

THE AGE OF RUN

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YEAR 1200

SPRING 1200

A war of Honor between the Crab and the Spider is sanctioned by Imperial authority. Although the war is limited to the Colonies, the Crab approach the task with zeal and the mutual hatred of the two Clans ignites into jungle warfare.

The Phoenix are dragged into war by the Unicorn Clan after an insult concerning the Moto Curse suggested that the bloodlines of the Unicorn are vulnerable to spiritual corruption.

The Mantis Clan “acquires” the Ancestral Sword of the Hantei from the Imperial Families. Daigotsu Kanpeki forgives their representative for taking his ancestor’s blade because they exemplified the philosophy of Shourido in doing so.

SUMMER 1200

Daigotsu Kanpeki is deposed from his position as Spider Clan Champion by edict of Emperor Iweko II and replaced by the Emperor’s brother, Iweko Shibatsu. Kanpeki retorts with an implied threat that this action may cause his father Daigotsu, Master of Jigoku, to call off the bargain he made with Iweko I. The former Empress rebuffs and explains that Daigotsu never intended to honor their bargain; that he merely suppressed the Taint to be unleashed for later use. Kanpeki departs from the Emperor’s Court, vowing to do what he must.

Iuchi Namida mysteriously disappears from her home in Unicorn lands, supposedly after falling into Chrysanthemum Petal Lake.

The Boar Clan is reinstated as a Minor Clan. Hida Tadama marries Heichi Tochiko and reclaim their ancestral homelands in the Twilight Mountains for the Boar.

The Lion offensive near the Scorpion Wall results in the Wall falling from within to the forces of Jigoku. Reports are unclear as to the actual cause of the breach, but the Lion are quick to accuse Bayushi Nitoshi of intentionally letting it fall.

FALL 1200

Stories leak to coastal cities of strange and evil forces gathering in the Sea of Shadows. The Mantis Clan rally their fleets, prepared to defend their isles.

WINTER 1200

Iuchi Namida suddenly finds herself in Thunder Dragon Bay. She speaks with the deity guarding the place and becomes the Oracle of Thunder.

YEAR 1201

SUMMER 1201

THE BATTLE OF THE FIRST SEAL

Tetsuo, Abbot of the Order of the Spider, forsakes his former clan and takes the Order with him. He marches a band of warrior monks to the Shinomen Mori, anticipating Kanpeki's first move. His maneuver is discovered by Imperial spies and the Emperor summons forces of the Crab and Phoenix to intercept them. Led by Kuni Renyu and Isawa Norimichi, they answer the call to defend the First Seal. The forces meet and, inevitably, an argument breaks out between the Abbot and Renyu. Suddenly, Daigotsu Endo and his undead forces ambush the squabbling armies, intent on their target. Norimichi is slain and the Seal is burned to ash. The effect unleashes Jigoku's fury. The shattered forces of the Empire and their unlikely allies stagger out of the Marsh, where the shadows are already growing deeper and more ominous. Throughout the Empire, no one finds rest in the night. They awaken in their beds, driven screaming from the peace of sleep by an unknowable terror.

In the morning, the Jade Sun does not rise. It is eclipsed by the cold face of the Obsidian Moon for the entire day. Shugenja, monks, and diviners across the Empire associate this event with dark omens of times yet to come to the Empire.

A NEW BARGAIN?

With the First Seal broken, Daigotsu Kanpeki brings the Son of Heaven a new ultimatum: He will accept the Iweco family as a minor clan in his Empire, provided Seiken commits seppuku.

The Emperor refuses the ironic request and double-downs against the Son of Hell. He orders the Lion Clan to end its feud with the Scorpion to deal with the Spider. The leadership of the Lion Clan accepts the order with zeal, but many in the Matsu family believe that the Scorpion Clan should be destroyed alongside them.

