problematic in other clans but in the Tortoise Clan is of no great account.

GAIJIN IN ROKUGAN

Since the Battle of White Stag (see page 3), Imperial decree has forbidden all direct contact with foreigners. However, as with many other aspects of Rokugan, what is official is not always the reality. The Tortoise Clan has maintained covert trade and contact with the gaijin throughout the centuries since then, and they are not alone in this. The Mantis, Phoenix, and Unicorn also have covert links with outsiders.

There are many reasons for these clans to maintain this trade despite the laws against it, but the most basic and obvious one is wealth. Rich samurai and merchants pay exorbitantly for unique and exotic curiosities from foreign lands. It is not actually illegal to own such items, although it can be considered scandalous, depending on what they are.

For an actual gaijin to enter Rokugan is quite unusual but not altogether impossible. Indeed, if one reads between the lines of the Tortoise Clan's history and founding, it is evident that most of the original "Tortoise samurai" were gaijin stranded in the Empire after their fleet was driven away. On rare occasions since then, gaijin have visited the Empire covertly (with or without the cooperation of the Tortoise). In exceptionally few instances, some have even lived there permanently.

Kasuga Yumiko is one of three potential villains in this adventure. If the GM selects her for the role, her motivation is the desire to boost her own power by spectacularly defeating a threat to the Empire: the mahō cult of Kitsu Sokori. She is funneling kidnapped samurai to Sokori until the time is ripe for her to swoop in, destroy the cult, and reap the political rewards. Since she herself must have this heroic role, she is very unhappy at the prospect of the PCs digging into things, and she tries to throw them off the scent or even frame them as incompetent. Yumiko's profile is on page 23.

THE DOCKSIDE

The town's coastline runs for almost a *li* (about a third of a mile) along the curving, irregular northern shore of the bay. The main commercial area, known as the Dockside, has dozens of piers extending into the water. The wharves are always crowded; there are ten to fifteen ships in the harbor at any given time, mostly the standard *kobune* but also a few merchant variants of the larger *atakebune*. There is also at least one vessel of distinctly foreign appearance, with a low-raking deck and a trio of masts with triangular sails; the locals behave as though this is nothing strange or exceptional.

The buildings near the docks are a mixture of warehouses and businesses. All cater to the needs of visiting sailors: cheap inns, sake houses, gambling dens, and a number of semi-covert brothels and opium parlors.

The Harbormaster: Kasuga Nagato

The harbormaster, Kasuga Nagato, has an office located at the southern end of the docks district. It is a large square building on tall wooden posts, filled with shelves stuffed haphazardly with scrolls.

Nagato is a portly, unhealthy man in his forties with a perpetual sneer. He is usually only present in his office in the morning and mid-afternoon. At the latter time, it is not uncommon for him to be drunk. He is also wholly corrupt, not only taking bribes from smugglers but also demanding bribes from smugglers and merchants alike to allow their ships to operate unmolested.

Suitengu's Rest

Suitengu's Rest is one of the less disreputable establishments in the this region, and is located on the southern docks where many gaijin dealings are made. The inn is run by a stooped, bald-headed old man named Zurui, who shuffles slowly, delivering cheap drinks and cheap food.

About half the guests here are samurai—mostly Tortoise and Mantis sailors. The gaijin smuggler Azif keeps rooms here for meetings with locals. The sinister rōnin mahō apprentice Gaku is staying here as well.

The Gaijin: Azif the Smooth

This gaijin in his thirties has black hair and a thick beard. He normally resides in his ship, a gaijin vessel whose name translates (roughly) as *Obedient Slave*. Originally from the city of al-Bhagvar, located along the Sand Road of the Caliphate, he fled after a youthful life of crime and murder. He eventually wound up as the captain of the *Slave*, pursuing a career of mixed piracy, smuggling, and legitimate trade.

Bold and ambitious, Azif sails directly to Slow Tide Harbor rather than following the Tortoise Clan's preferred protocol of landing on the remote island of Kameyama Jima. This has paid off for him with considerable wealth and improved contacts. He has cultivated alliances with the town's officials and merchants, as well as with the crime lord Boss Hana. Azif is fluent in Rokugani as well as several gaijin languages including his native Nehiri. He is one of the two most powerful smugglers here, the other being Kasuga Yumiko.



In addition to more conventional smuggling, he also brings in gaijin pepper, selling it through the Tortoise networks and various fronts to the Daidoji Harriers and Scorpion shinobi. He's also smuggling in a substance called "Blue Flame," created from a flowering plant unknown in Rokugan. It is a potent drug on its own, but when mixed with opium, it produces a more intense and ecstatic experience than pure opium does.

Azif is one of three potential villains in this adventure. If the GM selects this option, Azif is simply pursuing another profitable venture: smuggling people on behalf of a customer (Kitsu Sokori) who is willing to pay quite well. After all, her horrid blood rites are only hurting Rokugani, not himself, his crew, or his distant people. Azif's profile is on page 22.

THE WALLOW

The seediest part of Slow Tide is a pair of long, winding, parallel streets—known as the Street of False Hopes and the Street of Lowering Clouds—and the many crooked alleyways that connect them. Known as the Wallow, the town's most disparaged aspects can found here—opium dens that operate openly, gaudy brothels that no honorable samurai would ever enter, the offices of predatory moneylenders, and inns that are little more than filthy hovels for the poor and hopeless. The name was originally an insult from a long-ago Crane Emerald Magistrate ("this is where the scum come to wallow in their sins") and was adopted by the residents as an ironic tribute.

Those who come to Slow Tide in search of trade go to the Dockside or the Merchant District. Those who wish to indulge their sordid desires come to the Wallow. This is the area where samurai have been disappearing, and where the PCs must conduct a substantial portion of their investigation.

Boss Hana

The lean, middle-aged woman who calls herself "the Flower" is one of three major crime lords in Slow Tide Harbor. Formerly a brothel madam, she branched into running protection rackets against rival brothels and later added opium dens to her portfolio. She controls the eastern half of the Wallow and has been expanding her territory aggressively in the last few years, mainly at the expense of Boss Yaguro. A key aspect of her recent success is her alliance with Azif, which has allowed her access to Blue Flame. Her biggest source of income now is the large opium den here called the Golden Dream, which is booming thanks to the introduction of the new drug.

Boss Yaguro

The man named Yaguro was once a formidable brawler who rose in the ranks of his gang through his ability to dispose of rivals in back-alley fights. Those glory days, however, are long past. Now he is an old man with slumped shoulders, thinning hair, and a potbelly, and his opium gang is losing ground to more aggressive rivals—namely Bosses Hana and Kizo. Hana is using Blue Flame to push him out of his core territories in the Wallow, while Kizo is pressuring him in the Merchant District. Some of Yaguro's gang members are starting to drift away, joining the rival groups or simply leaving.

Yaguro spends all day in the back office of his main opium den, the Green Rest, smoking his pipe and obsessively watching entering customers. He has become increasingly desperate to find new sources of wealth. Most recently, he has stooped to selling bankrupt opium addicts to the gaijin to crew their boats—so far just peasants, but it is likely this will eventually escalate.

Yaguro is one of three potential villains for the adventure. If the GM selects him for the role, he has already escalated to selling drug-addicted samurai to Kitsu Sokori (via her agent, the vile rōnin Gaku). Yaguro's profile is on page 21.

RESIDENTIAL AND FARMING

Slow Tide Harbor is a town, not a city, and does not have a fortified exterior wall. Beyond the core neighborhoods, the town sprawls into a series of residences interspersed with small shops of artisans and smiths. In contrast to traditional settlements, there is no clear delineation between the samurai neighborhoods and those of peasants.

Surrounding the landward side of Slow Tide Harbor are the grain farms and rice fields which the peasant tend. These are actually fairly sparse compared to the size of the town. Slow Tide Harbor relies on trade to bring in the extra food it needs, and would be in serious trouble if its shipping was ever cut off.

THE BURAKUMIN VILLAGE

No large settlement in Rokugan can survive without the lowly *burakumin* to collect the refuse and dispose of the dead, and in this regard Slow Tide Harbor is unexceptional. About a hundred such *hinin* live in this satellite village located on the northern fringe of the town's farmlands. A pair of narrow, winding paths connect it to the main body of Slow Tide Harbor; one of these leads to the primary residential part of town, while the other eventually turns into the Street of Lowering Clouds, entering the town through the neighborhood known as the Wallow.

GAIJIN PEPPER

Made of small, black grains, this highly combustible substance is one of the most illegal gaijin imports and is banned throughout the Empire. Certain clan schools are rumored to use it, however, and Slow Tide Harbor is known in illicit circles as one of the most reliable locations for purchase.

Part Two: Tortoise Clan Player Characters

Players can use the following information to create player character samurai from the Tortoise Clan. This can be especially useful for new players joining a group, as characters made this way can organically join existing PCs in Slow Tide Harbor for **Dark Tides**. Tortoise samurai also make perfect replacement characters should a PC not survive their time here!

THE TORTOISE MINOR CLAN

Ring Increase: +1 Air

Skill Increase: +1 Commerce

Status: 25

It is possible there would never have been a Tortoise Clan if not for the terrible events of the Battle of White Stag. The conflict clearly displayed the dangers of unchecked and unmonitored gaijin activities in Rokugan, though, and it is now the duty of this unheralded and unassuming clan to be the eyes of the Emperor against this menace. From their merchant fronts they act like mere peasants (and often behave and dress like them), ignoring the open contempt from other samurai. Most clans simply ignore them, though Tortoise connections to the smuggling of gaijin goods are an open secret in many areas. All the while, the Tortoise secretly serve the Emperor by controlling and limiting such smuggling and gathering intelligence on gaijin activities. Such a life may seem like one without honor or glory, but the Tortoise know their duty is more important than their image.

The Kasuga Family

Ring Increase: +1 Earth or +1 Water

Skill Increases: +1 Skulduggery, +1 Government

Glory: 33

Starting Wealth: 9 koku

The main family of the Tortoise, the Kasuga can trace their lineage even beyond the clan's formation to the Dragon, from which the Tortoise founder Agasha Kasuga originated. It was Kasuga who rescued the stranded gaijin after their fleet was crushed, and it was Kasuga who the Emperor charged with forming a new minor clan out of a motley collection of clanless rōnin, heimin, and even some of those same gaijin. When samurai think of the Tortoise (if they do at all), they generally think of the Kasuga and their smuggling and other criminal activities. The Kasuga follow their duty, no matter who they must deal with and the honorless actions they must endure. They eschew higher status, knowing that their service in this vital matter is its own reward.

WHAT DOES YOUR CHARACTER KNOW?

All Tortoise Clan characters have a greater awareness of the following topics:

- ⊗ You have a strong grasp of the politics within Tortoise lands, as well as general information of the clan's major cities and ports such as Kyuden Kasuga and Slow Tide Harbor.
- ⊗ You know much about gaijin lands such as Pavarre and the Ivory Kingdoms, including their local customs, and may know several gaijin traders personally.
- ⊗ You can speak one or more foreign languages such as Ivindi, Myantu, or Portuga fluently, and are at least conversant in almost any foreign language that one might encounter in Rokugan.
- ⊗ You know the importance of keeping secrets and abiding lesser infractions of law and honor for the good of the Empire.

WHAT DOES BUSHIDŌ MEAN TO YOUR CLAN?

The Tortoise believe in the Path of No Path, whereby each clan member can choose a direction for their life individually, rather than a single, established path that all must follow. This grants greater flexibility for solving problems within the clan, and also greater moral flexibility when dealing with criminals and gaijin. The only thing that binds all Tortoise samurai is their mandate from the Emperor. For this reason, Duty (Chūgi) holds a special place for the Tortoise as their every honorless action is done to as per Imperial decree.

The Tortoise have little patience for courtly deeds, though, and care even less for diplomatic niceties. Such things are trivial when the entire Empire is at stake should they fail to prevent another Battle of White Stag, after all. Thus, the Bushidō tenet of Courtesy (Meiyo) is less important to members of the Tortoise Clan.

See page 301 of the Core Rulebook for more information on how these can affect your honor and glory.

Kasuga Smuggler School [Courtier]

The Kasuga have several schools that are the public faces of the Tortoise. Outsiders who are even aware of the Smuggler school believe it to be linked to tawdry merchant affairs, and thus beneath their notice. The Tortoise do their best to foster this misconception, for it actually trains their samurai who oversee the clan's extensive smuggling and covert trading operations.

Kasuga smugglers must be proficient in a wide range of activities, from simple deception and disguise to negotiating with gaijin traders and Rokugani criminals. Many travel to gaijin lands and might spend long periods at sea.

As they rise through the school, their focus can shift from base smuggling and dockside brawls to more refined operations as they interact with wider stratas of Rokugani society of various legitimacies. At the height of their power, they may acquire foreign works of art for Rokugani collectors or command large trading concerns that interact with many other clans. Some even "retire" to small merchant concerns, using their years of experience to better monitor gaijin activities and gaijin goods at a lower level. No loyal Kasuga ever forgets the true reason for the Tortoise, after all, and all know the price should they fail.

