

NAME: Hiruma Yasuji
CLAN: Crab
SCHOOL: Hida Bushi **RANK:** 3

Age: 20 **Sex:** Male **Height:** 5'5"
Physical Description: Solid-boned, young face, about 4% body fat, no left ear, small burn pockmarks on arm, clean-shaven.

FIRE 2
Intelligence 2
Agility 3

AIR 2
Awareness 2
Reflexes 3

EARTH 4
Willpower 4
Stamina 4

WATER 3
Perception 3
Strength 4

VOID 3

GLORY 4.1
HONOR 1.3
INSIGHT 180
TN TO BE HIT: 15 (25 in armor)

Wounds	Dice Penalty
____(0-8)	-0
____(9-16)	-1
____(17-24)	-2
____(25-32)	-3
____(33-40)	-4
____(41-48)	Down
____(49-56)	Out
____(57-64)	Dead

SCHOOL TECHNIQUES

Way of the Crab
Mountain Does Not Move
Two Pincers, One Mind

KOBO JIUJITSU TECHNIQUES

(pp. 138-144, *Bearers of Jade*)
Break the Bones
Slam the Gates
Drunk Bushi
Hida's Lesson
Tear-Giving

ADVANTAGES

Quick, Ancestor: Hiruma,
True Friend: Ide Masafumi

DISADVANTAGES

Scarred, A Home in Ashes
Lost Love

*When you see the Dark One,
tell him his mistake was touching this family.*
—Hiruma Katsuhito

SKILLS

Archery 2	Kenjutsu 2
Athletics 3	Lore: <i>Maho-Tsukai</i> 2
Battle 3	Lore: Shadowlands 3
Courtier 1	Meditation 1
Defense 3	Navigation 1
Engineering 1	Sincerity 1
Etiquette 1	Stealth 2
Hunting 2	Tetsubo 4
Investigation 1	Traps 2
Jiujitsu (Kobo-ichi-kai) 4	

EQUIPMENT

Tetsubo, katana, wakizashi, yumi and 30 ya, heavy armor and helm, a kimono under there somewhere, traveling pack, black body paint, finger of jade, mortar and pestle, weapon oil and cleaning powder.

HISTORY

Your Family

Well, now, there's a sore subject.

You were bottom kid. Three older brothers and one sister, and they all used to pick on you. Not that you didn't fight back—but that's usually when they left. Maybe that's why you spent so much time with your father. He told you how the Shadowlands had taken the Hiruma holdings, destroyed the Hiruma Bushi School, and scattered your people to the winds. He told you your family had become scouts who knew the Shadowlands better than the fallen Moto, and could navigate a way through the whirlpool of the mouth of Hell.

You realized early that this was nonsense. Hiding and scouting would not help regain your conquered lands. You decided to train with the Hida, and at your gempukku went into the Shadowlands to prove your worth on the corpse of a monster.

Lucky you, you ran into a pack of marsh trolls...and ran...and ran. You strung them out until there was just one to face, but he walked into the katana without feeling it and reached for you with a clawed hand. You clawed back, and you're not sure what happened next, but you were standing, your hands hurt, and it was dead. And you felt a presence—another young, reckless bushi who felt proud of you. Even if you did bend the katana a little.

While you were in school, Hiruma Kage attempted his ill-fated retaking of Shiro Hiruma. When you saw the defeated men trudging back to the Wall, the simple solutions you had believed in disappeared. There would be no retaking of Hiruma Castle, not now.

Your Companions

To your disappointment, Father's katana, *Nisshoku*, went to your brother. You had to make do with the bent one. And for that stupid reason, even after you killed a troll bare-handed, you were sent to some pacifist Phoenix instead of serving on the Wall with real bushi.

But it didn't turn out too bad. Isawa Ryoji taught you more than you wanted about the Shadowlands, and after a while you even got used to the arrogant chatterbox.

And all the court-folk were so grateful when you took out minor oni. Especially Ide Masafumi. The poor guy's family was on the line after some Akodo diplomat got struck with a curse. (It was kinda funny, see, there was this Unicorn's horse and some livestock, and...never mind.)

Anyway, Ryoji found that it was actually one of Mas's ex-lovers, Shinjo O-Niro, who was working with the *maho-tsukai* to get back at him. (You don't know what she was so upset about. Masafumi said he'd write...) And the Lion committed seppuku once the "your dishonor, my dishonor" talk started so Masafumi was riding the guilt wagon hard.

So Ryoji asked the Unicorn to show their gratitude by giving him someone to handle court folk, and Masafumi came onto the team. He was pretty broken up at first, but you reminded him it was because his girl was so clumsy with her trail that you tracked down a *maho-tsukai* who'd caused trouble all over Rokugan. He lightened up after that.

Between you and Daidoji Kame, Ryoji's bodyguard, you managed to keep the ponies alive. Actually, you had more trouble with ronin and small-town magistrates than oni. It was a ronin who took your ear off. She was all, "nyah, nyah, I drew first blood," which was dumb, since evidently she thought you'd *stop* at first blood.

Going Home

You and Masafumi became friends and when you headed home for training, he came with you as an emissary to the Crab. He even married Kaiu Michiko, a friend of yours who was attractive, available, and could see through Masafumi's womanizing in an Otosan minute.

He was also the one who sat by your side as the messenger told you scouts had gone missing near Shiro Kuni, where your family were stationed. He kept you from charging after them when you heard your brother was one of them, and would not let you fall on your sword when you heard of the poisonings that preceded Moto Sada's attack. You received a list of thirty survivors. Your family was not among them.

You always wanted to carry *Nisshoku*.

Now you do.

Your Assignment

You're stationed at the castle now, with a bunch of crass Wall Crabs, but you spend most of your time with Masafumi anyway. That got you appointed to court duty this winter, and Hida Yoshige took over your job at the Wall.

It's a little intimidating to be at the party where Hiruma Kage, the daimyo of the whole dang family, is getting married. Not that you're *afraid*, but the big silk guys of Rokugan live in a strange world, and it puts you on edge to be

part of it. But the rest of your magistrate friends are coming, too, and it'll be good to see the old crowd again.

Lastly, if you can do it without goofing, it's hit you that you should be getting married. You're of an age, and...well, your parents would probably have started the arranging this winter were they alive.

WHAT YOU THINK OF THE OTHERS

Ide Masafumi: Your best friend. Since you met, he's grown from an irresponsible layabout to an earnest magistrate and husband. Without his council, you wouldn't have survived the news of your family's massacre. He keeps you on track when you get carried away, and you only hope you can do as much for him.