BATTLE OF SEIKITSU PASS

A forward contingent of Kanpeki's forces invade Rokugan from a hidden pass in the Western Steppes. Led by Kanpeki himself, the Spider forces blaze through southern Unicorn provinces, overrunning the peaceful Ide lands with ease. Warned of his arrival, the Lion Clan rally to the Unicorn's aid. Akodo Dairuko marches her forces towards Duzaki Pass to intercept him. Meanwhile, Daigotsu Endo's contingent in the Shinomen Mori, strike at Ryoko Owari Toshi. Spider forces occupy the city and spare its depraved populace on Kanpeki's order. Unicorn and Scorpion forces respond by diverting troops there from Seikitsu Pass. This is a divisive tactic, however. The main bulk of the Spider army, led by Daigotsu Ookami, are now clear to move without prying eyes. They march on the now ill-defended Seikitsu Pass and crush the Rokugani forces there. The Unicorn Lands are overrun the following Autumn.

FALL 1201

DARK PRINCE RISES

Iweko Shibatsu marries Susumu Neya and is officially granted lordship over the remainder of the Spider Clan loyal to his brother. Despite pleas in court for him to change the Clan's name, Shibatsu rebuffs the suggestion, citing that the name keeps the Emperor's enemies sufficiently irritated. He inverts the colors on the Spider Clan mon and orders a new legion formed. The army is recruited from a mix of qualified ronin and turncoat refugees.

THE SCORPION GAMBIT

The Goju and Ninube begin their infiltration of the Scorpion Clan's ninja schools by reviving the practice of shadow branding among the Shosuro and Soshi families. Upon realizing the infiltration, Bayushi Nitoshi orders half of his clan into exile while publicly denouncing them as traitors. These "traitors" resume the Clan's exile into the Burning Sands. They begin to build a powerbase in the city of Medinaat al Salaam. Meanwhile, the Scorpion that remain in the Empire declare their loyalty to the "True Hantei Dynasty", and the Nothing-corrupted elements of their Clan join their brethren in the shadows.

WINTER 1201

ASSAULT ON THE LION

Seizing full advantage of his forces' unnatural stamina, Daigotsu Kanpeki marches his undead troops through Lion Territory. The winter snow stifles communication lines, leaving the Lion unable to coordinate a counter-offensive. Kaeru Toshi and Shiro Sano Ken Hayai are razed to the ground by Spring. Kyuden Ikoma also burns, but the library archives are spirited to Shiro Matsu before an ill fate befalls them.

YEAR 1202

SPRING 1202

With the snow in recession, Kanpeki's beeline for Toshi Ranbo is clear. Lion forces scramble to intercept his armies and keep them divided. The cleverness of Daigotsu Ookami keeps the Lion off balance, however. He uses his prior season's control of the land to his full advantage, staging raids and harrying Lion troops. The forces of Akodo Dairuko, far behind Kanpeki's lines counter with raids of their own, but both Champions avoid direct engagement without a clear advantage.

SUMMER 1202

INEVITABLE PYRRHIC VICTORY

The Lion Clan buy enough time for Crab and Phoenix forces to reinforce the Capital. However, the superior survivability of the tainted troops combined with the clever tactics of Daigotsu Ookami stalls the now tired and starving Lion Armies. Akodo Dairuko orders a desperate dash for Toshi Ranbo's gates. Kanpeki's army attacks the beleaguered Lion as the Crab defenders watch from the city walls. The Lion plea for reinforcements, and they are granted. The Crab forces, led by Hida Toranosuke, assault the Spider and drive them back. Akodo Dairuko is spared and retreats to the walls of the city, but at the cost of Toranosuke's

own life and his forces. Spider forces have the city surrounded by Autumn. The Emperor and his wife are trapped.

OTOSAN UCHI RESTORED

The Blood of the Preserver, a gift granted to Iweko Shibatsu by Kanpeki years ago is utilized in a bid to assert the legitimacy of his young clan. After years of study and experimentation, he orders the blood be used to purify and rejuvenate the grounds of the ruined Ootosan Uchi. A ritual is cast, and the city is resanctified. Rebuilding of the old Capital begins. In celebration, Shibatsu orders the news spread to all the Empire, including Daigotsu Kanpeki, who is less than thrilled.