Rings: +1 Air, +1 Water

Starting Skills (choose five): +1 Commerce, +1 Culture, +1 Courtesy, +1 Martial Arts [Melee], +1 Seafaring, +1 Skulduggery

Honor: 29

Techniques Available: Kata (ㄨ), Rituals (ㄨ), Shūji (ㄨ)

Starting Techniques:

- ❖ **Kata:** ❖ Rushing Avalanche Style
- ❖ **Shūji (choose one):** Honest Assessment, Well of Desire

Way of the Tortoise (School Ability): You never need to stake glory to publicly use a Trade skill, so long as you are doing so as part of your duty to your clan.

Once per scene, you may add a number of kept ■ set to ✨ results equal to your school rank to a check to interact with one or more gaijin, peasants, merchants, burakumin, or any other character with status of 20 or lower.

Starting Outfit: Traveling clothes, wakizashi (short sword), any one weapon of rarity 6 or lower, calligraphy set, knife, kiseru, abacus or gaijin compass, traveling pack, pouch of gaijin coins.



	ADVANCE	TYPE
RANK 1	Trade Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Culture	Skill
	Courtesy	Skill
	Martial Arts [Melee]	Skill
	Rank 1 Water Shūji	❖ Tech. Grp.
	❖ Coiling Serpent Style	❖ Technique
	Courtier's Resolve	❖ Technique
RANK 2	Social Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Commerce	Skill
	Seafaring	Skill
	Skulduggery	Skill
	Rank 1–2 Kata	❖ Tech. Grp.
	❖ Ebb and Flow	❖ Technique
	Tributaries of Trade	❖ Technique
RANK 3	Trade Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Fitness	Skill
	Government	Skill
	Martial Arts [Ranged]	Skill
	Rank 1–3 Air Shūji	❖ Tech. Grp.
	All Arts Are One	❖ Technique
	❖ Breath of Wind Style	❖ Technique
RANK 4	Scholar Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Design	Skill
	Martial Arts [Unarmed]	Skill
	Skulduggery	Skill
	Rank 1–4 Kata	❖ Tech. Grp.
	❖ Buoyant Arrival	❖ Technique
	Regal Bearing	❖ Technique
RANK 5	Trade Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Aesthetics	Skills
	Courtesy	Skill
	Sentiment	Skill
	Rank 1–5 Water Shūji	❖ Tech. Grp.
	Bend with the Storm	❖ Technique
	Immovable Hand of Peace	❖ Technique
RANK 6	Shell of the Tortoise (Mastery Ability): Once per game session as an action, you may invoke the shell of the Tortoise: the Emperor's remit to operate as you deem necessary. Until the end of the scene, treat your status as 90, and other characters must forfeit honor and glory equal to the difference between your status rank and their status rank to accuse you of wrongdoing related to the acquisition or transport of goods, illicit or otherwise.	

Part Three: The Adventure

*"Welcome to our humble city, honorable samurai.
May your visit be quiet and uneventful.
What delights can we offer you?"*

—Kizo, proprietor of Splendid Visions

The adventure sends the PCs on an odyssey through the town of Slow Tide Harbor. Initially, in Act One, they simply investigate the disappearance of a dishonorable Imperial noble, but looking into the case soon draws them to a larger problem of disappearing samurai and criminal conspiracies. In Act Two, a clue to the location of the missing samurai reveals that the victims are being sold to a mysterious villain who may be a mahō-tsukai. Finally, in Act Three, they engage in a climactic battle to save the kidnapped samurai and defeat the villain's conspirators—though the true mastermind, Kitsu Sokori, remains in the shadows for them to face again.

INTRODUCING THE PCS

Slow Tide Harbor is not the sort of place that most samurai would choose to visit. Accordingly, the adventure assumes that at least one of the PCs is an Emerald Magistrate. If some of the PCs are not, they can serve as yoriki to those who are. Alternatively, their daimyō may owe someone a favor and use the PCs to pay it off.

The adventure begins with the PCs being asked to investigate the disappearance of Otomo Hiroshige, the wastrel offspring of an Imperial noble, Otomo Saneda. Saneda is a man of wealth and influence. When his son went missing, he immediately called in favors to have Emerald Magistrates or others investigate.

The GM may wish to start off the adventure by having the group roleplay an initial meeting between the PCs and one of Saneda's allies, Doji Hiroka. (Saneda is far too important to meet with the PCs in person.) This could take place anywhere convenient for the GM, such as wherever the PCs finished their previous adventure or at a small Otomo family holding in Otosan Uchi.

Hiroka is a charming and elegant woman in her thirties, dressed in the latest court fashion with her hair dyed a pure white—the epitome of the Crane courtier. She explains the situation to the PCs in a very careful manner, avoiding speaking any rude, blunt truths. GMs can use this scene as a general lesson in the way that high-ranking samurai discuss such problems. Hiroka uses delicate and indirect language, relies on suggestion rather than explanation, and subtly encourages the PCs to figure things out for themselves so she does not have to say things she would prefer not to say. If a PC wishes to push her into speaking more clearly, they can choose to forfeit an amount of honor equal to their honor rank to violate the tenet of Courtesy.

That being said, the information Hiroka seeks to convey is the following, which can be adapted to use as her responses to PC questioning:

- Otomo Hiroshige is a wastrel and an opium addict (or, as Hiroka politely puts it, "*a struggling young man*"). After his father forbade him to indulge his shameful addiction within their home, he fled to an obscure and disreputable town called Slow Tide Harbor. He stayed at the Inn of Many Paths and he occasionally sent his father letters. In these, he claimed he was using the false name of Doji Hiroshige (so as not to bring shame upon the Otomo name) and he also frequently begged for money to pay his debts. Eventually Saneda tired of his son's behavior and dispatched a trusted retainer to fetch the young man back to Otosan Uchi. However, when the retainer arrived at the inn, the innkeeper claimed not to have seen Hiroshige for over a week (and she since has been trying to collect his unpaid rent).
- If the PCs ask why Saneda did not get help from the local authorities, Hiroka explains (somewhat more directly than in her other remarks) that the minor clan of the Tortoise govern the town, a group not known for its honor or respect for the law ("*the Tortoise would certainly not find such a person in the places they would look*"). Otomo Saneda does not trust them to find his son, preferring instead to call on the honorable services of the Emerald Magistrates. At the GM's option, Hiroka may also warn the PCs that the Tortoise Clan has the protection of the Emperor himself, making it difficult for Saneda to bring direct pressure to bear on it.

Alternatively, the GM can have the PCs make a **TN 3 Government (Earth 2) check** to be aware of the Tortoise Clan's unique aspects and protections.

CONTINUITY FROM PREVIOUS ADVENTURES

Players may be entering this adventure having played through the *Legend of the Five Rings Beginner Game*, in which one or more of their characters attained the position of Emerald Magistrate. If so, the GM may have their arrival at Slow Tide Harbor be the start of one of their first investigations. Word of their deeds at the Topaz Championship may have preceded them; it could even be the reason why they were asked to look into this matter. Alternatively, they might be passing through the region on the way to another posting that the GM has planned for their characters. This approach would work for new characters and veteran PCs alike.

If the PCs are more experienced characters, they may have been working at Slow Tide Harbor for some time as magistrates, and this could be their latest case. If so, the GM should paraphrase text as needed to reflect their experience here. This also allows the GM to weave the events of **Dark Tides** into a longer campaign to delve even deeper into this town and the murky morality within. There is certainly enough going on here to support many sessions of investigations, which perhaps could lead to the PCs becoming major players in the town's power structure.

ACT ONE: INVESTIGATION

Read or paraphrase the following text aloud when the PCs first arrive at Slow Tide Harbor:

The winding secondary road you have followed from Otosan Uchi has taken you through near-empty lands. Finally, after several hours in which you saw no human settlement at all, you catch the scent of salt water and rotting vegetation on the breeze. A half-hour later, you emerge from the latest belt of scrubby trees and see a moderately large town sprawled out ahead of you. There is no visible wall or fortifications, and the number of farms and rice paddies seems paltry for a town of this size. The settlement seems to have been built around the end of a marshy, tree-lined lagoon that presumably connects to the great Bay of the Golden Sun to the east. You can catch glimpses of ships' masts rising above the rooftops. It seems you have arrived at Slow Tide Harbor.

The scenario begins as the PCs arrive at Slow Tide Harbor, ready to start investigating Otomo Hiroshige's disappearance. At this point, their information is quite limited: all they know is that Hiroshige was going by a false identity as a member of the Crane Clan (Doji Hiroshige), was staying at the Inn of Many Paths, and apparently vanished at least two weeks ago.

The PCs are free to do whatever they wish; the scenario is designed to function initially as a "sandbox" and does not acquire plot momentum until Act Two. However, there are certain actions that are fairly standard for Emerald Magistrates arriving in a new location: presenting themselves to the local ruler (in this case, the governor) and to the local clan magistrate. Failure to do these things is a mild slight in courtly etiquette, so the GM should feel free to remind the players if they are not aware of this. This should not require a skill check—it is something any Rokugani samurai would know.

MEETING WITH THE GOVERNOR

If the PCs request an audience with the governor, read or paraphrase the following text aloud to set the scene:

After a wait of about an hour, the door to the audience room slides open. A lean, almost bone-thin man in late middle age comes in and seats himself at the head of the room. Two servants slide the door shut behind him and then position themselves to his side, their heads slightly bowed, waiting attentively. The man—you presume him to be the governor, though his garments are not as elegant as you might expect for a samurai of rank—regards you vaguely for a time, tapping his chin as though he is trying to remember something. Finally, he nods. "Honorable magistrates. What brings you to Slow Tide Harbor?"

Kasuga Mugatsu is polite but vague. He comes across as irritated by the PCs' presence in his town, and also as somewhat disconnected and uncaring. He encourages them to complete their investigation swiftly. Depending on what the PCs say, he may simply wish them well, or he may offer them a subtle warning not to disrupt the "equilibrium" of Slow Tide Harbor.

If needed, the governor uses the **Venerable Provincial Daimyō** profile, on page 315 of the *Legend of the Five Rings Core Rulebook*, but with the Gruff demeanor.

MEETING WITH THE MAGISTRATE

The PCs are not immediately required to seek a meeting with the local clan magistrate. However, they probably need to meet Kasuga Mikoto at some point regardless. This might be to request an arrest authorization for a local samurai, or perhaps to request her direct assistance to confront the villains.

That being said, the most likely reason for the PCs to meet with Mikoto is to ask if she has any information on the disappearance of "Doji" Hiroshige. If needed, Mikoto uses the **Seasoned Courtier** profile, on page 313 in the *Core Rulebook*, but has the Detached demeanor.

Once the player characters are ready to talk to Mikoto, read or paraphrase the following text aloud when the meeting begins:

The samurai who ambles into the room is somewhat paunchy, with a puffy face and a lower lip that droops slightly. She seats herself with a grunt and carefully unfolds a large fan before waving it languidly. "A great honor to have Emerald Magistrates in my town. A great honor, indeed." She regards you with a somewhat detached expression.

CULTURE SHOCK

It can be presumed that most or all of the PCs have no previous experience with the Tortoise Clan before visiting Slow Tide Harbor. There are a number of aspects to the place that they are likely to find unsettling or downright shocking.

In a normal Rokugani town, it is easy to tell samurai apart from commoners, thanks to differences in dress and behavior. In Slow Tide Harbor, this is much more difficult because so many Tortoise samurai dress and act almost the same as the commoners. Even more confusing, this is not a consistent difference. Some Tortoise still dress and act more or less like conventional samurai, so the PCs may wind up constantly second-guessing themselves.

A small but noticeable number of gaijin are either visiting or living in Slow Tide Harbor. This should be shocking to most Rokugani, since, officially, gaijin are barred from the Empire. Even Unicorn and Mantis PCs, whose clans have their own covert contacts with gaijin, are probably surprised at how open the gaijin presence is here.

The abuse of opium and other drugs is more widespread and casually accepted here than almost anywhere else in the Empire. Only the notorious Scorpion cities of Ryokō Owari and the City of the Open Hand rival Slow Tide Harbor for open toleration of these shameful vices.

As noted earlier, Kasuga Mikoto is actually smarter and more capable than she lets on. She is not happy to have investigators in her town, and she worries that they will cause trouble and disrupt the careful balance she maintains on behalf of the governor. (A **TN 2 Sentiment [Void 1] check** can reveal hints as to her motivations during their questioning.) In truth, she knows a great deal about the various smugglers, schemers, and criminal factions in Slow Tide Harbor, but she avoids sharing that information unless she absolutely has to. She might be forthcoming, however, if the PCs convince her that they don't seek to upset things in her town; the sooner they have solved the disappearance, they might say, the sooner they will depart.