Daidoji Kame: She started out as an Iron Crane and ruined it by training with a bunch of pacifists. She says she wants to perfect the Technique of No Thought. Does this sound intelligent to you?

Bushi are bushi. If you wanted to quote Shintao, you'd find a monk. She's a crow trying to learn to swim. Okay, so she's a *good* crow, but the only reason you don't pick on her is because you don't believe teasing helps.

And the only reason she wins while sparring is 'cause of that spear.

Isawa Ryoji: All the power of a Kuni without the dissections. Funny how someone from a traditionalist wussy clan can be just as lost at court as you. (I mean, you ain't too cultured, but even you knew who Otaku Kamoko was. Duh.) But he's right most of the time, he's got guts, and he knows about maho. You wouldn't be alive, or as successful, without him.

Kitsu Kikuzo: Watch out for the quiet guys. He's opened up as you've gotten to know him—he's got shame or somethin', like every Lion at the Wall. He's good to spar with. He doesn't let you get away with anything, and he's got great control.

Yogo Sumiko: When a Scorpion cares this much about you and your friends, something's gotta be wrong. Whatever her secrets are, she hides them, but you can't imagine much you'd condemn her for. I mean, she knows The Ward, so for all you care, she could smoke a warehouse of opium a day and she'd still be a goddess.

OTHERS YOU KNOW AT COURT

Ide (Kaiu) Michiko: Masafumi's wife. She's a teacher at the Kaiu school, but now she's retired to start their family.

Hiruma Ryoichi: The only other person from your town, Kowara, to survive. He runs messages for Hiruma Kage and his father.

Yasuki Kurako: A friend of Masafumi's who handles public relations for the Crab. A bit high-strung.

Hida Sachiko: One samurai-ko who even the Wall doesn't scare. 'Course, neither does the thought of her own seppuku every time she insults another lord or gets caught with a cute heimin and a bottle of shochu.

YOUR DAISHO

Your katana *Nisshoku* ("Eclipse") has been in your family for twelve generations, since your ancestor Ushidoshi was elevated to samurai status during the Battle of the Landbridge. It's made with more hard steel than soft, and is difficult to sharpen. Only the Kaiu swordsmiths really get it right.

Its companion wakizashi was lost long ago. The one you have is sharp enough to cut, and that's all you need.

NAME: Ide Masafumi
CLAN: Unicorn
SCHOOL: Ide Emissary **RANK:** 3

Age: 31 **Sex:** Male

Height: 5'7"

Physical Description: Stately, impeccably dressed, roguish yet kind features...think Rokugani Antonio Banderas.

FIRE 3
Intelligence 3
Agility 3

AIR 3
Awareness 4
Reflexes 3

EARTH 2
Willpower 3
Stamina 2

WATER 2
Strength 2
Perception 4

VOID 2

GLORY 5.3
HONOR 3.4
INSIGHT 180
TN TO BE HIT: 15 (20 in armor)

Wounds	Dice Penalty
____(0-4)	-0
____(5-8)	-1
____(9-12)	-2
____(13-16)	-3
____(17-20)	-4
____(21-24)	Down
____(25-28)	Out
____(29-32)	Dead

TECHNIQUES

The Heart Speaks: Add your Honor (+3) in points to skill rolls in social situations, and make an Awareness + Etiquette roll, TN 20, to avoid making any faux pas.

The Heart Listens: Make an Intelligence roll to remember anything said at a meeting, and a Perception + Investigation roll to find out about people while chatting with them.

When the Veils Move: Make an Awareness test, TN of the attacker's Void + Sincerity x 5 to take one action before a fight starts.

ADVANTAGES

Read Lips, Dangerous Beauty, Ally: Yasuki Kurako, Ally: Kaiu Michiko, True Friend: Hiruma Yasuji

DISADVANTAGES

Obligation: Phoenix Inquisitors
Bad Reputation: Womanizer

*There is no way to transcend life
It must be, and so it is
So live your time while you can
And when wine is offered, don't refuse.
—Kakita Toshimoko*

SKILLS

Bard 2	Kenjutsu 2
Calligraphy 5	Law 3
Commerce 3	Lore: Crab Clan 2
Courtier 5	Lore: Shadowlands 1
Defense 2	Lore: Unicorn Clan 2
Etiquette 4	Navigation 3
Heraldry 3	Painting 2
History 2	Seduction 2
Horsemanship 3	Sincerity 4
Hunting 4	War Fan 3
Investigation 3	

EQUIPMENT

Tessen (Excellent quality, wedding present from Kaiu, Str+1k3 damage)
Fine kimonos (some for all seasons)
Fine wakizashi, Unicorn horse ("Kajiko"),
Traveling packs and satchels, fine tanto, light armor, 2 koku, and about 11 more in assets, 5 fine netsuke (gift boxes) with rice paper.

HISTORY

Your Family

You used to think you must have done something good in a previous life, 'cause this time around, it was your turn to relax. First son of the castle magistrate, you learned to be good while young and *look* good when older and bolder. Trouble is, you learned this at twelve. By the time of your gempukku, you'd already become a man in a few ways not discussed in polite society.

You told a lot of stories as a kid. You thought about becoming a Kakita Artisan, but then you found out their stories started with appeals to the kami. You preferred stories like, "Oh, Kamoko-chan, you're the only one for me," and "I'll write while I'm in Lion lands, I swear." You did keep the writing promise... and quickly found that your father was right when he said half of diplomacy is in letters. When you began sending journal entries around, they were racy, scandalous, and very popular. You got noticed.

Which often created its own difficulties...

See, your problem is, you like people. Even with all you've seen, they continually surprise you. And entrance you. You've never done anything with a woman you didn't love...but you fall in love quick, hard and often. And in Rokugan, once is usually painful enough.

Meeting Your Companions

Not to name-drop, but you were smoothing things over between Otaku Kamoko and a few of Akodo Toturi's men at Shiro Otaku when you discovered one of the Lions was under a curse which seized his mind.

You called for an Inquisitor, because you needed an inter-Clan authority, and in walked Isawa Ryoji with his bodyguards Hiruma Yasuji and Daidoji Kame. They tracked down the *'tsukai*, and of all people, it's Shinjo O-Niro, with some Isawa shugenja gone bad.