FALL 1202

A DOOMED COUNTER-OFFENSIVE

Phoenix, Dragon and Imperial Legion forces rally to the banner of the Emerald Champion to break the Siege of Toshi Ranbo. They attempt to coordinate a pincer attack, but Dragon forces are blocked by the troops of Daigotsu Ookami that have taken position on a strategic hill by the Drowned Merchant River. They attempt to skirt around and cross the river elsewhere, but, are harried by Spider archers at every go. Soon, they have no choice but to engage Spider forces, retreat, or freeze. The Dragon fall back to their mountains and the failed counter-offensive weakens the strength of Iweko II's forces.

DRIVING THE DARKNESS BEFORE THEM

In the wake of the devastation of Lion Clan lands, the lords of the Crab Clan gear towards mounting their resources into total war. The forces of Hida Kisada preserve their supplies by foraging from the territory and villages of the Clans whose lands they pass through, burning and salting what they cannot take to deny the resources to the enemy. The Crab Clan take no chances with the Taint and would rather see their world rendered unto ash than let the Son of Daigotsu have his way.

WINTER 1202

DEATH OF A GENERAL?

With the Dragon Clan at bay and the Capital tightly surrounded, Daigotsu Kanpeki orders General Ookami to destroy Shibatsu's Spider Clan. Ookami leads his undead forces down the River of the Sun, frozen over for the season. They follow it south, spotting Shibatsu's Legion prepared for battle on the far side, and a contingent of Lion forces moving in from the south. Ookami has the strength to overrun either force, but only one at a time. As the armies converge on him, Ookami gives orders to engage Shibatsu's forces and falls into his trap. The Legion sets an oil fire on the iced river and makes their stand. The Lion catch up to cover the Legion's flank but within minutes, Spider forces on both sides fall into the bone-chilling water as fire shatters ice. The frozen corpses of the undead are later picked off with ease, but the body of Daigotsu Ookami is never recovered.

YEAR 1203

SPRING 1203

THE EXODUS OF THE UNICORN

With the majority of their lands occupied by the Tainted, and their neighbors to the South practicing slash-and-burn tactics, those Unicorn that remain within the bounds of the Empire decide to abandon what is left of their holdings. While the majority of them head for the Ki-Rin's Path, a select few decide to stay behind, acting as a guerilla force within Rokugan itself. These riders, under acting Champion Moto Chinua, harass the forces of Daigotsu Kanpeki by going in secret among the Heimin of the Empire, stockpiling the weapons of the Samurai caste and training the populace in their use. Where previously, the forces of the enemy would simply overrun and zombify any villages that defied them, they suddenly found themselves confronted by fully armed and trained encampments of Ashigaru, in some cases backed by mobile Unicorn skirmishers and shugenja. This creates difficulties with some of the other clans, as some of their tax collectors begin meeting with similar receptions. In particular, the Crab do not take kindly to the peasantry objecting to their total war resource grab with steel.

To the Southwest, the Path is shut to the other Clans, held by redoubled forces of the now homeless Unicorn. They make special note to put any Spider travelers to the sword instantly. Along the path, The Khan escorts a wounded Moto Naleesh to the Colonies, finding Journey's End Keep occupied by a mere skeleton crew of the other Clans. Under Shinjo Min-Hee's command, the Unicorn fall upon the city en-masse, bringing news of the state of the Empire to the shocked residents. The Spider remnants are driven out, and Min-Hee claims the city for the Unicorn, coordinating her forces from her new base in the Colonies.

A SECRET MISSION

Susumu Shibatsu sends a small contingent of those loyal to him on a discreet mission into the heart of Kanpeki's territory. Little is known of the mission or its results, but a few things are certain. Of the initial forces, only a handful survived, Kanpeki is said to have flown into a rage upon hearing of it, and the few of Shibatsu's Spiders who escaped brought with them a wicker container large enough to contain, perhaps, a small child.