Threats probably won't be useful (and require a **TN 4 Command check**), but attempts to get Mikoto on the PCs' side should generally be successful, as they lessen any disruption. These should require a **TN 2 Courtesy (Void 1) check**.

The following items can be adapted as replies to PC questioning:

- ✱ Mikoto knows that three clan samurai ("Doji" Hiroshige, Kasuga Toru, and Kasuga Michiko) and a rōnin named Fubato, have all vanished in the last six weeks. Another samurai, Yasuki Suzaku of the Crab Clan, also vanished during that time and was later found dead in an alley. This is an unusual run of crimes. However, for the moment, she does not ascribe this to a conspiratorial plot or a single enemy; rather, she assumes this is just a run of bad luck. Disappearances and murders are not uncommon occurrences in Slow Tide Harbor, after all.

- ✱ If the PCs ask for information and details on Hiroshige's disappearance, she has little to offer. The man was staying at the Inn of Many Paths and vanished without paying his rent. Mikoto might indirectly suggest that Hiroshige may simply have fled to avoid paying his debts. *"Surely, he has simply gone to get more money and will return with his payment any day now."* No body or other evidence has been found.

- ✱ If the PCs ask for more information about why Hiroshige was in Slow Tide Harbor or what he was doing there, Mikoto smiles in a slightly vacuous way. *"I invite you to consider, honorable magistrates, why a samurai from another clan might seek out Slow Tide Harbor. There are really only two reasons for one to be here, and I doubt your friend was seeking out gaijin curiosities."* She avoids using words like "opium" or "drugs" unless the PCs push her into doing so, perhaps through threats to her comfortable livelihood or insinuations that the crime lords of the city are extremely unhappy with her efforts.



- ❖ Mikoto does not volunteer any further information on any other crimes unless the PCs ask the right questions, and even then, she minimizes their significance. *"Well, what do you expect in a town like this? Slow Tide Harbor is not a place where Bushidō is valued highly."* If the PCs (politely) insist on more information, she eventually gives them the names of the victims (if she hasn't already) and the location where Suzaku's body was found.
- ❖ Mikoto knows the identities of all the major criminal "players" in Slow Tide (the three crime lords and the two major smugglers) but does not share that information unless the PCs specifically ask or otherwise give her a good reason to do so.
- ❖ If the PCs mention or complain about gaijin in Slow Tide Harbor, Mikoto talks vaguely about special exceptions made by her superiors, pointedly mentions the Emperor's protection of the Tortoise Clan, and notes that she would greatly prefer not to have to deal with any "untoward violence" in her town.

THE INN OF MANY PATHS

The PCs most likely come here next, since it is where Otomo Hiroshige was thought to live. Read or paraphrase the following text aloud when they arrive:

The inn that was Otomo Hiroshige's last known residence is a two-story building located on the east side of the town's open-air market. It seems to be fairly well maintained but is plain and unimpressive compared to the sort of establishment where an Imperial noble would normally stay. There is no garden and no stable. The door is open, with a curtain screening the top third of the doorway.

When you brush the curtain aside and enter the common room, you see an assortment of worn tables and chairs, about half of them occupied by what appears to be a jumbled mix of samurai and peasants—it is difficult to be sure. A portly, middle-aged commoner is setting cups and bowls in front of customers; she pauses to bow at you, her face set in an impassive blank. "Welcome, honorable samurai. Do you need food? A room?"

Chiyu is normally a cheerful and raucous woman when speaking with her customers (regardless of whether they are samurai or peasants). She becomes withdrawn and careful, though, with strange samurai. Her two teenage sons emerge from the back rooms and flank her in a protective manner while she speaks.

A **TN 1 Sentiment check** can let the PCs realize she will give them more information if they are friendly than if they are stern. If they are friendly, she quickly relaxes and becomes chatty, with her sons occasionally chipping in answers as well. However, if the PCs are stern or threatening, she is cautious and restrained while her sons remain silent. If the PCs mention at any time that "Doji Hiroshige" was actually Otomo Hiroshige, though, she becomes alarmed and fearful, answering questions with nervous brevity and refusing to volunteer anything extra. PCs can overcome these obstacles either by being sufficiently threatening (a **TN 2 Command [Fire 1, Air 3] check**) or sufficiently charming (a **TN 2 Courtesy [Water 1, Earth 3] check**). The PCs can spend ✨ to have Chiyu volunteer additional information without the need for them to ask specific questions.

At the most basic level, Chiyu can confirm that Hiroshige stayed at the inn for about four months. He was frequently behind on his rent, but since he was a Great Clan samurai, she did not throw him out as she would have done with a Tortoise or a commoner. He did get money periodically: some apparently sent by his family, some won in gambling, and some borrowed locally. He disappeared a little over two weeks ago.

- ❖ If the PCs ask who has been looking for Hiroshige since he disappeared, she mentions the messenger from his father, collectors sent by two moneylenders (Kizo and Doro) who both claimed Hiroshige owed substantial debts, and a Crane samurai (Kakita Amano) who was a personal friend of Hiroshige. The collectors visited a couple of times. The Crane came a half-dozen times at least, trying to find out where his friend had gone, but she has not seen him in the last few days.
- ❖ Chiyu identifies Kizo as a well-known businessman who lives in this part of town and runs a block-print and sumi-e shop. If they ask specifically about criminal connections or spend an ✨ on their Social skill check, she sets her hand by her mouth and half whispers, *"Well, folk say there's more to it than that, and it isn't wise to cross him or fail to pay off your debts to him."*
- ❖ She knows nothing about the other moneylender (Doro) other than that he is very likely from another part of town. *"From the Wallow, by the look of his collector."*
- ❖ Chiyu does not directly mention that Hiroshige was an opium addict and drug user. If the PCs ask why he was in town or what he did there, she responds, *"Why does anyone come to our town, magistrate-sama? This is a place where one can get things that are hard to find elsewhere."*

- The PCs can ask about friends and associates, or follow up on Chiyu's reference to Kakita Amano. She lists Amano as one of Hiroshige's friends, as well as a short, quick-tempered Tortoise samurai whom Hiroshige called "Toru" and a rōnin whose name she did not catch but who dressed in a jumble of different-colored garments and wore a gaudy eye patch. On one occasion, she also saw Hiroshige with a Scorpion samurai who wore a distinctive mask with a cat's face on it. She does not know specifically where any of these people live, but she has seen both Amano and the Scorpion in this part of town. If the PCs ask her sons (or have *to* spend), one of them blurts out that he remembers seeing the rōnin serving as a bouncer at the Waiting Cat at the Dockside (and is then scolded by his mother for visiting a gambling house).

The PCs may want to look at Hiroshige's room; Chiyu admits she has rented it out again. She is holding his remaining belongings in storage, though, as collateral against his possible return and as something to sell for his debts if he does not. Chiyu objects to the PCs' request to search the room now that another guest (a Tortoise ship's officer) is renting it. The PCs can invoke their authority as magistrates to intimidate her into allowing the search, or forfeit 4 honor to bribe her if they prefer to leave a favorable impression instead. There is nothing of interest in Hiroshige's old room, however.

Hiroshige's stored belongings are sparse, consisting of a spare kimono, some minor clothing, a pair of chopsticks, a calligraphy kit, and a bundle of scrolls that prove, when untied, to be sumi-e paintings. The absence of much in the way of personal belongings is a side effect of Hiroshige's addiction—he was slowly selling off his personal property, as Chiyu can attest if asked. The paintings are all stamped with the chop of Hiroshige's Crane friend Kakita Amano, indicating that Amano is the artist.

OTHER INVESTIGATIONS

Once the PCs have made preliminary contacts with the local authorities and visited the Inn of Many Paths, they should have a variety of options for further investigation. The following sections outline the different avenues the PCs can follow to try to unravel the mystery of the disappearing samurai. The goal for this part of the adventure should be for the PCs to learn the lay of the land in Slow Tide Harbor and to gain clues pointing them at the villain's warehouse.



Kakita Amano

If the PCs go looking for Hiroshige's artistic Crane friend, they find him difficult to track down—he has gone to ground since the disappearance of Kasuga Toru. They can ask around the district, perhaps making a **TN 2 Command** or **Courtesy check (Air or Water 1, Earth 3)** to find someone who can give them directions to Amano's apartment. Alternatively, knowing that he makes sumi-e paintings, they can look for sellers of such works (which can lead them to Boss Kizo's shop; see page 18). Finally, they can ask others who might know, such as Bayushi Naizu or the rōnin Hade. Any of these options can lead them to Amano's apartment.

The apartment is located on the second floor above a sandal-maker's shop in the Merchant District. The irritable old man who runs the shop mocks "that fancy artist" who suddenly moved out four days ago, convinced that sinister forces were going to kill him. "The man moved into a flophouse in the Wallow; can you imagine? I thought those Crane had standards. Besides, I don't know how he expects to keep it secret where he's living when he still goes to smoke Blue Flamed opium at the Golden Dream each week."

Amano now lives in a bedraggled one-room apartment in a row house in the Wallow. The residents around him are generally opium addicts, wastrels, and criminals. He doesn't fit in well, since despite his intention of "hiding," he still tries to wash every day and wears samurai clothing (although not his blue-and-white Crane garments, which he sold). When the PCs finally track him down, read or paraphrase the following aloud to the players:

Amano is a thin man. He probably would have been considered fashionably slim in his more respectable days, but his life here has reduced him to an unhealthy skinniness. He is dressed in an ill-fitting kimono woven in flower patterns. His hair is loose rather than in a proper topknot, and it dangles like a veil. Amano appears to have stopped dying his hair some time ago, leaving only the tips still white. His fingers and hands are ink stained, and his small room is full of loose pieces of paper, some of them with paintings, others blank.

Amano habitually chews on a thin wooden pipe, even if it is empty. He is perpetually short on money; his only income comes from selling paintings to Kizo's shop, and his art is not particularly good. He is likely to appeal to the PCs to support his art and to Crane PCs specifically to show sympathy for a fellow Crane forsaken by fate.

Getting information from Amano is not difficult, since he is eager to talk to anyone who shows the slightest sympathy for his plight. Unfortunately, his addiction causes hallucination; more recently, he has also become paranoid due to the disappearances of two of his fellow opium smokers (Hiroshige and Toru).

Thus, he tends to babble, go off on tangents, and whimper about his own safety, all behaviors that proper samurai should find repellent. If the PCs can endure his ramblings and occasional petulant demands, however, and succeed at a **TN 1 Command check**, he can potentially share some useful information. If a character succeeds on the check, they receive one item of information, plus one additional item per bonus success. Different characters may each make a check to find out more information.

- On the night Hiroshige vanished, the two of them spent some time at the Golden Dream opium house with their friend Hade, a rōnin who lives and works at the Waiting Cat gambling den in the Merchant District. (Amano rather pathetically tries to avoid saying exactly what they were doing at the Golden Dream.) Hiroshige had lost the last of his money earlier that evening at the Waiting Cat, but Amano had gotten lucky so he treated them both, as well as Hade, who he considers a good-luck friend. However, they all three ended up quarreling over money and debts. Hiroshige finally stormed off toward his inn, Hade left to try to visit his lover at one of the brothels, while Amano remained to smoke away the rest of his winnings.

- A couple of days later, when Amano realized that Hiroshige was missing, he went looking through the neighborhood and found an alleyway near the Golden Dream where there was obvious evidence of a struggle. *"I even told the magistrate's yoriki, not that they cared...they're probably in on it!"* He can tell the PCs which alleyway, but he won't go there willingly (the PCs can bully him into doing this with a **TN 2 Command check**).
- Afterward, he and Kasuga Toru searched on and off for Hiroshige. They initially suspected he had run afoul of one of the moneylenders he owed (Kizo or Doro) and feared the worst. Hade did not help them search. *"He just shrugged. 'People disappear sometimes,' he said. Maybe he's part of it, too!"*
- Amano has not met with Hade since that conversation, but he has seen the rōnin at the Golden Dream once or twice, deep in an opium dream.
- Five days ago, Kasuga Toru got thrown out of the Golden Dream for starting a fight with another customer. Amano saw him leave for another opium den—probably the Green Rest—with a rōnin. *"Not Hade; someone else. Big fellow with a tattoo on his neck. I'd never seen him before."* He never saw Toru again.

Amano is in hiding now because four days ago, after he realized Toru had also disappeared, he became overly paranoid and publicly accused Boss Kizo of murdering his friends. However, he is very reluctant to admit this rather terrible breach of public etiquette. The PCs need to wheedle it out of him with a **TN 2 Courtesy (Fire 3, Water 1) check**, or perhaps by purchasing some Blue Flame for him (a **TN 1 Sentiment** or **Medicine check** can indicate his need).

If the PCs learned from Chiyu about it, they may ask Amano about the Scorpion in the cat mask who was seen with Hiroshige. *"I don't know his name, but I've seen him around town. Thinks himself superior to us—as though anyone living here can claim that!"* He does not know why Hiroshige sought out the Scorpion. If the PCs missed learning about Hiroshige's Scorpion associate from Chiyu, the GM can have Amano mention this should the PCs spend ☼ on any Social checks they make with the Crane artist.