You were heartbroken. She spouted venom about how she was corrupted to evil by rutting with you like an animal and if her name was soiled, she might as well give it away. She was executed and her word was worthless, but you were relieved Ryoji didn't mention it in his report. When he asked you to join him as a magistrate under the Phoenix, you were glad to travel with the people who had saved your life. Yasuji, in particular, had rescued you from practically right under the oni's claws, and he was a lot easier to be grateful to than the aloof, arrogant Ryoji.

You traveled with them for a time, making

sure Ryoji's accusations were always heard in court. You became close to both Yasuji and Kame, and their dedication to their duties shamed you into putting aside your old ways. And you found you *liked* maturity. People respect you and you make a difference in a way you once hardly dreamed of.

Your Assignment

When the group split up last year, you went with Yasuji, taking a permanent position as an emissary to the Crab, for you'd grown to value their honesty and courage. Yasuji introduced you to Kaiu Michiko, a sensei at the Kaiu-ryu and acceptable match for your parents, and you've even found yourself liking marriage and monogamy. And now you're going to be a father! It's time to settle down and prove to your new lord that you are more than a pretty face.

However, getting Hida Kisada to look at a courtier as anything but target practice takes effort. But at least this year, with Hiruma Kage insulting the Crane, Kisada's short on court-ready people, so you wrote and asked him if there was any way you could help. Everyone warned you about attracting his attention, but you're sure he's not so bad.

WHAT YOU THINK OF THE OTHERS:

Daidoji Kame: When you first met Ryoji's cute bodyguard, you tried your usual tricks, but they backfired in the best possible way. After a few talks that were meant to be seductions, you found her helping you over your depression about The Incident. It shamed you to see her trying so hard to live a pure and simple life, and impressed you that she maintained her ideals no matter what occurred.

Hiruma Yasuji: Your doshi in spirit, if not in blood. He was a talented kid trusted with a man's duty when you met him, grouchy, honest, and determined not to be used. Once you persuaded him that looking for *maho* elsewhere was as necessary as the work at the Kaiu Wall, the two of you got along great. When you returned to Kyuden Hida, it was you who heard about his family's massacre and kept him from running to his death in the Shadowlands. If there was anything you could do to ease his pain, you would.

The best thing for him now is to start a family of his own, but his holdings were all destroyed in the attack.

Isawa Ryoji: Yes, yes, best of the best. Yes, you know he's a prodigy among the celestially destined. Yes, you're grateful, but somebody took the fun out of this boy's life. You're proud you won his respect, but it was a little annoying how much effort it took.

running his court.

Kitsu Kikuzo: Until you had to tell Yasuji of his loss, you'd never seen anyone sadder than Kikuzo. You'd read about them in samurai tragedies, but it's weird to meet one. His family evidently rejected him because of some shugenja thing, and he requested to leave Lion lands and work with your family instead. It's great that he got married. Maybe now he'll find some happiness, too.

Yogo Sumiko: You knew better than to get involved with a Yogo, but you're glad she's here. While her questions sometimes end up prying without meaning to, you know not to answer them. She made no move when she could have blackmailed you over O-Niro, so you figure her Clan hasn't found you important yet, which is fine by you. She seems nice enough, but she's bought the Scorpion loyalty line wholeheartedly, and may not always know where to stop.

OTHERS YOU KNOW AT COURT

Ide (formerly Kaiu) Michiko: Ah, your wife. She's a Crab, all right: never brooks any of your games, and you've grown to like her for it. You don't have that youthful passion for her, but you respect her, and that will probably last longer than love anyway.

She teaches children engineering at the Kaiu-ryu, and now that you are starting a family, she's been walking on air. So have you. You've told nearly every Crab in the castle.

Ide Toshimitsu: A friend from school who's a few years older and settled down young. A fine diplomat, but too pacifistic for the Crab.

Ide Keiyomi: Wow. Your sempai's daughter is *sixteen*? You feel *old*. On the other hand, Yasuji's only twenty. Toshimitsu wants his daughter to marry someone kind, and he's got enough land and money for them both. Maybe you could introduce Yasuji and Keiyomi and help two friends at once?

Shinjo O-Shito: Oh, drat. You know her from somewhere. Was it a past affair? No, maybe that was that Phoenix delegate...

Yasuki Kurako: Whoa! You remember little Kura-chan! You used to see her every winter at the Razor of the Dawn! She's a little flighty, but evidently Kisada felt she could handle

NAME: Daidoji Kame
CLAN: Crane
SCHOOL: Daidoji and Shiba Bushi
RANK: 3 (Daidoji 2, Shiba 1)

Age: 22 **Sex:** Female **Height:** 5'3"
Description: Stiff, dyed hair usually braided, sturdily built, soft but slightly rough voice.

FIRE 4 **AIR** 2
Intelligence 4 Awareness 2
Agility 4 Reflexes 4

EARTH 2 **WATER** 3
Willpower 3 Perception 3
Stamina 2 Strength 3

VOID 3

GLORY 3.6
HONOR 4.1
INSIGHT 180
[TN TO BE HIT: 20 (30 in armor)

Wounds	Dice Penalty
____(0-8)	-0
____(9-16)	-0
____(17-24)	-0
____(25-32)	-1
____(33-40)	-2
____(41-48)	Down
____(49-56)	Out
____(57-64)	Dead

TECHNIQUES

The Force of Honor: Your Honor substitutes for your Earth in figuring Wound Ranks.
Wielding the Inner Fire: If you go Full Defense for one turn, you automatically have the highest initiative the next turn.
Way of the Phoenix.

ADVANTAGES

Multiple Schools, Strength of the Earth (2 levels), Balanced (May raise in an Iaijutsu duel as if Void were 2 higher, ignore modifiers to Honor rolls, ignore taunts)

DISADVANTAGES

Idealistic (for every 5 Honor lost, lose 1 more)
Obligation: Isawa Ryoji (lesser obligation)

Think not that you are in the wrong place. Ask why it could be right.

—*Tao of Shinsei*

SKILLS

Archery 2	Iaijutsu 3
Athletics 3	Investigation 1
Battle 2	Kenjutsu 3
Courtier 1	Meditation 2
Defense 5	Shintao 2
Etiquette 2	Sincerity 2
Lore: Bushido 2	Tea Ceremony 2
Lore: Shadowlands 2	Theology 1
Horsemanship 1	Yarijutsu 4

EQUIPMENT

Fine yari, fine katana, fine wakizashi, fine pony, yumi and 20 ya, fine heavy armor (no movement penalty), helm, traveling pack, two stylin' kimonos, fine boken, aiguchi, and nage-yari. Scrolls of the Diamond Sutra of Shinsei, a blank scroll, writing implements, 2 koku

HISTORY

Your Family

You would never speak ill of your honored mother and father. Your Shiba mother died giving birth to you; there was no shugenja present. For years, your father tried to pretend she was still there. "What would your mother say?" he would ask, and remind you that at the end of your life you will see her in Jigoku and have to account for your actions.