YEAR 1204

SPRING 1204

A DESPERATE SUMMONS

In Kyuden Isawa, research begins on breaking down the barriers between the realms of Ningen-do and Tengoku. Prominent Phoenix scholars reason that, if Jigoku is coming to their realm, the way to counter the Dark Realm's influence is to invite the forces of Heaven to do battle with them. This proves difficult, however, as the drift that has been observed between Ningen-do and the Celestial realm makes their more conventional methods of contacting Tengoku impossible. They look elsewhere for solutions to their summons, as their scholars are no longer preoccupied with research into the Moto Curse.

SUMMER 1204

FRUITION OF RESEARCH

Though the process proves tiresome and draining, both on the researchers and the resources of the Clan, the Elemental Council authorizes the study of the drift of the Celestial Realm to the exclusion of all other projects. Through manipulating half-understood relics and lore stored from the time of the Kami, the Phoenix manage to snap through the barrier that has been erected between the Realms in a matter of months, though they exhaust many of their shugenja and librarians in doing so. After initial successes, the creatures that they summoned proved unwilling to involve themselves in the affairs of mortals. In secret, research begins on methods to compel their cooperation...

FALL 1204

FLIGHT OF THE EMPEROR

After having been under siege for nearly two years, the starving and desperate people of the Imperial Capital devise their last stand. The remaining guard of the Seppun Miharuru burst from the city gates in a last ditch attempt to allow the Emperor escape. He, and most of his entourage flee to Otosan Uchi and the relative safety of his brother's company. In the process, the remaining Seppun and most of the Lion forces stationed in the city are killed or corrupted. The whereabouts of Akodo Dairuko are unknown.

YEAR 1205

SPRING 1205

TO DO WHAT WE MUST

After hearing reports of the near rout of the Lion Clan forces, Crane Champion Doji Makoto sets to the task of defending his own lands. He takes council with the Harriers, the Crane's elite force of tactical scouts and trappers in order to stop Kanpeki's army. At their advice, Makoto prepares a counteroffensive, and his orders are carried out none too soon as Kanpeki's Spider forces have now allied themselves with the Scorpion Clan and have set their sights on the rich and prosperous lands.

SUMMER 1205

THE FALL OF IMPERIAL ROKUGAN

The Emerald Champion and the Shogun, divided on how to deal with the encroaching darkness that has overwhelmed the Empire for so many years, bring their argument to the Emperor. The Shogun, who up unto this point has been coordinating the Imperial Legions using the hit-and-run tactics of his upbringing, advises that to fight such an overwhelming force head-on would be disastrous. The Emerald Champion argues that the tactics that have been employed up unto this point have been ineffective in slowing Kanpeki's advance, and more drastic action is necessary. Seiken deliberates with the two of them, as well as the rest of his advisors, for four days, before going into seclusion to make his decision. He emerges a day later, announcing that he is siding with Mirumoto Tsuda, and the Imperial Legions will actively engage the threat. The Shogun leaves the Imperial Court in disgust.

In the weeks that follow, Seiken and Tsuda draw up plans for meeting the forces of Kanpeki in open combat. While Tsuda is initially confident in the plan, he begins noticing small inconsistencies in Seiken's strategy. Simple maneuvers that should be child's play to someone who trained with every clan in the art of war seem to be misplaced, or outright foolishly employed. While Tsuda quietly

corrects many of the mistakes he sees, he is uncertain of how many that he misses. Furthermore, the Emperor himself seems unusually on edge. He thoughtlessly commits mild failures of etiquette, servants murmur about him wandering the halls talking softly to himself, and during one of their strategy sessions he caught Seiken suppressing a manic giggle. Not knowing what else to think, Tsuda chalks it up to the stress of ruling a scattered Empire at constant war, and attempts what damage control he can.