JUNSHIN

To be called junshin, or "pure of heart," would be high praise everywhere in Rokugan—except within the Scorpion Clan. For such a Scorpion, to be so limited in outlook would be to impede the clan's means of serving the Emperor. A Scorpion with this label might follow Bushidō strictly and be morally opposed to many of the tactics their clan employs. Depending on their family, they might be shunted away where they cannot interfere with Scorpion activities.

Kasuga Toru

Asking any local Tortoise samurai—or specifically asking the magistrate, the owners of the two main opium dens, Kakita Amano, or the rōnin Hade—reveals the identity of Hiroshige's short, bad-tempered Tortoise friend. He is Kasuga Toru, a wastrel whose poor self-control caused him to fall into opium abuse some time ago. He is notorious for getting into brawls when he is drunk or when he cannot afford his opium. When he can obtain the drug, he usually visits the Golden Dream opium den, but he sometimes gets thrown out of there and goes to the Green Rest instead.

Toru was thrown out of the Golden Dream five days ago after getting into a quarrel with another customer (Toru was trying to persuade the customer to loan him money). The PCs can learn about this from Kakita Amano or by talking to the manager of the Golden Dream, Master Aoi. They can also learn—from either source—that Toru left in the company of a large, formidable-looking rōnin with a tattoo on his neck. (This was Gaku, Kitsu Sokori's agent.)

The PCs cannot learn anything else unless they track down Toru's apartment; Amano and the rōnin Hade can both direct them to it. It is a grubby two-room apartment in the Dockside district. It is obvious there was some kind of struggle in it: the minimal furnishings have been knocked over and scattered, there are rough punctures in the paper walls, and so forth. There are also muddy sandal prints on the floor, left by whoever kidnapped Toru; a **TN 2 Design (Air 1) check** reveals that the missing Tortoise's feet were significantly smaller, as can be seen from the tattered spare set of sandals tumbled into a corner.

The footprints cannot be followed very far outside as there are too many other tracks to distinguish one set from another. The PCs can tell that the earth in the tracks is more characteristic of land near rice paddies with a **TN 3 Survival (Earth 2, Air 4) check** or a **TN 2 Labor (Water 1, Fire 3) check**. This provides a hint that the PCs should be looking at the outskirts of town. Characters may also request an audience with the local kami using the Commune with the Spirits ritual (see page 212 of the Core Rulebook).

The Scorpion: Bayushi Naizu

Tracking down Hiroshige's "Scorpion friend" is not as hard as it might seem, for the simple reason that this man is the only Scorpion living openly in Slow Tide Harbor. The PCs can simply ask around the Merchant District for "the Scorpion" or "the man in the cat mask," and they will eventually be directed to a small apartment in a row house on the western edge of the Merchant District, close to the river that separates the district from the Wallow.

Bayushi Naizu is a *junshin*: a failure from his clan, a man whose moral doubts caused him to be consistently mediocre but never outright incompetent, and thus never obligated to commit seppuku. Rather than continue to be a burden on his clan and family, he accepted a sort of exile to Slow Tide Harbor, surviving in genteel poverty on a minimal stipend from his family and the generosity of friends. Never particularly good at the traditional Scorpion methods of blackmail and manipulation, he suffers from a world-weary cynicism that he masks with wry humor.

Naizu does have some knowledge of the secrets in Slow Tide Harbor, but much less than one might expect from a Scorpion. Knowing he is to live out his life without purpose, and burdened with doubts about his clan's lack of ethics, he simply does not care enough to ferret out secrets for their own sake. Naizu very rarely partakes of opium; seeing what it has done to so many in the town, he makes an extra effort to not fall to its lure. His greatest challenge in Slow Tide Harbor, however, is sheer boredom. As a result, he actively seeks out new people and friendships whenever possible. Many of his days are spent wandering the streets, greeting old friends and making new ones where he can.

Hiroshige came to him looking for help with his moneylender troubles. Naizu could not assist him, other than to warn him to get out from under Boss Kizo as quickly as possible. Naizu confesses he was sorry to have to disabuse the younger man of his assumptions. *"I think he imagined that anyone from my clan would have immense secret resources. He was rather disappointed to learn I am simply an old man of no particular importance."*

Naizu can tell the PCs the names of the three major crime lords (Kizo, Yaguro, and Hana), and offer a rather lighthearted description of their rivalries. He also can warn the PCs not to be too disruptive here: *"The Tortoise do not appreciate anyone meddling in their affairs, and they have the backing of the Son of Heaven himself."* He also can name the town's two most prominent smugglers (Azif and Kasuga Yumiko) and provide information on other disappearances if the PCs have not yet learned it from other sources. Finally, he is aware that the local gangs and smugglers often store their goods in the town's outlying warehouses rather than in the populated areas, although he does not know which warehouses are owned by which factions.


Naizu is aware of the three disappearances and the murder, and he can name all four victims, but he has not witnessed anything himself.

The Waiting Cat Gambling House and Hade, the Gaudy Rōnin

If the PCs come here in search of Hade the rōnin, read or paraphrase the following aloud to the players:

As seems to be common in Slow Tide Harbor, on your way to the Waiting Cat Gambling House, you pass several people who are openly inebriated: whether on sake or opium is hard to tell.

A burst of loud voices, laughter, and groans greets you as you pass into the gambling den. People of all stations are crowded shoulder to shoulder around low tables. Staff with headbands around their foreheads kneel at the head of each table, calling the bets and throwing dice. Each rattle of the dice is met with a chorus of noise from the customers.

A rōnin is serving as bouncer, but he does not resemble the descriptions of Hade that the PCs have picked up. If they question him, he grins and explains that Hade "crawled into his pipe" and lost his job. "The last time he showed up, he couldn't even stand up straight." This also resulted in Hade losing his room. If the PCs ask where Hade might be now, they are met with a shrug, but with sufficient persistence (or  on a Social skill check), someone overhears and mentions that Hade was carrying on an affair with a young woman, Ikue, at one of the Dockside brothels.

Tracking down Ikue is not difficult, although some PCs may find visiting a brothel to be distasteful. She angrily says that she is no longer seeing Hade, since in his recent visits he was drunk or high on opium and demanding money. "He's been like that ever since his friend Hiroshige went missing," she declares. If the PCs ask where Hade is now, she suggests he is probably sleeping in a stable somewhere. "The last time he came here, he stank of horse dung."

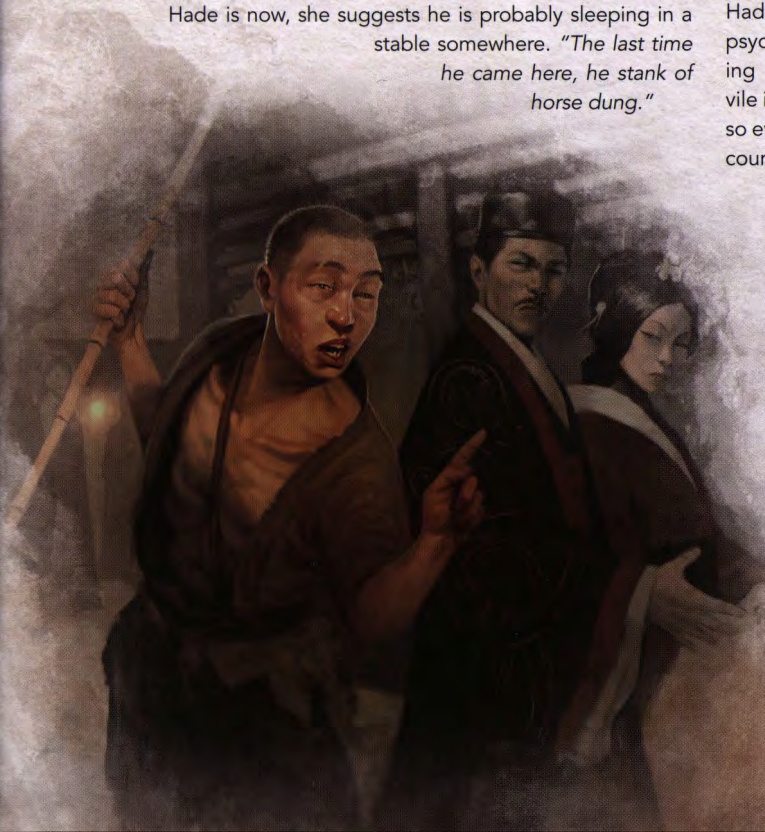
Ultimately, finding Hade entails spending a couple of hours conducting a search of the two dozen or so stables in the Dockside district. Eventually the PCs locate their target; when they do, read or paraphrase the scene aloud to the players:

Sprawled in the hay at the back of the stable is a bedraggled man dressed in garments that were once gaudily multicolored but are now torn and stained an ugly brown. A katana in a battered sheath lies in the straw next to him. A wide, brightly embroidered eyepatch is tangled in his hair, pulled up to reveal that he appears to have two undamaged eyes. A long snore emerges from his mouth as you approach.

Hade is on opium. If the PCs wake him, he initially responds to them with a mixture of wild bluster and fear. Once he realizes they are not threats, he relaxes a bit, but raising the topic of Hiroshige and Toru makes him nervous once more. The GM may call for a **TN 2 Command (Earth 1, Fire 3)** or **Sentiment (Water 1)** check for the PCs to calm him down enough to get him to tell his story.

He witnessed a portion of Hiroshige's kidnapping: on his way back from visiting Ikue, he saw a trio of men dragging Hiroshige out of the Wallow, following the Street of Lowering Clouds. He shouted and started to pursue, but then one of the men turned and shouted something. "Sounded kind of like a prayer, maybe, but there was something wrong about it. And then I was... afraid. I've been afraid ever since." He starts to weep. "It was magic, some kind of curse! It made me into a coward!" A **TN 1 Sentiment check** reveals he feels he is being as honest as he can with the PCs.

Hade encountered Gaku, who used mahō to cause Hade to be consumed with fear. Due to Hade's brittle psyche (the result of drug abuse), the spell has had lasting effects. Kansen—corrupted elemental kami—that vile incantation summoned are still lurking around Hade, so everyone feels a bit queasy around him. Hade's stable counts as Defiled terrain (see page 267 of the Core Rulebook). PCs may make a **TN 2 Theology (Earth 3, Fire 1)** check to determine that he was targeted with a mahō spell. The Street of Lowering Clouds leads out toward the burakumin village and the outlying warehouses, which can be a clue to the PCs that they should look there.



Speaking with Boss Kizo

The PCs may decide to speak with Kizo at Splendid Visions in the Merchant District as he is one of the moneylenders to whom Hiroshige owed coin. Kakita Amano, Bayushi Naizu, Yaguro, or Hana may have also pointed at him as potentially responsible for the disappearances and murder.

Kizo shows the PCs his grandfatherly face, insisting he is merely a community-minded person who loans money to his fellow citizens. He denies any involvement in organized crime, laughing off such notions. *"Look at me, honorable magistrate—do you think an old man like myself could be the source of such evils? And why would I harm the honorable Doji Hiroshige? After all, if harm came to him, he would never be able to repay his loan. I am a victim of his disappearance!"*

PCs who adopt a more cynical and pragmatic approach, making clear they have no interest in disrupting his operations and merely want to catch the kidnappers, may be able to get cooperation from Kizo (a **TN 2 Courtesy [Fire 1, Water 4] check**). He can explain the situation in the town, identify all the major players, and draw the connections between them. He also is aware of what his sometime-sponsor Kasuga Yumiko is up to. *"A man like me needs allies in the samurai caste, but I confess I am not comfortable having her as an ally. She is much too ambitious, and I think she is playing a multi-sided game. It would not surprise me if she tried to sacrifice me to further some personal goal."*

BOSS KIZO, GANG LEADER

ADVERSARY

CONFLICT RANK:  3  2

Roleplaying Notes: Your body language is closed, your gestures and voice sharp and brittle. You constantly have a pipe in your hand and gesture with it when you aren't taking a draw.

Quote: *"A gangster? Not at all! I am merely the head of a brotherhood dedicated to community improvement."*

Boss Kizo uses the **Experienced Bandit** profile from page 316 of the Core Rulebook, with the following changes:

Demeanor: Shrewd (Water +2, Fire -2)

Gear (equipped): Faded clothing (Physical 1), a pouch containing small candies and toys

Abilities: Amused at Failure (When an opponent suffers strife in a failed Social skill check targeting him, Kizo recovers the same amount of strife)

Doro the Moneylender

The other moneylender to whom Hiroshige was indebted is Doro, a commoner of dubious character who keeps a *shichiya*, or pawnshop, in the Wallow. Slow Tide Harbor contains several such businesses—mostly in the Wallow—that prey on desperate people. If the PCs track him down, read or paraphrase the following aloud to the players:

The pawnshop is a tiny place, tucked in between a cheap public bathhouse and a row of low-grade apartments. Brushing past the linen curtain that hangs across the upper half of the door, you enter a narrow, dimly lit room lined with shelves and benches. All sorts of items are here: clothing, utensils, parasols, sandals, even a few weapons. The detritus of ruined lives, exchanged for a few coins.