You listened for your mother, and prayed to her, and she was in your thoughts when you swore to serve the Clan at your gempukku. You begged your father for an entire summer to let you become a bushi, because it was the most noble profession.

Then you went to the Daidoji school and found out differently. The daimyo hid his face like a Scorpion. They taught that honor would drive you...but the first time you saw action, you were told that because you were outnumbered, you would *trap* good bushi in a pitch-filled gorge and shoot the survivors. When it was over, you requested a transfer out. Your mother would not approve of such a school; perhaps her own would be better.

Then You Found the Tao

At the Shiba school, your sensei started you with a blank scroll. "Write down everything you know," she said. You thought it was some kind of trick, and wrote that down.

"Not what you *think*," she smiled, "what you *know*." And with that, your education began again. "This scroll is blank," she said. "See its potential. It can contain anything, mean anything, and at the same time, it is only paper. You have writing on you, but that does not mean you cannot be blank if you must."

Truly Shinsei was the wisest man in history. No bushi can find his true strength without understanding Void. When you were asked to guard Inquisitor Isawa Ryoji, you knew that this was your calling: protecting the man who searched for evil in the heart of Rokugan.

It is humbling to be in the presence of one so blessed by the elements. He has assured you often of the rightness of your duty. It shames you to admit it, but you feel pride in that praise. You have been called upon to defend your charge from oni and *maho*—as well as ronin and other magistrates who do not appreciate his position—and you must admit an enjoyment of your skills out of place with your humble position.

The other bushi in his service—Kitsu Kikuzo and Hiruma Yasuji—have proven loyal and far

more capable than you. Though they claim not to care for the Tao, it is obvious in their confidence that they feel it inside. Ide Masafumi, the smooth, graceful emissary who joined you after Ryoji saved his family from a *maho-tsukai*, was tragically unfamiliar with the way of the Fortunes when you met, but you have spent long hours together trying for a better understanding of the universe.

You were a little nervous when Ryoji said the *maho* expert Yogo Sumiko would be traveling with you...not that you listen to rumors, but Scorpion are widely said to be treacherous. Fortunately, your fears were unfounded, but you sensed something unresolved in her chi before you left for training. Perhaps when you meet again this winter, you can help her find peace.

Your Assignment

People have said you're "innocent," and that at Winter Court you'll see "the real way of the world." You're not sure what they mean, but it sounds great. You want to see the world. You want to become wiser. Everyone else is so much more sure of themselves. There is so much to learn before you are truly worthy of the trust placed in you.

Though the Crab court is a little intimidating, you are pleased to be among so many Phoenixes. Surely they have much to teach, and the famed honesty of the Crab will make certain this winter court has no problems.

WHAT YOU THINK OF THE OTHERS

Ide Masafumi: At first you were overwhelmed by this well-traveled man who was so very sure of himself. Without an understanding of The Way, he should have been wracked with confusion and guilt. Hopefully, your conversations have done him some small bit of good. It shames you that twice you have had impure thoughts about him. But he is married now, and you find that you are truly glad for his happiness.

Hiruma Yasuji: You don't understand what drives him. He has no family, doesn't know his daimyo, doesn't study the Tao, and expects death in his duty. But still, he keeps going. He doesn't look for deeper meaning and he kills the unrighteous with frightening fury. Yet he doesn't seem to be a bad person. You must meditate on this further.

Isawa Ryoji: It is humbling to have been entrusted with his care. While his personal

arrogance is a little off-putting, it is not for you to judge his character, but support his mission. Besides, Isawa Tadaka and many others who have studied the Celestial Order far longer than you speak highly of him. They are wise.

Kitsu Kikuzo: When you first met, he judged you on the color of your kimono, not the strength of your character, and he actually said Shintao and bushido were mutually exclusive. You were scared while debating him, but it turned into a comparison of Akodo's and Shinsei's teachings, and you learned that there were many more values that you shared than that divided you. While the shortsightedness of his family has marred him, his soul is in the right place. He'll do fine.

Yogo Sumiko: She's the daughter your father wishes he had. Even born into the Yogo family, she somehow manages to maintain all the womanly virtues. You wish you could be as demure and polite, but you are a samurai-ko, and your training is not for the court.

OTHERS YOU KNOW AT COURT

Yasuki Kurako: Well...you'd never, um, mention it, but it's surprising that Kisada-sama trusts a *Yasuki* to run his court. Sensei always said they were treacherous commoners who sold out samurai like double-dealing criminals.

Shiba Noboru: Bodyguard of Hiruma Kage's intended bride. He was several years ahead of you at the Shiba school.

YOUR DAISHO

Kesshin ("Determination") is the name of your katana. It is 337 years old, and has been banged up and re-polished by Kakita swordsmiths until its nicks simply became the metal's "grain" again. The saya is a nice mahogany engraved with thorn bushes, thistles, and a butterfly. The tsuba is of five sea creatures, and the hilt's pin-caps silver representations of Lady Doji.

Kan-on ("Gratitude") is its companion. It is in much better shape, and its hilt-pins are arranged to be used right-handed.

Bakushinchi ("Core of the Explosion") is the yari your Daidoji sensei gave to you. It has ray-skin handle wraps; you prefer it not slide around in your grip.

NAME: Kitsu Kikuzo

CLAN: Lion

SCHOOL: Akodo Bushi **RANK:** 3

Age: 25 **Sex:** Male **Height:** 5'11"

Physical Description: Unusually tall, slightly gawky, doesn't meet people's eyes. Wears the Akodo mon, not the Kitsu.

FIRE 3

Intelligence 3
Agility 3

AIR 2

Awareness 2
Reflexes 3

EARTH 3

Willpower 3
Stamina 3

WATER 4

Perception 4
Strength 4

VOID 2

GLORY 4.9

HONOR 3.0

INSIGHT 180

TN TO BE HIT 15 (25 in armor)

Wounds

____(0-6)	-0
____(7-12)	-1
____(13-18)	-2
____(19-24)	-3
____(25-30)	-4
____(31-36)	Down
____(37-42)	Out
____(43-48)	Dead

Dice Penalty

*A samurai's greatest strength
is not what he is, but what he can be.
—Akodo*

SKILLS

Archery 2	Iaijutsu 2
Bard 1	Investigation 2
Battle 4	Jiu-jutsu 1
Courtier 1	Kenjutsu 5
Defense 3	Lore: Bushido 1
Etiquette 3	Lore: Shadowlands 2
Heraldry 1	Poetry 2
History 1	Sincerity 2
Horsemanship 4	Yarijutsu 3

TECHNIQUES

Way of the Lion.