Come the battle, the Imperial Legions openly meet the hordes of Jigoku on the fields of Kintani Valley. The forces, as unlike as any two that have ever met in combat, charge each other, one in strict formations and rigid walls of blades, the other in a massive gibbering horde of chaotic bestial hunger. Though the samurai of the Legions fight valiantly, the weaknesses in their overall strategy take their toll, and the reinforcements of minor Oni and undead seem endless. The battle culminates after several hours of pitched combat, when the officers of the Legion are overrun, and whatever cohesiveness the Legions still had is shattered. The remaining Legionnaires are either killed or routed, and the standing army of the Empire is annihilated. Knowing that the fault lied not with his strategy, but with the modifications that the Emperor had made, Mirumoto Tsuda leaves the retinue of the Emperor, hoping to find the Shogun and rally whatever remnants of the Legion they can. His public disgrace naturally includes loss of his position as Champion, though some in the Court question the relevance of the position of Champion at all when the Legions are destroyed.

YEAR 1206

SPRING 1206

THE PATH OF HEAVEN

The Phoenix, frustrated beyond the point of tolerance, come to the conclusion that all of their research indicates that there is no way in modern or pre-Imperial Rokugani magics to compel the cooperation of a creature of Tengoku. However, in the secret halls of the Isawa, a researcher named Isawa Oda stumbles upon an old text that contains a theory about the practices of the Yobanjin Shamans, never confirmed, postulating that the Wyrms ridden by their foremost warlords are in fact Ryu called and bound by the amulets created by their Shamans.

The Isawa travels to Yobanjin Mura, where he attempts to convince the residents to give him such an amulet, naturally without success. Oda presses further, finally spending a great fortune simply for the location of a Yobanjin village on the other side of the mountains. Gearing up for a long journey, he vanishes into the mountains beyond the eyes of his superiors. Several months later, he emerges, and in the dying Spring travels to Kyuden Isawa. There, he simply orders the servants to request a meeting with the Council, and retires to his chambers.

Come the appointed time for the meeting, Isawa Oda is not present, much to the ire of the Council. The servants sent to find him discover his body in his rooms, where he has committed seppuku. Placed in front of his corpse is a neat bundle containing an odd amulet of a style very distinct from those recovered in warfare with the Yobanjin, his research notes on its effects and how to reproduce it, and, in lieu of a death Haiku, a simple scrap of paper bearing the note "What I have done, I have done for the Phoenix."

What Isawa Oda discovered in the territories beyond the northern edge of the Empire is unknown, but the results of his trial are immediately apparent. The Oni and Lost forces surrounding Phoenix lands suddenly come under assault by Ryu and other creatures of the Celestial Realm, all of which

seem to be of a dulled radiance. Their eyes, report the troops on the front line, contain the desperate madness of a beaten dog lashing out against all in the hope of eventual freedom.

YEAR 1207

FALL 1207

THE SECOND SEAL IS BROKEN

All throughout the season, dark portents plague the assorted families of the Mantis, heralding some coming evil beyond what they currently contend with. The Mantis Champion Yoritomo Hiromi, reinforces the fleet watching the darkness in the eastern seas.

The threats coming from the Sea of Shadows turn out to be a feint, as a force loyal to Daigotsu Kanpeki seizes the corrupted Shrine of Yoritomo while the fleet is away. The saboteurs summon a dark force that drills deep into the foundation of the island, rupturing the Second Seal in the process.

The sundering of the Seal, coupled with the massive strike at the bedrock that broke it, creates a massive earthquake felt throughout Rokugan. In the epicenter, the Isles of Silk and Spice are destroyed, and nothing but a loose archipelago of small islands and floating debris is left of the home of the Mantis. All those who were on the Isles when the event took place are killed and the fleet turns for home, chased all the while by the malevolence of the expanding Sea of Shadows.