In the back, in an open-air office of sorts, a rather studious older fellow with *gaijin* spectacles is seated cross-legged behind a low table. He is busily counting something on an abacus, and does not look up until you approach. His eyes widen at the sight of you.

Doro mostly lends to other commoners, but he makes a specialty of lending to opium addicts, knowing how easy it is to lean on them. Currently, he is upset and worried, however, because two of his debtors—Hiroshige and Kasuga Michiko—have recently disappeared. He does not think they were murdered; he has enough ties to the town's underworld that he would have heard. When he began inquiring, a trio of ruffians led by a large *rōnin* with a tattoo on his neck came to his shop and told him bluntly to let the matter drop.



The presence of clean-cut, obviously non-addicted samurai in his shop alarms Doro, but once he knows why the PCs are here, he readily shares all his information. If the PCs ask for more details about the threatening trio, Doro knows nothing more about the tattooed leader ("never seen him before") but vaguely recognized the other two as local ruffians who work for one of the bad characters in town. *"Not sure which one; there are so many! One of the gangs, or maybe a smuggling ring? It's more than a poor pawnbroker can keep track of."*

If they think to ask whether the two vanished customers had anything in common, he says they were both opium addicts. Michiko usually went to the Green Rest opium den, but Hiroshige preferred the Golden Dream. *"That's where a lot of the really desperate ones wind up. They dose up the opium with some foreign drug, Blue Fire or something, that makes it stronger."*

Hiroshige's Kidnapping Site

The PCs can learn of this location from Kakita Amano, or they can find it themselves by backtracking from where Hade saw Hiroshige being dragged away. It is an alleyway in the Wallow, about two blocks away from the Golden Dream opium den.

Although the passage of several weeks has long since obscured any footprints, there are still some clues to be found here. PCs with a vigilance of 2 or higher who search the muddy ground discover a broken piece of a straw hat that belonged to Hiroshige (any of his friends can identify it from the color). Aside from proving that this is where Hiroshige was kidnapped, it could also be used to reveal the rest of the hat's current location in a warehouse.

Additionally, PCs who have a vigilance of 3 or higher notice that one of the kidnappers caught their clothing on the splintered beam of an adjacent building. PCs who make a **TN 3 Skulduggery (Air 2, Earth 4) check** determine that the piece of linen is stained with raw opium, suggesting it was worn in someplace where large amounts of the drug were stored. This is also a clue pointing to the warehouse they will seek out later on.

Shugenja who question the kami can learn that a trio of men ambushed Hiroshige, bound and gagged him, and dragged him away. The kami, of course, would never be so literal. The GM should relate that the kami felt three discordant tones silencing a plaintive tune, then lifting it away from the ground, or of an animated, gesturing shape being compacted into a stiff ball as three shapes pulled it into darkness. ☸☸ on the check can mean the kami also mention that the largest of the kidnappers "felt bad," a hint that he is a mahō apprentice.

The Golden Dream Opium Den

A seedy and unpleasant, but highly successful, opium den located on the eastern side of the Wallow, the Golden Dream is controlled by Boss Hana's gang. It is the main establishment offering the new "Blue Flame" drug courtesy of Azif. As a result, it is currently the most popular opium den in town. When the PCs approach, read or paraphrase the following aloud to the players:

You pass a number of people sprawled in the street, apparently in the grip of opium, as you approach the front door of this wide single-story building. A sign above the door features a rather clumsy drawing of a plump man sleeping on a cloud. Inside, the floor is lined with dirty futons, every one of them occupied by an addict. The air is hazy with smoke. As you peer around, a short and muscular woman approaches you. She seems to be in her forties and she wears her hair tied back, held in place with a sheathed knife. Behind her looms a hulking, bare-chested enforcer with a swollen belly and hands as large as dinner plates.

The woman is Aoi, the manager of the Golden Dream, and her bodyguard is called Mugu. Master Aoi is not inclined to be cooperative. However, she is aware that the PCs are samurai with Imperial authority and that she cannot defy them too strongly. She tries to be evasive and makes vague threats about the backing of "Boss Hana," who, she claims, has friends in high places. The PCs can try to overcome her resistance with a **TN 2 Command (Water 1) or Skulduggery (Earth 3) check** or simply bribe her if they have the money (and are willing to forfeit 3 honor). Her operation is illegal, after all, so the PCs must weigh shutting it down versus gaining useful information from her.

Alternatively, they can use violence, although this likely has consequences beyond the immediate fight with Aoi and Mugu, her large bouncer. Boss Hana may seek to retaliate (and Azif as well, since the PCs are disrupting his Blue Flame trade), and the town's officials are not appreciative of violent disruption of the quiet corruption there. (If needed, Aoi and Mugu both use the **Experienced Bandit** profile on page 316 of the Core Rulebook, though neither wears armor. Aoi only talks, and Mugu only uses his huge fists.)

Once any unpleasantness is concluded (or avoided altogether), Aoi can share the following, with each ☉ on a check providing one item of information. PCs may spend ☸ on a successful check to have additional (and useful) flavor added to a response.

- ❖ Aoi knows that three of her more frequent customers—Toru, Hiroshige, and a rōnin named Fubato—have vanished in the last few weeks. Toru was the most recent (probably five days, as that is when he was last seen). This isn't the first time this has happened, but it is quite unusual for so many samurai to vanish at once (disappearances and murders among peasant addicts are much more common).
- ❖ If the PCs ask if she has heard of any other disappearances, Aoi says there are rumors that customers at the competing Green Rest opium den have also gone missing or been found dead, although she has no details. If the PCs don't ask specifically about this subject, ✨ on other checks can be used to have her reveal this.
- ❖ If the PCs question her about the specific events surrounding Hiroshige and Toru, Aoi can recount a brusque, unsympathetic version of the same story the PCs may have heard from Amano or Hade. Hiroshige left the place after running out of money, Toru was thrown out after getting into a quarrel with another customer, and neither has been seen again.
- ❖ If the PCs ask about the notorious Blue Flame drug, Aoi smirks. *"What, you interested in a free sample, samurai-sama?"* She tries to shrug off the question, but if pressed (and if the PCs assure her she is safe from arrest), she reluctantly admits that it is a new drug supplied by a "gaijin merchant" named Azif, who can be found in the Dockside.
- ❖ If the GM has chosen Azif as the true villain of the scenario, Aoi knows more than she lets on. She is aware that Gaku is selecting addicted samurai for kidnapping on behalf of some unknown patron of Azif's, and she has been instructed to not interfere. She does not admit anything about this to the PCs, but they may be able to tell that she is hiding something, especially if they ask about the mysterious "big rōnin with a tattoo."

As with many of the borderline (or outright) illegal activities the PCs witness during the adventure, they may feel bound to take action against Aoi's den. This could upset the course of their investigation, however, so they must decide which is more important (and honorable).

The Green Rest Opium Den

This opium den is controlled by Boss Yaguro and is located on the western side of the Wallow. Formerly Slow Tide Harbor's most popular den, it has recently lost that title to the Golden Dream and it is visibly less crowded and popular than the other business. When the PCs arrive, read or paraphrase the following aloud to the players:

The large interior chamber of this opium den is lined with grubby, threadbare futons, but only about half of them are currently occupied by customers. A skinny and almost desperately nervous older man scurries forward and greets you with clasped hands and a wide, slightly fixed smile, his head bobbing in repeated short bows. As he does so, a wooden shutter in the smoky back of the den slides open, briefly revealing a candlelit room and the silhouette of a slump-shouldered elderly man. He seems to peer out at you for a moment before sliding the shutter closed with a bang.

The man looking out from the back office is Boss Yaguro, who checks out each new visitor with a mix of fear and vague hope. The manager of the place, Master Awa, grovels and simpers before the PCs, hoping they are new customers (and they might attempt to pose as such).
A TN 2 Sentiment check reveals he is desperate for business.



Once he realizes the PCs aren't customers, though, he becomes much more nervous and fearful, and may ask if "our gifts of respect" have been insufficient. He calms down somewhat and becomes more cooperative if the PCs explain they are investigating the recent disappearances and murder. If a PC succeeds on a **TN 2 Command (Earth 1, Fire 4) check**, they receive one item of information, plus one additional item per bonus success.

- Awa can identify two missing regular customers, Yasuki Suzaku and Kasuga Michiko, and has heard rumors that Suzaku's body was found elsewhere in the Wallow. He also has heard rumors that some of the regular customers at the Golden Dream have likewise disappeared, including one—Kasuga Toru—who also visited the Green Rest with some frequency.
- He has no specific information on Suzaku and Michiko's disappearances at first, but if a PC used the Fire approach and got at least one ✨, he slaps his fist into his palm: "Ah, I remember. Suzaku-san was talking with a big rōnin with a tattoo on his neck, the last night she was here. I remember because I hadn't seen that fellow before—he wasn't a regular here." He has not seen the tattooed rōnin since then.
- If the PCs ask Master Awa who he thinks might be behind the recent wave of crimes, he vaguely suggests that it must be one of Boss Yaguro's rivals: Boss Hana or Boss Kizo.



Meeting with Boss Yaguro

If Boss Yaguro is not the GM's chosen villain, he may decide to seek out and meet with PCs who visit the Green Rest, hoping to turn their investigation to his advantage. If he is the villain, though, he does not seek a meeting on his own. The PCs may still decide to speak with him no matter his wishes, perhaps once they realize he is one of the three main crime lords in the town.

Yaguro is paranoid and suspicious at the best of times, and doubly so if he is the villain. He tries to feel out the PCs and figure out their "true" motives (he thinks that an honorable investigation of a missing Imperial samurai, especially here, is surely just a cover story). Given the chance, he tries to steer the PCs toward one or both of his rivals, Boss Hana and Boss Kizo. He also makes a point of identifying the smugglers who lurk behind those two individuals as their sponsors and suppliers: Azif for Hana, and Kasuga Yumiko for Kizo.

BOSS YAGURO, GANG LEADER

ADVERSARY

CONFLICT RANK:  3  4

Roleplaying Notes: You are losing power, failing, and you know it. Shift and fidget constantly, muttering under your breath and sometimes counting on your fingers. When you speak aloud, do so in a shrill and querulous voice—the voice of an old man who feels the world slipping away.

Quote: "What did you say? What do you mean by that?"

SOCIETAL		PERSONAL	
22 HONOR		ENDURANCE 12	
19 GLORY		COMPOSURE 12	
09 STATUS		FOCUS 5	
 +2,  -2 DEMEANOR · AMBITIOUS		VIGILANCE 3	

ARTISAN 0

MARTIAL 2


SCHOLAR 0

SOCIAL 2

TRADE 3


ADVANTAGES

Knows This Town:

 Scholar; Interpersonal

DISADVANTAGES

Bad Liar:

 Social; Interpersonal

FAVORED WEAPONS AND GEAR

Staff: Range 1–2, Damage 6, Deadliness 2, 2-handed, Mundane

Gear (equipped): Thick clothing (Physical 2), stained pipe, pouch containing several koku and bu

ABILITIES

DESPERATE ACT

Activation: When Yaguro performs an Attack action check, he may spend ✨ in the following ways:

• ✨+: Suffer 2 strife to increase the damage of the attack by 1 per ✨ spent this way.

• ✨✨: Suffer 2 strife to increase the deadliness of the attack by 2.

Meeting with Boss Hana

The PCs may decide to meet with Boss Hana when they realize she is the owner of the Golden Dream opium den, or possibly if Yaguro or Kizo points them at her. The GM can create the scene based on Hana's description in Part One. Hana is not about to cooperate with Emerald Magistrates, although she is wary of openly defying or insulting them. She cooperates to the minimum degree necessary and is especially cautious about any questions relating to her ally Azif, the Blue Flame drug, or the recent disappearances.

BOSS HANA, GANG LEADER

ADVERSARY

CONFLICT RANK: 3 2

Roleplaying Notes: Your body language is closed, your gestures and voice sharp and brittle. You constantly have a pipe in your hand and gesture with it when you aren't taking a draw.

Quote: "Life is cruel. I don't expect any better."

Boss Hana uses the **Experienced Bandit** profile from page 316 of the Core Rulebook, with the following changes:

Demeanor: Gruff (Air +2, Earth -2)

Gear (equipped): Gaijin dagger (Range 0, Damage 3, Deadliness 5, Concealable, Durable), elegant clothing (Physical 1), pipe, a pouch containing a handful of bu

Abilities: Cruel Cunning (When performing a Social skill check, Hana may spend in the following way:

: One target gains the Dazed condition.)