Strength of Purity.

With the Strength of my Ancestors.

EQUIPMENT

Katana, wakizashi, no-dachi, 3 kimonos (one Fine), dai-kyu, 10 ya, 10 watakusi, 10 armor-piercing arrows, yari, fine heavy armor and helm, horse, 5 koku

ADVANTAGES

Ally: Kitsu Hanako, Large,
Death Trance

DISADVANTAGES

Dark Secret (see History), Forsaken (your ancestors do not speak to you)

HISTORY

Your Family

Your sixth birthday is your earliest memory, and the one that shaped your life. As you entered the ancestral shrine with your parents, a cold breeze extinguished the candles and your brother dropped the sacred offerings. The spirits did not speak on that day, nor have you ever heard their voices since.

They said it was your fault, spoke of a curse given when your mother looked upon an ogre while expecting, and whispered that your unusual size was a sign of your unworthiness.

It was difficult not to believe them.

Your Training

The Akodo Bushi School was a refuge from your family and you excelled there, but you could not escape your failings. Every shrine, every samurai who spoke his ancestors' names reminded you of your lack. You stayed far from the regular bushi, joining Toturi's newest project; the cavalry. While initially not important enough to be more than a footman, you proved your worth breaking and training horses, and your proudest moment came when Akodo Kage walked by and said, "Give that one a horse."

When your training was sufficient, you asked for an assignment that would allow you to travel to another land. He agreed, and you found yourself an honor guard to a family of Ide emissaries in Unicorn lands.

Your Journeys

Shortly after, the family was plagued by a *maho-tsukai*, and the Phoenix Inquisitor who tracked down the sorcerer requested the family's son, Ide Masafumi, to join his magistrates. You followed.

At first, it was tempting to define your new companions by the stereotypes you grew up with—you distrusted Daidoji Kame, were intrigued by Isawa Ryoji, puzzled by the gaijin Ide, respected Hiruma Yasuji, and were suspicious of Yogo Sumiko.

But they welcomed you, judging you on your own abilities and not your ancestors'. You could hardly do less for them. After an awkward beginning, you found acceptance that you could not have at home, and for a few months you were content.

Your Shame

Sumiko was your closest companion. Young, bright, caring, she genuinely grieved for your losses, and forced you out of the armor you

had encased yourself in. Though she spoke often of her loyalty to her clan, she did not betray the secrets you shared with her. And she told you her own, her dreams of aiding the empire with her magic, her longing for love unmarred by her family.

Your first kiss felt so right it was impossible to think you were mistaken; this could only be love. Still, you held back, for bushido has no room for matters of the heart. It was only when you realized how easily you could lose her, when only your sword saved her from the oni Ryoji was trying to ward, that you gave in to passion. That night, you lay together, and for a short time there was no guilt as you held her beneath the stars.

Then she wept on your shoulder and said she loved you and would no longer keep secrets from you. When she said that she had blackmailed a Unicorn daimyo to keep him from offending the Emperor, you understood. When she spoke of forging documents to get at a *maho* cult which had long been hidden, you did not condemn her. But when she said the poisons, the assassination and the torture were all done in the name of the Son of Heaven...you did not know what to think.

How could you have been so wrong? How could the woman you love perform such reprehensible actions? And is it something in *you* that draws you toward evil even when you try your best?

Your Marriage

It was fortunate that your school called you back for training shortly after, for you could no longer bear to be around Sumiko. When you got home, your parents had sent word of your impending marriage.

You accepted Akodo Hanako's hand with relief, but it was not so easy to put Sumiko aside. She is in your thoughts constantly, and now at the very winter court where you and your wife have been invited to attend...

Your Assignment

You are at Kyuden Hida in the service of Matsu Bushime, a *taisa* in your sensei's army. With the Scorpion dominating the Imperial Court, and no Crane here this year, your superiors felt it fortuitous to renew friendship with the Crab. While you have few specific duties, Bushime-sama has ordered you to do whatever you must to gain Kisada-sama's good will.

WHAT YOU THINK OF THE OTHERS

Daidoji Kame: Oh, the shame whenever you look at her! You used to discuss the virtues of bushido and the Fortunes, and she still believes you are as guided by those ideals as she. She is true to her word, loyal to her companions and compassionate to those less fortunate. And she's a Crane! How have you fallen so low?

Hiruma Yasuji: There is little bad to say about Yasuji—he is skilled, forthright, and determined—but like many Crab, the best that can be said is that you're glad he's on *your* side. On the other hand, he probably hasn't tortured anyone, so these days he's looking oooooookay.

Ide Masafumi: When you heard his reputation, you prepared yourself for a two-faced, womanizing Doji Hoturi, and instead got a man whose only flaw is that he loves too much. You two always got along when discussing horses (surprise), but you know how quickly he sees through lies. How long can it be before he learns your shame? But isn't it his fault, in a way? The man who saved you from your prison also let you find a new one. You don't blame him, but you almost wish you had never met.

Isawa Ryoji: Okay, you agreed to ignore the stereotypes, but Ryoji fits it. Overconfident, brash, abrasive, arrogant, and prefers to let other handle his battles, even though he has the power to turn the tide. But he's saved your life more than once, and you his, so it doesn't bear discussion.

Yogo Sumiko:

Maybe you could kill yourselves together.
Or become ronin! Your ancestors have already forsaken you...

But you wouldn't do that to her. She may still redeem herself in Jigoku.

There is nothing that can be done. You love each other, but that is not enough, and were you a stronger man, you would atone for your sins. This beautiful, kind, torturing, blackmailing murderess is the wrong kind of woman for you, for anyone, but there is no one else who will ever mean so much.

And you don't know what she'll do if you tell her it was a mistake. She would never hurt you, but she has not met Hanako, and she has killed strangers before. Though you care little for your wife personally, you promised to

honor and protect her before her family, the summoned ancestors, and the shrine of Akodo One-Eye. This time you will not go back on your word.