On the mainland, the resulting natural disasters caused in the wake of the Isles' destruction buffets the coastline with tsunamis and torrents of broken stone. Coastal holdings are devastated as far out as the edge of the Colonies, with the Crane suffering the worst losses.

A few weeks later, swallowing their pride, the harried remnants of the Mantis fleet must beg asylum of the Crane that they have so often warred with. The Crane, having only the ramshackle remnants of a fleet left themselves, accept the refugee Yoritomo with open arms, for reasons known only to them.

WINTER 1207

THE WRATH OF HEAVEN

The Phoenix Elemental Council deliberate how to go about taking vengeance against the Shadowlands for the damage done to their coastline. They come to the conclusion that Kanpeki's horrors cannot be allowed to make landfall, lest they become sieged from two fronts. They authorize the use of their bound ryu to meet this threat, and send for the Fire Dragon to be moved from the Western Front to defeat the titanic beast that leads the forces of Jigoku. The Shiba left to defend the western provinces report that, even after the great Dragon has left, tortured moans from its victims still echo in the scorched lands where it had been deployed, as though the spirits of those it incinerated still felt the agony of its divine flame.

YEAR 1208

SPRING 1208

THE HUNT FOR A CHAMPION

Rumors reach the remaining Lion provinces that Akodo Dairuko's body was not found among the fallen at the siege of the Capital. Based on this glimmer of hope, Akodo Kano, acting as Champion in his sister's absence, sends a party to search for her, living or dead.

A LAST STAND

After the devastation of the Islands of Silk and Spice, the remaining members of the Yoritomo family converge in Crane lands to plan their vengeance against the forces that ruined their home. What transpires, ripples waves throughout every court.

SUMMER 1208

NOTHING IS SACRED

Reports from the lands of the Kitsune family reach various courts that the Crab Clan's war machine, ever hungry for additional resources to fuel their war against the Darkness, is no longer respecting the sanctity of their forests. Kaiu lumber teams have come under attack by denizens of the Spirit Realms as the Kitsune Mori itself attempts to repel the invaders, with little success. The Kitsune reach out to other Clans, pleading them to intervene, but without the prestige of the Mantis Clan to back them, their words fall on deaf ears. The remaining Clans in the Empire are too concerned with the defense of their own lands to spare their forces in defense of such a small family.

BROKEN STORM

Court invitations emerge from Broken Wave City, claiming to be from the new Champion of the Mantis Clan, Yoritomo Ichido. Many remaining Samurai of the House answer the call, but any reply from the Clan's colonial holdings are silent. The Kitsune family, seeking military backing against the Crab's costly war, swear their allegiance. The Moshi Family appear divided with many of the more traditional members of the house seeing a chance to rededicate the old Centipede Clan's direct service to the Sun rather than a mercenary warlord, while others are eager to continue their allegiance to a clan that has served their ambitions. Only the Tsuruchi family pay no heed to the invite for reasons known only to them.

FALL 1208

A POINT OF LIGHT

The Boar Clan, still in the infancy of its rebirth, has become a refuge for those whom the war has taken its toll. The Minor Clan is more than welcoming of those whose lands are taken from them, either by the needs of a Great Clan or the nightmarish forces of Jigoku, and their population swells in the few short years since its reinstatement. Led by their Champion and Daimyo, Heichi Tochiko, and with the newly reawakened Shakoki Dogu shielding the land from the view of the Tainted, the Boar build a haven in the shadow of Kanpeki's army.

WINTER 1208

A WINTER OF DISCONTENT

After years of warfare attrition, Kanpeki attempts to consolidate his base of power by calling upon the power emanating from the Second Pit his father had torn a generation ago within the mortal realm. However, when his call goes unanswered, he decides to take matters into his own hands. In his mad quest for power, he traverses the pit, walking into the infernal realm himself. He appoints no regent or second in command in his place. Across the face Empire, coordinated attacks cease as the now masterless oni simply lash out, directionless in their rampage. In the chaos, his generals

consolidate their own power bases amid the ruins of various castles across the Empire. Their alliances are uneasy and several look upon the conquests of others with eyes of jealousy.