Meeting with Azif

It is possible that the PCs may decide to speak with the gaijin Azif, especially if they have discovered the connection between him, Boss Hana, and the Golden Dream opium den. Azif cannot really refuse such a meeting. As a gaijin, his position is quite vulnerable even in Slow Tide Harbor, and he is fully aware of that fact. He can meet the PCs in his room at a Dockside inn, his preferred place for negotiations with Rokugani.

Speaking with Azif should be an uncomfortable experience for the PCs. Not only is he a foreigner within the Empire in defiance of tradition and Imperial decree, but he is also a bold and confident man who is clearly not afraid of them. Azif is polite, in a slightly unsettling way, speaking Rokugani correctly but with a thick accent. He makes sure to position himself in such a way that he can flee the room easily if the PCs resort to violence; Azif knows that the warriors of Rokugan often get an itch in their sword hand.



AZIF THE SMOOTH, GAIJIN SMUGGLER

ADVERSARY

CONFLICT RANK: 4 3

Roleplaying Notes: Smile and laugh often, showing your teeth when you are amused—but also when you are angry or frightened. Gesture broadly while you speak, and stroke your beard when you are nervous or thinking hard.

Quote: "Think me a fool? You will learn better, as others have already done."

SOCIETAL	PERSONAL
11 HONOR	ENDURANCE 12
12 GLORY	COMPOSURE 10
01 STATUS	FOCUS 7
+2, -2 DEMEANOR - ASSERTIVE	VIGILANCE 3

ARTISAN 0

MARTIAL 3

SCHOLAR 0

SOCIAL 2

TRADE 3

ADVANTAGES

Good Liar:

Social; Interpersonal

Haggling:

Trade; Interpersonal

DISADVANTAGES

Arrogance:

Social; Interpersonal

Gaijin Appearance:

Physical; Interpersonal

FAVORED WEAPONS AND GEAR

Rigging daggers: Range 0, Damage 3, Deadliness 4, Concealable, Durable, Mundane; can be thrown (Range 1-3)

Gear (equipped): Gaijin clothing (Physical 2), sake jug (full), pouch stuffed with bu

ABILITIES

...GET THEM!

Activation: As an action, Azif may have up to two of his allies within range 2 of him immediately move 1 range band. If they have not already acted this round, they may also perform a Strike action. These allies count as having skilled assistance (see page 26 of the Core Rulebook) on their check.

ACROBATIC FIGHTER

Activation: When performing an Attack action check, Azif may spend in the following ways:

: If at range 0 from the target, Azif may move two range bands away from that opponent.

+: Azif may kick any opponent at range 0-1 and then move two range bands away from that opponent. The kick deals 3 damage with a deadliness of 1 plus the spent.



Meeting with Kasuga Yumiko

Yumiko's connection to Boss Kizo—whom she sponsors and supplies with smuggled opium—may draw the PC's attention. They may also hear of word of an ambitious Tortoise with growing ambitions (the GM can use ☸ in relevant Social checks the PCs make to reveal this).

She can be found most often at the Docks with several other Tortoise samurai, watching goods being loaded and offloaded. Yumiko brushes off any questions about local crimes and disappearances as matters beneath her concern, though. *"The sort of people who fall into that life are not the sort who end well. Why do you imagine I would care about them?"*

KASUGA YUMIKO, RENEGADE SAMURAI

ADVERSARY

CONFLICT RANK:  4  2

Roleplaying Notes: Speak formally but project confidence and pride in both yourself and your clan. You are inwardly contemptuous of anyone who opposes you.

Quote: *"Too many underestimate the Tortoise. That will change."*

Yumiko uses the **Loyal Bushi** profile on page 312 of the Core Rulebook with these changes:

Demeanor: Ambitious (Fire +2, Earth -2)

Advantages: Battle-Hardened Toughness (Earth) [Martial; Mental, Physical], Tortoise Clan Devotion (Fire) [Social; Mental]

Disadvantages: Hot-Tempered (Fire) [Social; Interpersonal]

The Other Two Disappearances

If the PCs ask around, they can learn that two other samurai have disappeared in the last couple of months: a Tortoise named Kasuga Michiko and a ronin named Fubato. Both disappearances happened long enough ago that it is no longer possible to find any physical clues. However, asking about the victims confirms that both of them were opium addicts. Michiko frequented the Green Rest opium den, while Fubato preferred the Golden Dream. Neither had any family or friends in town.

The Murdered Crab

The PCs may learn about Yasuki Suzaku's murder from several sources: street gossip, Bayushi Naizu, Awa (the manager of the Green Rest opium den where Suzaku was a regular), or even Magistrate Kasuga Mikoto if she is being cooperative. Suzaku disappeared about four weeks ago and was found dead in a Merchant District northern alley ten days ago. This is actually a fairly standard crime for Slow Tide Harbor, the only oddity being that the body was dumped in an alley instead of into the lagoon, the traditional disposal method.

Suzaku's corpse was discovered by local peasants, who can be tracked down within a few hours. They describe the body as filthy, covered in blood and dirt, and stinking of the flowery odor of raw (unsmoked) opium. From their description, the PCs can deduce with a **TN 2 Skulduggery** or **Medicine (Fire 1) check** that Suzaku had died shortly before arriving in the alley, meaning she was held prisoner somewhere for a couple of weeks before her death. If the PCs ask for more details about the body, the peasants look disgusted and suggest talking to the burakumin who handled the corpse.

If the PCs explore the alleyway, those with a vigilance of 2 or higher find a few remnants of dried blood and raw opium ground into the packed earth. They can use the Commune with the Spirits ritual to get the kami to recount that two bright flames dropped a cold coal into this location, or that a leafless, dead branch fell from a pair of trees. (In reality, two men carried the dead Yasuki Suzaku into the alley and left her body there.)

PCs who can bring themselves to travel north to the burakumin village and speak with the hunched, cowering "nonpeople" who live there can learn a great deal more. The GM may wish to inflict strife or increase the effects of strife on fastidious or rigidly conventional PCs. The burakumin are not accustomed to magistrates who actually seek information from them, but if the PCs convince them of their sincerity (a **TN 1 Command [Fire 2, Water 3] check** or a **TN 3 Courtesy [Earth 2, Air 4] check**), they readily share the following:

- ☸ Yasuki Suzaku was beaten heavily, but the cause of death appeared to be knife wounds. With ☸, the burakumin also say they believe she was fighting someone before being stabbed as there were bruises and blood on her knuckles and blood and hair under her fingernails.
- ☸ Suzaku's body showed signs that she had been kept as a prisoner, such as rope burns and chafing on her wrists and ankles. One wrist and hand were severely abraded and had bled heavily, suggesting her hand was pulled forcibly out of a manacle. (This was part of her escape attempt.)
- ☸ The burakumin kept Suzaku's clothes and eventually sold them (something they are allowed to do this with unclaimed bodies). They say her clothing had thick dust and many wood splinters on it, as though she had been inside a dirty, wooden building. There was also raw opium ground into her clothing as though she had fallen in or lain on it.
- ☸ The burakumin are aware of the various warehouses on the outskirts of town that gangs and smugglers control. Some of the warehouses are near their village, but they do not meddle with them as it isn't worth their lives.

Information from the Harbormaster

Although there are no obvious clues pointing toward Kasuga Nagato, the PCs may want to question the harbormaster about smuggling, the local crime lords, suspicious happenings in the harbor, or any number of other topics. He knows all the ships here, including which ones carry legitimate cargo and which ones do not.

Nagato can identify all the players in town—the three gang leaders and the two main smugglers—but he won't share that information unless the PCs make it worth his while or bring pressure to bear on him. More importantly, he knows that the smugglers and gang leaders often store their illicit goods in warehouses on the outer edges of the town (to keep them secure from each other). He deliberately does not know which ones belong to which smugglers. *"Not wise to dig too deeply, you know? Not if you want to live to spend your bribes."*

Kitsu Sokori's Agent: Gaku



Gaku is an apprentice and agent of Kitsu Sokori. A rōnin of formidable skill and strength, he is here to ensure that the kidnapped samurai are collected and delivered to his mistress. He sometimes visits the opium dens to scout out potential kidnapping targets, and he coordinates with the local villain's ruffians to carry out the kidnappings. Aside from that, he keeps a low profile (necessary since his physical size and distinctive tattoo make him visually memorable). Very few people in Slow Tide Harbor know his name or who he works for.

Gaku lives in the inn Suitengu's Rest, but the PCs are likely to have a hard time tracking him down. From a story perspective, it is probably best for the PCs not to be able to find him until Act Three. However, if the PCs are stuck and unable to find their way to the warehouse, the GM may opt to let them stumble across Gaku somewhere in Dockside or the Wallow (but not in a proper bathhouse, as his tattoo would prevent him from being allowed admission). The PCs' best option is not to confront Gaku but instead to follow him: this can eventually lead them to the warehouse or to whichever of the local villains is in league with him. If they choose confrontation instead, he is insolently uncooperative, bluntly suggesting that he has protection and allies in Slow Tide Harbor who render him untouchable.

If the PCs arrest Gaku, the villain (Yumiko, Boss Yaguro, or Azif) calls in favors with the Tortoise authorities to have him released. If the PCs are adamant that he remain in custody, it may result in a dangerous confrontation with a squad of Tortoise bushi, perhaps led by another local magistrate connected to the villain. Such incidents can spin out of control with disastrous consequences, and the GM should give the PCs plenty of chances to back down and save face rather than cross swords with the Tortoise in their place of power.

GAKU, MAHŌ APPRENTICE

ADVERSARY

CONFLICT RANK:  4  3

Roleplaying Notes: Your eyes gleam with malice and hatred, and your habitual expression is a half smirk, allowing your emotions to leak through.

Quote: *"Fools! Sokori-sama will destroy you all!"*

Gaku uses the **Wicked Mahō-Tsukai** profile, on page 318 of the Core Rulebook. He can additionally perform the mahō techniques of Grip of Anguish and Incite Haunting (see page 224 of the Core Rulebook).

ACT TWO: RAIDS AND CHASES

The trigger for the adventure's second act comes when the PCs gain clues pointing to a warehouse on the outskirts of the Merchant District that might contain one or more of the missing samurai. The clues pointing to the warehouse include the evidence found at Hiroshige's kidnapping site and Yasuki Suzaku's murder site, the fact that the rōnin Hade saw one of the kidnap victims being carried out to the road that leads to the warehouse, and the evidence found on the body of Yasuki Suzaku. Investigations using invocations, rituals, or kihō can also be used to gather these or other suitable clues, at the GM's discretion. The warehouse belongs to whichever of the three potential villains the GM has selected as the true culprit, so if the PCs are already suspicious of that person, that can also push them to investigate this location.

If the PCs are unable to find their way to the warehouse, the GM can allow them to catch a glimpse of the mysterious tattooed rōnin, Gaku, speaking with one of the villain's ruffians. Gaku then goes to a meeting with the designated villain while the lower-ranking criminals head for the warehouse.

Once the PCs decide to investigate the warehouse, it triggers a conflict scene and, hopefully, supplies the clues that lead the PCs on to Act Three. At this point, the tone of the adventure should still be one of the gradual unraveling of the truth, although the action at the warehouse offers a break from pure investigation. By the end of this act, though, much of the mystery should be cleared away, and the PCs should feel a real sense of urgency and alarm.

THE WAREHOUSE

Located on the far northern fringes of the Merchant District (along the path that Hade witnessed Gaku taking), this building is one of a number of isolated warehouses and storage sheds that various criminals use to store their goods away from prying eyes. When the PCs approach, read or paraphrase the following aloud to the players:

You see a tall and broad rectangular wooden building with a cheap tile roof. A large sliding door is on the end facing you, and you can also see a smaller door on the side toward the back. There are no visible windows, and no one seems to be around.

PCs with a vigilance of 2 or higher can spot a strip of bloody cloth outside the warehouse that matches what the burakumin found Yasuki Suzaku wearing.

There is another small door on the back side of the building. All three doors are shut and blocked from the inside. (Note that Rokugani doors typically do not have locks in the modern sense, but instead are blocked in place by wooden bars that prevent them from sliding open.) A small group of rough-looking commoners, employed by the adventure's villain, are inside guarding the contents.

The PCs can approach the situation in whatever manner they choose. Breaking down the main exterior door requires a **TN 3 Fitness check**; the TN for the side door is one lower as it lacks the heavy bracing of the main door. ✱ can be spent to allow the PCs to smash open a door suddenly and violently enough to surprise the ruffians inside.

Certain invocations may also be effective, or a PC could use a **TN 3 Skulduggery (Air 2, Fire 4) check** to try to open a door by stealth. This could be done by sliding a blade or other item through a crack in the door to lift the blocking bar out of place.

More creative PCs might try to coerce the ruffians by shouting orders, announcing themselves as magistrates conducting an inspection, or making similar loud commands. This approach, together with a **TN 2 Command (Fire 1, Earth 3) check**, can cow one or more of the ruffians into opening the doors.