OTHERS YOU KNOW AT COURT

Matsu Bushime: Your lord for the duration of court, she is a rough but fair woman with little interest in socializing. Her entourage are honorable men and women who do credit to the Lion clan. You try to avoid them as much as possible.

Kitsu Hanako: A good wife, trained in all the womanly arts. She can remain quiet, sew lovely kimonos, prepare elegant dinners, and...and...another subject, perhaps?

YOUR DAISHO AND ARMOR

Your family has no ancestral katana. Your katana, *Koteki*, and wakizashi, *Hado*, were given at your acceptance to the Akodo bushi school. They are second-hand, and only about 30 years old.

Your armor was awarded after you proved yourself in battle with the Daidoji, dueling five and killing eleven more. Your sensei had no children, and gave you the lacquered gold-and-black family suit. It is called *Haiu* ("Cloudburst"). Notably, it does not have the +5 TN penalty for acting while wearing it.

NAME: Isawa Ryoji
CLAN: Phoenix
SCHOOL: Isawa, Tensai of Earth
RANK: 3

Age: 28 **Sex:** Male **Height:** 5'0"

Physical Description: Short but solid, immaculately groomed, proudly displaying both Phoenix and Isawa mons. Moves deliberately and rarely hesitates.

FIRE 2
Intelligence 3
Agility 2

AIR 2
Awareness 3
Reflexes 2

EARTH 4
Willpower 4
Stamina 4

WATER 2
Perception 3
Strength 2

VOID 4

GLORY 5.3
HONOR 2.1
INSIGHT 180
TN TO BE HIT: 10

Wounds	Dice Penalty
____ (0-8)	-0
____ (9-16)	-1
____ (17-24)	-2
____ (25-32)	-3
____ (33-40)	-4
____ (41-48)	Down
____ (49-56)	Out
____ (57-64)	Dead

SCHOOL TECHNIQUES

Free Raise to all Rituals
Can spend up to maximum Void on any spell
3 Free Raises to Earth spells,
+10 TN to Air, Fire, and Water spells

ADVANTAGES

Death Trance, Innate Ability (marked)

DISADVANTAGES

Fascination: *maho*, Proud, Small
Dark Secret (see History)

EQUIPMENT

Fine winter kimono and nice sandals
traveling pack, scroll satchel, wakizashi,
tanto, 4 Koku, acupuncture and first aid kit
2 books, 18 scrolls, writing implements,
jade badge of office as an Isawa Inquisitor
traveling papers for extended stay

If you are willing to sacrifice yourself for all things, you can be trusted with the world.

—Shiba

SKILLS

Advanced Medicine 2 Lore: Shadowlands 4
Calligraphy 2 Lore: Shugenja 2
Defense 2 Meditation 3
Etiquette 2 Shintao 3
History 2 Sincerity 1
Investigation 4 Spellcraft 2
Law 2 Subojutsu 1
Lore: *Maho-Tsukai* 3 Tea Ceremony 1
Lore: Phoenix Clan 2 Theology 2

SPELLS

Sense
Commune (Innate)
Summon
Grounding Energy (Earth)
Jade Strike (Earth, innate)
Tomb of Jade (Earth)
Tetsubo of Earth (Earth)
Courage of the Seven Thunders (Earth)
Oni Warding (Earth)
Hands of Jurojin (Earth, innate)
The Path to Inner Peace (Water)
Sympathetic Energies (Water)
Amaterasu's Blessing (Fire, innate)
Amaterasu's Anger (Fire)
Accounts of Shorihotsu (Air, innate)

HISTORY

It was clear from before you could walk that you were drawn to the elements, especially the solid presence of the earth herself. When you were chosen by Isawa Rujo to become a *tensai*, the honor was hailed by all, but for your parents...and you...it was no more than expected.

Nor was your acceptance into the Phoenix Inquisitors. The bushi and shugenja who protect Rokugan from *maho*, the Inquisitors are the counterpart to the Emerald Champion himself, the emperor's preemptive defense against the Dark Brother. You would be wasted as anything else.

While you dutifully learned investigatory procedures, studied past cases, and practiced spells to burn a creature of Taint with Amaterasu's holy fire, it was the quest for knowledge that pulled you onward.

For all that the Empire has fought the Shadowlands for a thousand years, there is little truly known of them. Kuni libraries hold treatises on the spread of Taint and physiology of goblins, but cannot explain what makes a samurai turn to the Fallen One, or why spilling blood holds such power.

Library research could take you only so far, and you petitioned to work in the field. With a bodyguard, Daidoji Kame, from the Shiba school, and Hiruma Yasuji of Hida-ryu to assist you, you began your first case investigating the wasting death of a minor Crane diplomat.

Discovering evidence of *maho*, you brought the matter before the man's family, but instead of praise, you received anger for the shame it would bring them. No matter, you figured as you followed the sorcerer's trail into Unicorn lands. Your reward comes not from gratitude, but from solving the case itself.

In Unicorn Lands

You finally tracked the *maho-tsukai* to the home of Shinjo O-Niro, who had given her name to his summoned oni in return for his attack against the Ide lover who spurned her.

You were not ready to learn that your quarry was an Isawa, trained in the same schools as yourself. There was no time to ask what made him choose this path, but as you spilled salt across the body and watched its burning, you understood the Cranes' shame. It would not always be so simple as to search out the dark servitors and destroy them. You would need someone to help you understand why they chose this path, and to present your cases to the courts and families of the accused.

You found your mouthpiece in Ide Masafumi, O-Niro's former lover, who eagerly agreed to cancel his debt by offering his services. Your psychological and *maho*-lore specialist is Yogo Sumiko.

Your Dark Secret

You have still found no solution to the greatest mysteries. You studied with Luchi wizards to learn of magics unrooted in the elements, and peppered Sumiko with questions, but they only taught you how little anyone truly understands. The only place to learn of the Dark Brother is in the minds and scrolls of those who lost their souls to him.

You have saved these items when you find them, particularly scrolls that could aid your study. Casting them would not be in your interest, which is purely to aid the Empire, but many Crab would misunderstand were they to find them in your possessions. It is...unlikely that they would let you explain. Far better you keep them safe and out of sight.

The spells you have are: Dark Divination (which allows you to ask the GM one question), Summon Oni, and Banish Oni (which only works on oni you summon).