YEAR 1209

SPRING 1209

THE SIEGE OF SHIRO USAGI

The Hiruma scouts are quick to report back to the heart of Crab territory on the state of the Empire. With Kanpeki gone, the Spider forces occupying the various ruined fortresses of Rokugan are separate, weakened by their lack of forced cooperation. It is an opportunity that the Clan of Hida cannot pass up.

With the lumber seized by force from the Kitsune Mori and other forests, the Kaiu siege engineers construct and mobilize their war engines. The studded wheels of towers that threaten to split the sky tear into the Imperial roads, leaving a trail of devastation behind the advancing army. Though the advance of the Crab is both ponderous and quite conspicuous, the Spider forces do not move to halt their advance. The disparate Oni Lords and Tainted generals instead watch eagerly to see where the Crab point the devastating point of their offensive, interested in seeing which one of their rivals' holdings will soon be up for the taking.

The spearhead of the army ends up headed straight for the heart of the lands of the former Hare Clan, where lies Shiro Usagi, now owned by a powerful member of the Order of the Dark Lotus, Kokujin Gunjao. Throughout the spring, the Kokujin rallies the forces "loyal" to him, his initial bravado at the chance to be the first to engage the legendary onslaught of the Crab fading away to blind panic as the full strength of the approaching forces becomes known to him.

By the first days of summer, Shiro Usagi is aflame once again. Not a single monk or goblin remains alive within the lands of the Hare, and the war machine of the Crab marches grimly forward.

SUMMER 1209

SECRETS IN THE MOUNTAINS

While traveling among the remnants of the Empire, the Shadow-branded agents of Bayushi Nitoshi capture agents of the Dragon Clan sent in secret to the courts of what Clans still have the means to hold them. The Kitsuki samurai are tight-lipped as to their purpose, even under torture, but what information they do extract tells the Scorpion Clan Champion that the Dragon are doing what they have always done. Wait, watch, and plot. In particular, they seemed to be watching for something specific, though what that something was remains elusive, as the agents' methodology seemed to change with every Clan they visited. Not unusual in and of itself, but it does draw into question what they are waiting for as well.

The Kitsuki agents are certainly not telling. After they were drained of what information they would divulge, their identities were given to the Goju. The agents would return to the Dragon Clan, to see what additional information could be gleaned.

YEAR 1210

SPRING 1210

RUMBLES FROM THE EAST

In the quiet eastern reaches of the Empire, rebellion brews. Many of the citizens of the Empire who have lost their homes receive word from anonymous sources that there is hope for revenge, as a new army is forming at the Castle of the Emerald Champion.

Those who make the journey find that the area around the former Champion's estate has been converted into a sprawling military camp, where samurai and ashigaru alike train in the various arts of warfare. Using the lull in combat brought on by Kanpeki's departure, unknown elements have lured enough people with promises of hope and victory that they number a Legion or more.

It is unusual to see peasant warriors and those of the samurai caste training together, but whoever is at the head of the force offers their knowledge to all without regard to social class. Those who find this intolerable are invited to leave, while those who can accept it find that their education is enhanced for having a wide range of experiences to draw upon from their comrades in arms. While the caste barrier still very much exists, skill in combat is no longer one such divider.

As the force grows in strength and the lull in Spider activity continues, rumour in the Castle turns towards conquest. There is still much of the coastline ravaged by demons from the fall of the Mantis, and the people cry out for liberation...

FALL 1210

A NEW WARLORD

Having carved a large fief from her days of conquest, Yoritomo Aranai retires from public life in the Colonies. She leaves her land to a ronin named Arashi whom she met only a few years prior. Arashi is a man quick of temper and with a shattered arm that never healed correctly. The rumor mills regard him as a young lover or the retired Warlord and courts within the Second City believe his grab for power cannot last. Still, he holds himself with supreme confidence and his martial skills are second-to-none.