The Guards

The ruffians should be numerous enough to offer some challenge to the PCs, but not so many as to pose a real threat of defeat—perhaps an encounter rank equal to half or two-thirds of the group rank (see page **Constructing Conflicts** on page 310 of the Core Rulebook).

Their default action is to fight. Once it becomes clear they are outmatched, though, those who can flee do so, preferably via whichever entrance(s) the PCs did not use. This can lead to a chase, since the PCs probably want to take at least one prisoner for interrogation. (Alternatively, PCs who employ clever tactics in combat may be able to defeat one or more of the gang members without using lethal force, removing the need for a chase.)



TORTURE IN ROKUGAN

In Rokugan, torture is considered a proper method of investigation. It is also a spiritually impure activity, however, due to the torturer touching blood and sweat. Thus, only members of the hinin caste normally perform this function. A PC who actually engages in physical torture themselves should forfeit a significant amount of honor (and glory if others are aware of it) and are rendered spiritually impure until they can visit a shrine and undergo a purification ritual.



RUFFIAN

ADVERSARY

CONFLICT RANK:  1  1

Roleplaying Notes: You're overly confident, and you blusteringly brag of your prowess in all areas to cover for your low standing and poor skills. You'll always seek to use ambushes, greater numbers, and loudly stated connections to important organizations and criminals against your enemies.

Quote: "Do you know who you're dealing with?"

Ruffians use the **Desperate Bandit** profile on page 315 of the Core Rulebook, with these changes:

Demeanor: Assertive (Earth +2, Water -2)

The Chase!

The fleeing ruffians run to cross the waterway between the Merchant District and the Wallow, seeking to lose the pursuing samurai and hide somewhere until things blow over. The PCs find themselves running through narrow alleys and crowded streets as the ruffians dodge between people and trip them into the PCs' paths, hurl baskets and parasols at them, and otherwise do their villainous best to thwart pursuit. Each PC can specify which ruffian they are chasing, if any, and both characters then make a competitive **TN 3 Fitness (Fire 2, Earth 4) check** (as per page 26 of the Core Rulebook). If the PC wins, they have caught one of the ruffians. If the ruffian wins, they keep running. Clever PCs may be able to come up with different tactics for running down their foes, and GMs should reward this as appropriate. If any of the PCs are shugenja, invocations and other abilities can come into play as well.

The Warehouse Contents

The interior walls of the warehouse are lined with large wooden crates, stacked up to three deep and taking up a large part of the floor space. There is a modest open space by the main entrance (which is where the gang members normally hang out), and narrow passages between the crates that lead to the back walls and the two smaller doors. In the back of the warehouse is another open space, where the prisoners were held.

Some of the crates have false inventory documents (stamped with the mon of the harbormaster) identifying which ship brought them into Slow Tide Harbor: *Obedient Slave* (Azif's ship), *Floating Destiny* (Yaguro's hired smuggling ship), or *Jealous Zephyr* (the smuggling ship Yumiko is using). These documents are direct clues regarding which ship is about to transport the prisoners, and thus the identity of the adventure's villain.

Once pried open (a **TN 2 Labor** or **Fitness check**), the crates reveal numerous illicit goods inside. There are plenty of dark-brown blocks wrapped in linen bags to protect and conceal them during transport; a **TN 1**

Medicine or **Skulduggery check** is needed to realize that these are raw opium. The other goods depend on which villain the warehouse belongs to, as follows:

- **Azif:** Gaijin items from the Ivory Kingdoms (intense spices, exotic jewelry, art that includes images of Ivindi gods and animals, saris, kukri knives, etc.), and the Blue Flame drug, which takes the form of a blue powder stored in small leather bags.
- **Boss Yaguro:** Nothing but opium, albeit of very high quality.
- **Kasuga Yumiko:** Gaijin items from across the Sea of Amaterasu such as leather-bound books, forks and spoons, rapiers, and fancy glassware.

The holding area in the back of the warehouse contains clear and abundant evidence that prisoners were being kept there up until very recently. PCs with a vigilance of 2 or higher notice sets of iron manacles attached to the wooden wall with thick iron staples; all of the manacles show dried blood, bits of skin, and other evidence. There are also several chamber pots and water canteens, and the remnants of simple meals (barley, rice balls, dried fish, etc.).

Prisoner Interrogations

Assuming the PCs take at least one living prisoner, they are able to interrogate them and gain crucial information. They can also search their foes, both those taken prisoner and those slain in combat. The PCs may feel the need to call in burakumin to search the corpses, of course, or if they do it themselves, they can visit a shrine to become cleansed of their unclean state.

Examining the ruffians can uncover some evidence of their employer. They all have distinctive tattoos and clothing, which vary according to which group they belong to; a **TN 3 Aesthetics (Air 2)** or **TN 2 Skulduggery (Earth 1) check** verifies the identity of the group. Their belongings also indicate this, as follows:

- If they work for Azif, many of them have gaijin items and gaijin coins on their persons. Some of them have a gaijin appearance and tattoos of symbols and creatures not seen in Rokugan.
- If they work for Yaguro, there is obvious evidence of opium addiction or at least familiarity with the drug: pipes, pouches of opium, etc. Their clothing is worn and stained.
- If they work for Kasuga Yumiko, their clothing and gear are of somewhat better quality, and at least one of them carries travel papers stamped with a Tortoise mon.

Captured ruffians are (at least initially) defiant and uncooperative, and the PCs may find it necessary to hand them over to the town magistrate's official torturer. The PCs may alternatively try to overwhelm the prisoners' resistance with their own psychological tactics, by making a **TN 3 Command (Fire 2, Water 4) check**. A successful check means a prisoner has broken and sobbingly reveals the following:

- ⊗ The name of their employer (Azif, Yaguro, or Yumiko as appropriate).
- ⊗ Up until yesterday, four prisoners were held in the warehouse. The ruffians describe them as three men (Otomo Hiroshige, Kasuga Toru, and Fubato) and a woman (Kasuga Michiko), and believe they were all samurai. They were definitely all opium addicts.
- ⊗ The boss had the prisoners taken into town last night. They are supposed to be shipped out to somewhere else on a smuggler's boat. If the villain is Azif, the ruffians know this vessel is *Obedient Slave* (his only ship). If the villain is Yaguro, they recall he has used *Floating Destiny* in the past; if it is Yumiko, they overheard her arranging to hire a ship named *Jealous Zephyr*.
- ⊗ The rōnin Gaku is in charge of the shipment. He does not work for the boss; instead, he works for whoever the boss is sending the prisoners to. Who is that? They don't know.

Physical Clues at the Warehouse

There is a great deal of physical evidence and many clues to be found in the warehouse once the PCs have dealt with the gangsters. As noted, searching through the crates provides strong hints regarding who owns the warehouse. There are a number of ways the PCs can learn more about the prisoners who were kept there as well:

- ⊗ A **TN 2 Survival (Water 1, Fire 3) check** can reveal the number of prisoners kept there (five) and roughly how long they were there (the longest time period being about six weeks, the most recent less than a week).
- ⊗ A **TN 2 Aesthetics (Earth 1, Air 3) check** uncovers that some kanji scratched into the wall next to one of the manacles can be read as the name "Hiroshige."
- ⊗ A **TN 2 Martial Arts [Unarmed] (Air 1, Earth 3) check** lets the PC notice the greater amount of blood and torn skin on one set of manacles and determine that this was where Yasuki Suzaku was held prisoner until she managed to escape.

BLAMING THE WRONG CULPRIT

Depending on how things play out, the PCs may wind up trying to blame the kidnappings on a different villain than the one truly responsible. The PCs may blame the wrong person due to either personal enmity or sheer error. Condemning the wrong person deliberately is, of course, a serious mistake. In this investigation, the PCs should stake glory equal to their status rank of the accused to make any accusation, and the PCs should lose this staked glory if proof of their error comes to light.

The consequences of this can be significant, since whoever the PCs convict for these crimes is condemned to death. The victim's family and allies will seek vengeance, and the PCs gain long-term sworn enemies; note that this can also happen if the victim was the correct villain.

Alternatively, if the PCs have been chasing the "wrong" villain throughout the scenario, the GM can always choose to change the ending and make that person the "real" villain after all.

- ⊗ Shugenja might also use rituals or other abilities to get information from the local kami, confirming that four prisoners (Otomo Hiroshige, Kasuga Toru, Kasuga Michiko, and Fubato) were held here, and that a fifth (Yasuki Suzaku) broke free and then was killed by the guards.

PCs with a vigilance of 2 or higher can also find a few other clues should the GM determine additional hints are needed to aid their efforts. If the warehouse is Yumiko's, the PCs can find several letters from her addressed to Slow Tide Harbor's magistrate, Kasuga Mikoto, in an official-looking pouch. If the warehouse is Azif's, they find cloth pouches with traces of gaijin pepper. If it is Yaguro's warehouse, there are several boxes filled with opium pipes. A successful **TN 2 Skulduggery (Air 1) check** reveals these are the same ones seen in the Green Rest.

If the PCs seem to be stuck and are unable to figure out where the kidnapped samurai have gone (most likely because the PCs didn't take any prisoners), the GM can have a couple of additional ruffians arrive to relieve the guards. This gives the PCs another chance to take prisoners or, alternatively, to chase or follow the ruffians back to the docks and the ship waiting to transport the prisoners to Kitsu Sokori.

ACT THREE: BATTLE AT THE DOCKS

The PCs enter the adventure's third and final act when they learn which villain is behind the plot and which ship is smuggling the prisoners out to Kitsu Sokori. They should find themselves rushing to the docks to try to stop the ship from sailing. Ideally, the GM should arrange for this to happen at night, for maximum dramatic atmosphere.

The tone of the adventure now shifts completely into dramatic action, and the GM should adjust accordingly, emphasizing speed and excitement. The fate of four samurai is at stake; further, the PCs begin to realize that this may involve not merely crime or drugs but also mahō.

Based on their investigation at the warehouse, the PCs should be aware that the villain is preparing to ship out the remaining kidnapped samurai via the sea. If the villain is Azif, the planned shipment is on his ship, *Obedient Slave*. If the villain is Yaguro or Kasuga Yumiko, the shipment is being transported on a hired smuggler's ship (*Floating Destiny* or *Jealous Zephyr*, respectively).

If the PCs did not find the clues in Act Two that identify which ship is taking the prisoners, all is not lost. They can demand information from the harbormaster, question one of the other smugglers or crime lords about their rivals' ships, or simply race to the docks and look for any ship that is preparing to cast off.

THE SCENE AT THE DOCKS

The PCs arrive at the docks to find that the designated ship is about to cast off. The prisoners are already secreted away in the ship's cargo hold. Gaku is aboard the vessel as well, ready to take them away to his mistress to be sacrificed. The crew are casting off the mooring ropes, pulling up the gangway, and putting out oars to row the ship away from the dock and through the lagoon.

The Villains Gathered

The exact nature of the PCs' confrontation here can be modified according to which of the three villains is behind the plot. A few suggestions follow:

- ✱ If Kasuga Yumiko is behind the plot, she is at the docks with Tortoise samurai (at least one per PC). Her intention is to let the smuggler's ship (*Jealous Zephyr*) sail and then pursue in her own vessel. When the PCs approach, she tries to obstruct them, claiming they are interfering in her business and firmly denying their accusations. Her goal is simply to delay the PCs long enough for the smugglers' ship to depart. Actually fighting is a last resort, undertaken only if the PCs escalate. If Yumiko is the only member

of her group who remains at the end of the fight, she could demand a duel with one of the PCs as an honorable means of resolution. She might also plea for the PCs not tell her family of her crimes to spare them and her clan the shame. The PCs may acquiesce to this, especially as sparing the Tortoise from shame could reduce the severity of potential repercussions.

- ✱ If Azif is behind the plot, he is aboard *Obedient Slave*, with at least two gaijin crew for every PC. If his forces are vanquished, he begs forgiveness for his ignorance of Rokugani culture and offers a staggering sum for his freedom. The PCs could be tempted by the sum, or perhaps could turn him into a source of information on gaijin activities both in foreign lands and in the Empire.
- ✱ If the villain is Boss Yaguro, he is at the docks along with a crowd of his ruffians: roughly two for every PC, just about everyone left in his gang. They fight to keep the PCs from reaching the ship he uses (*Floating Destiny*), with Yaguro displaying unexpected ferocity, as he knows this is his last opportunity to recover his dwindling fortunes. Should all of his allies fall, he throws down his katana and begs the PCs to end his life now. The PCs may agree, allowing him a somewhat dignified ending, or they might make him accept a more humiliating fate of being paraded through the streets to the jeering cries of peasants.

How Many Foes?

In contrast to the fight in Act Two, this battle should pose a serious threat to the PCs' safety. Aside from Gaku and the adventure's main villain, there should be a large number of their supporting fighters. The GM should include a number of Tortoise samurai and gaijin smugglers such that the total encounter rank for the scene is equal to or slightly exceeds the group rank of the PCs (see page 310 of the Core Rulebook).