Your Assignment

You will spend Winter Court at the Kaiu Wall. You prefer to think of it as an opportunity to study your quarry first-hand, but you know other Inquisitors were drawing lots for who'd have to go. It did not take long for you to grow tired of the condescending attitude of the Kuni, who think their flawed studies as objective as the Isawa school, and you quickly set them in their place when they suggested you work with the common Wall troops. You are an Inquisitor, and it would be a far greater blow to the Empire to lose your services in battle than would be justified by the demeaning process of identifying Taint among Hida guards.

WHAT YOU THINK OF THE OTHERS

Daidoji Kame: A capable bodyguard for one so young. Her reliance on the teachings of Shinsei and Akodo to decide her every move is admirable, but a trifle...inflexible. You value her presence, but she is unlikely to go far in the Empire without a strong guiding hand.

Hiruma Yasuji: You have heard of the tragedy that befell his family. Hopefully, the news did not hit him too hard. Rarely does he search for a difficult solution when a simple one is available, and the loss of his home and

loved ones might send him over the edge into sheer brutality.

Ide Masafumi: Your greatest success story. The hedonistic layabout who you recruited as a concession to courtly manners has become truly devoted to justice. He still knows little of the Dark Brother, but perhaps his recent months among the Crab have taught him more.

Kitsu Kikuzo: After joining your service as Masafumi's retainer, Kikuzo proved himself a talented general, skilled bushi, and loyal teammate. He has confessed that the spirits of his ancestors refuse him access to the strange Kitsu magics, and for that you are both sorry and glad. The ancestral realms are an aspect of the spirit world the Isawa do not fully understand, and the concept has long intrigued you. However, had he wielded them, you would likely have never met, and he has saved your life repeatedly. Surely, in this case, the Fortunes decided wisely.

Yogo Sumiko: The *maho* studies of this Scorpion family are the most thorough in the Empire, and you have never regretted recruiting Sumiko to your team. You have been warned to trust no Scorpion, but you prefer your own judgment on such things.

OTHERS YOU KNOW AT COURT

Isawa Hikaru: His lack of skill as a shugenja relegated him to court, but his daughter is here to be married, so you suppose he will be the center of attention this winter.

Asako Wataru: An Emerald Magistrate. You know little of him, and care less. The Asako have never done anything worth mentioning in the history of the Empire save write it down, and you see no reason they would start now.

NAME: Yogo Sumiko
CLAN: Scorpion
SCHOOL: Yogo Shugenja **RANK:** 3

Age: 18 **Sex:** Female
Height: 5'1"

Physical Description: Small, shy, sweet-looking, with a demure yet teasing smile, soft voice, and habit of watching everyone from the corner of your eyes.

FIRE 3 **AIR 4**
Intelligence 3 Awareness 4
Agility 3 Reflexes 4

EARTH 3 **WATER 2**
Willpower 3 Perception 3
Stamina 3 Strength 2

VOID 3

GLORY 4.0
HONOR 0.8
INSIGHT 180
TN TO BE HIT: 20

Wounds	Dice Penalty
____(0-6)	-0
____(7-12)	-1
____(13-18)	-2
____(19-24)	-3
____(25-30)	-4
____(31-36)	Down
____(37-42)	Out
____(43-48)	Dead

SCHOOL TECHNIQUE
You have 1 Free Raise to all wards

ADVANTAGES
Ancestor: Yogo, Blackmail: Matsu Bushime
Clear Thinker, Innate Ability (marked)

DISADVANTAGES
Meddler, Dark Secret (see History)
Unlawful possession of *kirei-ko* (arsenic)
Yogo Curse

EQUIPMENT
Kimono and sandals, traveling pack, scroll satchel, 15 scrolls and 4 blank, wakizashi, tanto, 3 koku, fine quality fan, hand-held mirror, jade bead necklace, 1 vial *kirei-ko* eye powder

How dearly we cling to pretty deceit.
—*Bayushi Tangen*

SKILLS

Acting 2	Lore: <i>Maho-Tsukai</i> 4
Calligraphy 2	Lore: Shadowlands 3
Courtier 2	Meditation 2
Defense 2	Poisons 3
Etiquette 2	Seduction 2
Forgery 3	Sincerity 4
History 2	Stealth 3
Investigation 2	Theology 1
Knife 1	Torture 2

SPELLS
Sense
Commune
Summon
Counterspell (Innate)
Know the Shadows (Air)
Quiescence of Air (Air)
Look Into the Soul (Air, Innate)
Howl of Isora (Air)
Call Upon the Wind (Air)
Evil Ward (Fire, Innate)
The Fury of Osano-Wo (Fire)
Path to Inner Peace (Water, Innate)
Sukinjin's Gift (Water)
Courage of the Seven Thunders (Earth)
Elemental Ward (Earth, Innate)

HISTORY

Your Family

Love was not a word often mentioned in your parents' house. Both Yogo, they took separate bedrooms after your birth and seldom spoke. You were given to the care of a distant cousin who taught you reading, writing and the story of your ancestor's curse, all before you were old enough to stay up past dark.

You found solace in your schooling, and your talents and gentle manner made you a favorite of your sensei...who quickly shipped you to the Bayushi court so you would grow no closer.

Your years there taught you little magic, but there were plenty of people who explained the Scorpion Clan's duty, and after you proved your loyalty, instructed you in all the tools. You learned how any man will break under torture, at the loss of his love, a limb, or many other things. At first it was repugnant, but Bayushi promised Hantei that he would sacrifice his name to do what was necessary for the Empire. How could you do less?

And, well, you don't like to emphasize this part, but you...um...*liked* getting confessions. It was more...*exciting* than reading scrolls. You had their undivided attention, and you were their master.

With your new understanding, you chafed at returning to Shiro Yogo. You could do far more than sit in a tower practicing wards. You wanted to take your talents into a world that needed them. You brought your new understanding of people to your studies of *maho*, and when Isawa Ryoji wrote to your sensei requesting a young shugenja to join the Inquisitors, you jumped at the chance. And the first time you encountered a *maho-tsukai*, you knew you'd made the right choice. You knew things intuitively that no one could guess, whispers written on black scrolls no one had seen. The spirit of Yogo was proud of you. You would wreak revenge on Fu Leng for his curse.

Traveling through the lands of the Great Clans, rooting out and combating *maho*...you couldn't think of anything more you would ask for. And some nights, you found and punished perpetrators in your own special way. You were creating justice.

Falling in Love

But your magistrate group brought you far more than a gift for investigations, it brought you Kikuzo. Calm, even withdrawn at first, he soon proved loyal, intelligent and caring. But he harbored a deep sadness that made you

ache to help.