Of course, falling to a swarm of minions is a poor end to things. This battle is intended to be suitably dramatic, allowing the PCs to demonstrate their courage in a dangerous and unpredictable setting. The GM should feel free to adjust on the fly to keep the scene from bogging down, such as by having some of the minions lose their nerve and flee or by spreading fires across a ship. Gaku could also utilize more powerful mahō techniques to reinforce the supernatural dangers present, especially if the PCs include powerful shugenja. The combat should be filled with tension, letting the darkness, the uncertain light from torches and fires, and the boat's unsteady decks make this battle a unique and perilous one.

TORTOISE SAMURAI

ADVERSARY

CONFLICT RANK:  4  2

Roleplaying Notes: You behave more like an armed peasant than how the Great Clans expect of their samurai. You're willing to talk to non-samurai as equals and you easily associate with merchants and even gaijin.

Quote: "Yes, that is indeed a gaijin item. What of it?"

Tortoise samurai use the **Skillful Rōnin** profile, on page 316 of the Core Rulebook.

GAIJIN SMUGGLER/SAILOR

MINION

CONFLICT RANK:  1  1

Roleplaying Notes: You don't like being away from your ship in this strange land, but have become quite fond of the local beverages and other attractions. You're somewhat in awe of the refined culture here but try to hide it as best you can.

Quote: "We haven't broken any of your laws, and we'll be gone with the next tide anyways!"

These gaijin use the **Desperate Bandit** profile on page 315 of the Core Rulebook, with these changes:

Demeanor: Shrewd (Fire -2, Water +2)

Skills: Martial 3, Trade 2

Advantages: Salt of the Sea (Fire) [Trade; Physical]

Disadvantages: Cultural Ignorance (Water) [Social; Mental], Gaijin Appearance (Fire) [Physical; Interpersonal]

Gear (equipped): Rigging daggers (Range 0, Damage 3, Deadliness 4, Concealable, Durable, Mundane; can be thrown [Range 1-3]), gaijin clothing (Physical 2), coil of rope, sake jug (half empty), pouch containing several gaijin coins and bu

Much Excitement!

Ideally, this battle should be a dramatic action sequence rather than a grinding tactical fight. The PCs must try to board, while Gaku and the crew try to fend them off.

If the ship manages to get away from the pier, the PCs can still pursue by swimming out to it (a **TN 2 Fitness [Earth 3, Water 1] check**) or by making a suitable invocation (such as *Stride the Waves* or *Call upon the Wind*). They can also commandeer another ship and set out in pursuit—all of the smaller boats are off night fishing (or smuggling), so the PCs would need to take command of a proper kobune. If a PC makes a **TN 2 Seafaring [Fire 1, Earth 3] check** they reach their foes in two turns, otherwise reaching them takes three turns.

This can lead to a dramatic pursuit across the lagoon and a boarding action, with the PCs climbing up the side of the enemy ship or leaping across decks (a **TN 2 Fitness [Water 1, Earth 3] or Seafaring [Water 1, Earth**

3] check). The defending smugglers attempt to knock the PCs back into the water with oars or boat hooks with **TN 3 Martial Arts [Melee] (Fire 2, Air 4) checks**.

In general, the GM should reward PCs who approach the fight in a creative manner rather than with blunt force. For example, a PC who makes an intimidating speech or bellows a terrifying war cry could make a **TN 3 Command (Fire 2, Water 4) check** to intimidate some of the enemies into fleeing.

Once the PCs get aboard the smugglers' ship, they have to face Gaku. The rōnin cultist initially fights the PCs in a conventional manner; he is a formidable swordsman and should be a serious threat for any PC. If the battle is going badly, though, Gaku does not hesitate to use mahō. He never willingly surrenders, and he fights to the death if possible. However, clever PCs may be able to use a **TN 3 Command (Air 2, Earth 1) or Courtesy (Fire 4) check** to get him to shout out a few bits of useful information during the fight, such as the name of his master, Kitsu Sokori. This may also happen if he unmasks during the fight. Fanning the Flames and other shūji can achieve similar results as well.

If the PCs are winning too easily, Gaku can set the ship on fire to drive them away. This might also happen through a combat misstep, invocations, or accidents involving a lantern. This imposes a "clock" on the fight, as the PCs must try to get belowdecks, free the prisoners (they are chained up and Gaku has the keys), and drag them out before the ship is engulfed. The GM can adjust the fire to increase or lessen tension during the battle, or even introduce storms to add additional environmental factors.

A Dramatic Moment: The True Villain Appears

Although Kitsu Sokori is not at the docks, she is in the lagoon aboard a converted fishing boat with a crew of four enslaved samurai. Her intention is to rendezvous with the smugglers' ship as it heads out of the lagoon, but once the PCs take action, she hangs back to observe. Sokori won't make an appearance until the PCs defeat the last ruffian and think their troubles are resolved.

At the GM's discretion, Sokori may use one or two mahō techniques, such as *Grip of Anguish* and *Incite Haunting*, to interfere with the PCs' efforts to capture the smugglers' ship. She makes these checks using a Water Ring of 4 and a Theology skill rank of 3. It is not readily apparent where these attacks have come from, but PCs with a vigilance of 3 or higher can spot a distant figure on a boat far across the lagoon.



If she doesn't participate directly, the PCs catch a dramatic glimpse of Sokori after their battle is concluded and the night comes to an end. Read or paraphrase the following aloud to the players:

The rising sun turns the lagoon the color of molten copper. Silhouetted against the blaze of Amaterasu's light is the distant shape of a fishing boat, oars carrying it swiftly down the channel that leads out to sea. You can see a robed human shape standing upright in the boat. It is difficult to be sure from this distance, but you think it is a woman, and she seems to be looking back at you fixedly. A cold chill runs through you, as though a malevolent entity has marked you for attention.

It is very unlikely that the PCs can harm Sokori, as they are probably in bad shape after their encounters that ran through the night, and she is too far away to be engaged. The GM should act to ensure that she survives the adventure, perhaps using the **Twists of Fate** sidebar on page 316 of the Core Rulebook. Sokori can thus become a wonderful recurring nemesis for the PCs in further campaigns, so devious that the PCs may not even immediately be aware she is present in a later investigation.

CONCLUSION AND EPILOGUE

Hopefully, the battle at the docks ends with the prisoners rescued and Gaku defeated. Interrogations of any prisoners and a search of the smugglers' ship can reveal that the kidnapped samurai were intended for someone named Kitsu Sokori, a mahō-tsukai who wished to sacrifice them for power.

LEGENDS CONTINUE

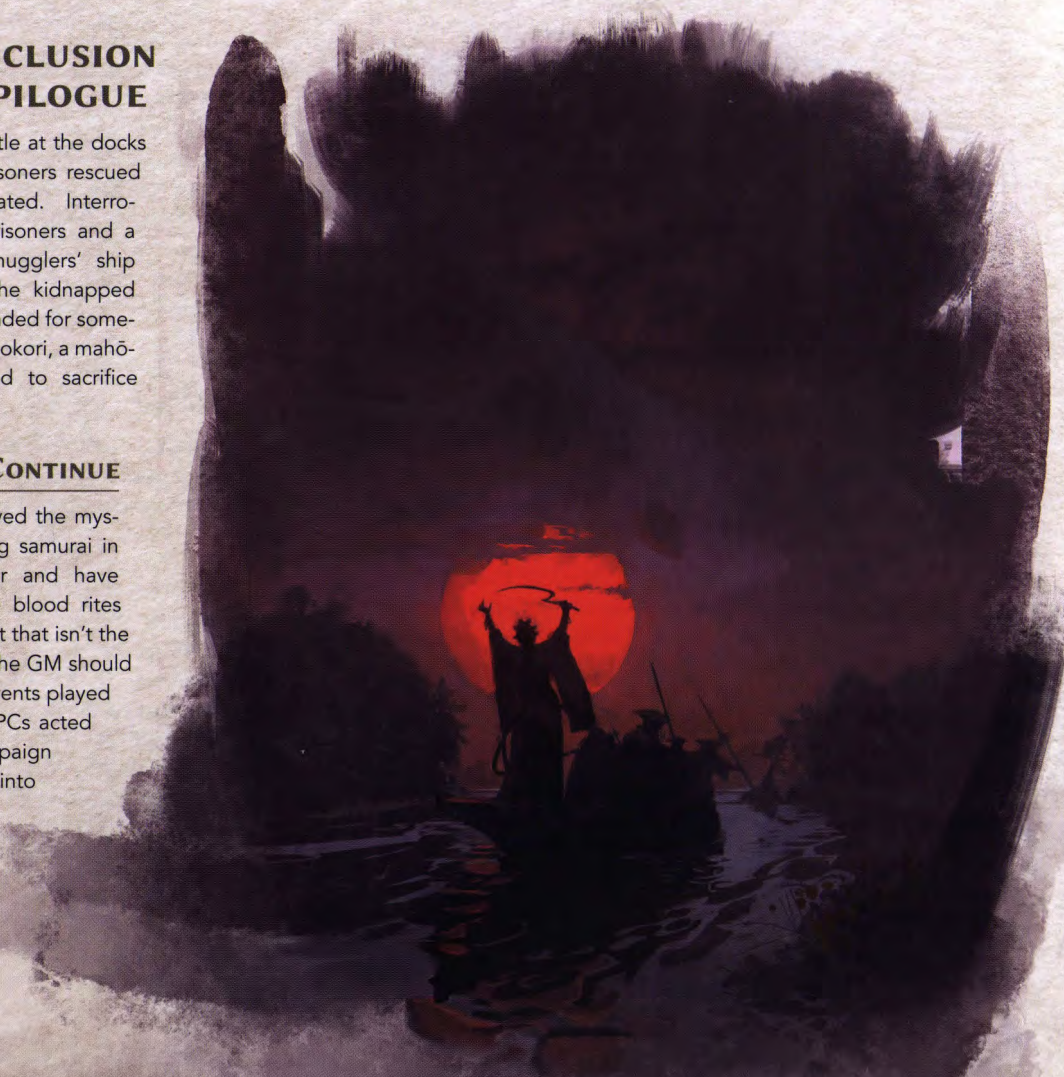
The PCs have solved the mystery of the missing samurai in Slow Tide Harbor and have prevented terrible blood rites from occurring, but that isn't the end of the story. The GM should use the way the events played out and how the PCs acted to carry their campaign narrative forward into new adventures.

The Tortoise Clan

The outcome of the investigation affects the Tortoise Clan, no matter who the local villain is revealed to be. Even if the Tortoise are not directly implicated, they face embarrassment for allowing these crimes to occur in their city. If Tortoise members were involved or were actually directing the crimes, the clan may well seek to scour its ranks against future internal villainy. Local officials may start pointing blame and divulging secrets regarding smuggling and other criminal operations to ensure they survive the aftermath. Lastly, and most importantly, if word reaches the Emperor, the Tortoise may face a penalty—something other clans may push for, as it might allow them to claim Tortoise lands as their own.

Slow Tide Harbor

The various other powers in the town are also affected. Outsiders might pay more attention to the port, something residents will not welcome. Shakeups might also install new major players in the town or introduce new criminal groups to replace those removed or eliminated in the turbulence.



Kitsu Sokori

The PCs have gained a powerful new nemesis in this vile mahō-tsukai. She can show up in future adventures, possibly again pulling the strings from the shadows such that the PCs might not be aware of her activity for some time. While she is upset that they stalled her plan to use the kidnapped samurai in powerful blood sacrifices, she might find the PCs interesting and attempt to lure them to her service. She is certain to keep tabs on them regardless, so that when she faces them she will be better prepared—and perhaps even know some of their specific weaknesses. She might also attempt to move her operations to another location, where she can perform even more terrible deeds.

PLAYER REWARDS

With the adventure over, the GM should reward each player for their character's actions and successes:

- 4 XP: Stopping Gaku from escaping with the prisoners (and thus stopping Sokori from performing her mahō rite)
- 2 XP: Rescuing the prisoners
- 1 XP: Capturing the main villain of the adventure
- 1 XP: Capturing Gaku
- 1 XP: Exposing the Blue Flame trade

In addition, the GM should award honor and glory to the PCs if the following events occur. These should also be awarded as appropriate for the tenets of Bushidō (such as three honor for standing against numerically superior forces as per the tenet of Yū, or Courage). See page 300 of the Core Rulebook for additional examples.

- Honor
 - Award 6 honor for the tenet of Chūgi (Duty and Loyalty): Refusing to obey orders from higher status Tortoise officials (or other powerful individuals) to call off the investigation
 - Award 3 honor for the tenet of Jin (Compassion): Treating the Tortoise samurai (including Kasuga Yumiko) if they are wounded in the climactic the battle at the docks
- Glory
 - Award 6 glory for exposing (or creating the appearance of) any direct Tortoise Clan involvement with the investigation's crimes.
 - Award 3 glory for publicly quashing an opium smuggling ring or other major criminal enterprise

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