Determined to break through his shell, you coaxed him into long talks during your many nights of travel. You still don't know why his ancestors would abandon the most wonderful, noble man you know, but when you understood his tragedy and the quiet dignity with which he bore it, you knew you were in love.

When you first kissed, it felt so right that you could not understand why he held back, but he spoke to you of bushido and *giri*, and for the first time, you felt ashamed of...some...of what you'd done. But you silenced those voices, hearing only that he did not want you.

When he nearly flung himself onto a poisoned oni claw to get between you and it, you could not fight your feelings any longer. That night, under the stars, was a magic unrivaled by spirits.

You could keep no more secrets from him. Lying in his arms, you told him everything you had ever done to protect the Empire—the blackmail, the poison, the murders. He understood in that quiet way of his. He had to. It's a part of you now. And you've done so much good with it. It's no worse than any bushi in Rokugan does.

A little later, you were parted. Your schools summoned you for further training, and you were careful to tell no one of what happened. The clan elders would condemn you for giving in to passion, and if they did not demand seppuku, your father would sell you to a geisha house. And Yogo...Yogo would not stay with you then.

At Winter Court

You will be reunited! After not seeing him for six months, you heard that Kikuzo will be among the Lion families at Kisada's court! Though you could wish for a more glamorous setting, you couldn't be happier. There will be Emerald Magistrates there to approve Hiruma Kage's marriage, and who knows what other affairs they might arrange...

WHAT YOU THINK OF THE OTHERS

Daidoji Kame: Impossibly clean, impossibly naive. It's hard to believe you live in the same world. She never speaks ill of anyone, and will not listen to rumors. For her, bushido and the Tao are rules not to be broken. It would be so simple to manipulate her...if she weren't so genuinely nice, and hadn't helped you so often.

Hiruma Yasuji: A straightforward man who values honesty, but does not seem able to distinguish it from lies. He is loyal to those who show loyalty to him, and remembers favors done and owed. He longs for simple solutions, but is enough of a realist to understand that one isn't always available.

Ide Masafumi: He's seen and done his share of petty evils, but when it comes to the Fallen One, his heart and mind are in the right place. More than the rest, he understands the fascination of figuring out people, and accepts the levels of deception (self and other) which keep Rokugan functioning. You would never tell him your methods, but you trust him to turn a blind eye when you "discover" something fortuitous to the team.

Isawa Ryoji: Though he speaks often about the importance of saving innocents from the Dark Brother, he seems more interested in the magic itself. He enjoys the challenge of investigating *maho*, but you've rarely seen him speak personally with those "innocents" he is so concerned with in his reports.

Kitsu Kikuzo: Loyal, honorable, brave, devoted, and more tender than you thought possible. Surely what you share is beyond the reach of any curse.

WHO YOU KNOW

Matsu Bushime: She's here ostensibly to improve Crab and Lion relations, but you have proof, in a Miya's own calligraphy, that she is on assignment from the Otomo to spy on Kisada.

Bayushi Tatsukoro: Just glorious enough to get noticed, but not glorious enough to make it to the *real* winter courts. He's trying to play army-bushi to impress the Crab.

Bayushi Masayari: He is the go-between for Kage and Mutsuye, and therefore no one valuable. The real spy is probably a lot less visible.

Yogo Shigeru: A sleazy, mannerless troll, who is more interested in the Shadowlands than any sane person would be.

Shosuro Shiko: A tart of dubious reputation who is known for her cutting insults and cares little for her good face.

GLORIOUS, INFAMOUS, AND OTHER NOTABLE PERSONAGES AT THE WINTER COURT OF KYUDEN HIDA, IN THE TWENTY-SECOND YEAR OF THE SON OF HEAVEN HANTEI XXXVIII:

KNOWN THROUGHOUT THE EMPIRE (Glory 9.0-8.0)

Hida Kisada: The Great Bear. Daimyo of the Hida family and daimyo of the Crab Clan. He's also the Champion of the Crab, and they couldn't have picked a more fearsome one. No one, man or Oni, has ever injured him and lived. He has three children (Yakamo, O-Ushi, and Sukune), none of whom are here this year.

Hiruma Kage: Hiruma Family Daimyo, and one of the major Crab clan generals. You hear he's more genteel and controlled than Kisada. As most berserkers are.

This inter-clan court was called to celebrate Kage's engagement to Isawa Mutsuye. It will be officially announced this evening.

KNOWN (Glory 7.9-6.0)

Yasuki Kurako: Daughter of the Yasuki who arranged Kisada's marriage, Kurako usually provides advice and hosting at the Razor of the Dawn castle for the Unicorn and Lion visitors. She is running the social part of this court, and is a trifle high-strung.

Asako Wataru: A Phoenix Emerald Magistrate here to sanction Kage's marriage.

Asako Kuhime: Daughter of the Emerald Magistrate. Friend of Mutsuye.

Isawa Hikaru: Mutsuye's father. Gentry. Also reasonably wealthy, owner of some prominent Phoenix lands.

Isawa Mutsuye: Kage's bride-to-be. Young, relatively unknown in politics.

Kaiu Takakana: *Karo* of Kyuden Hida. As the chief magistrate, it's his responsibility to make sure the castle is secure.

Bayushi Tatsukoro: The Scorpion representative who somehow landed a Crab liaison job. *Sure* he's happy to be here.

Matsu Bushime: Glorious commander of a

brief Matsu-Daidoji war. She's rather cheerful that the Crane aren't here this year.

Shinjo O-Shito: Liaison for the Hiruma Scout School in the Shinjo lands. She's organized, methodical, and knows a great deal about the law for a bushi.

FOLKS YOU'VE SEEN AROUND THE CASTLE SINCE YOU ARRIVED

Shiba Noboru: Mutsuye's bodyguard. Quiet, self-effacing.

Yogo Shigeru: A widely disliked shugenja.

Bayushi Masayari: Mutsuye and Kage's go-between, a man of impeccable reputation.

Hiruma Ryoichi: Hiruma Kage's trusted messenger.

Kuni Taira: A shugenja with a reputation for being thorough in his studies.

Shosuro Shiko: A courtier who somehow ended up at Kyuden Hida and is determined to make everyone suffer for it.

Isawa Akiko: A very young, wide-eyed, talkative Phoenix.

Ide Keiyomi: A wild, impetuous sixteen-year-old enjoying the freedom of the Crab Court to say what she likes.

Ide Toshimitsu: An emissary, no doubt here to make sure the Unicorn look good. Keiyomi's father.