Wholly in spite of his apparent weakness, Arashi is quick to garner respect and marshals Aranai's forces to the banner he dubs the Mantis Clan. None question his assumption of the Yoritomo name and one of his first acts is to decry Yoritomo Ichido's Mantis Clan as false, a *pale shadow that only mimics the glory of true heroes*. Arashi also openly scoffs at any notion of loyalty to the Emperor, much to the fright of Colonial Courts. The following Winter, Arashi seizes control of the Second City, wresting the last bastion of Otomo power from Sukihime. Some courtiers fear he is actually a double-agent for the Spider Clan.

YEAR 1211

SPRING 1211

A JOURNEY ABROAD

Shinjo Min-Hee, from her base in the Colonies, sends forth emissaries to the distant city of Mendinaat-al-Salam in search of potential allies in the eventual fight to reclaim their homelands. The road to the Jewel of the Desert is fraught with perils, and the moment that the band passes beyond the edges of the Colonies, all contact with them is lost. The Unicorn can only hope that their mission will be successful, and that the city has not changed so much that their emissaries will find themselves without friends so far from their Clan.

SUMMER 1211

A MARK OF HEAVEN'S DISFAVOR

The Phoenix, desperate to find a way to recoup the losses caused by the loss of the Fire Dragon, redouble their efforts to summon and bind Celestial creatures. Despite all the prayers and magics at their disposal, the ryu come in fewer and fewer numbers. Prominent astrologers and diviners looking into the issue come to the conclusion that, with the events of recent years, all of the Empire's efforts to slow the drift of Tengoku have been undone. They predict that, within the next decade, Heaven will have abandoned Ningen-do entirely.

FALL 1211

THE REBEL ALLIANCE

Shibatsu, seeing that the years of calm do not seem to be ending, reaches out to the forces of the former Shogun and Emerald Champion. While the city of the Imperial Spider is far from any front, they have no standing army since the mutual destruction of the Spider forces many years ago. Therefore, Shibatsu makes an offer to the Last Legion: In exchange for the Legion's protection for the tiny Clan's holding, they may have full use of the city of Ootosan Uchi and its resources for housing and supplying their troops. After deliberating for a week, the commanders of the Legion send word of their assent, along with the first group of farmers to work the floodplain into a more usable form. With the second group come soldiers that were once masons and woodworkers, and with the Legion's help, the ancient city starts to become both livable and defensible once more.

YEAR 1212

SPRING 1212

SECRETS IN THE SANDS

The delegation from the Unicorn Clan at long last reaches the walls of the Jewel of the Desert. While their trials were long and arduous, the city welcomes their long-time friends with open arms. The delegation wastes little time in sending out feelers to allies that have aided them since the time of the Awakening, with mixed results. However, they also find support from factions that they never expected to meet...

SUMMER 1212

THE LAST LEGION

Having settled into their new home in Ootosan Uchi, the peasant army led by Moto Taigo seizes control of Kyuden Kasuga and begin fortification. With their expansion, the last of the beasts from the Sea of Shadows are driven back into the dark waters that now border most of the Rokugani coast.

WINTER 1212

THE AKODO RESTORATION

Noting the Emperor's deteriorating state of sanity, the remaining lords of the Lion Clan convene at Shiro Akodo to discuss plans to restore order within the remaining government of Rokugan. With a heavy heart, Akodo Kano, acting Champion of the Lion Clan, orders word sent to the courts of other clans that he intends to assume the post of Shogun of the Empire in wake of Moto Taigo's disappearance and Mirumoto Tsuda's disgrace. Silently, several prominent members of the Lion Clan confer as to the possibility of enacting the Shogun's duty to claim the Throne should Seiken continue to be unfit for rule.

YEAR 1213

SPRING 1213

SHADOW PLAY

Daidoji Akeha, Daimyo of the Daidoji and the new leader of the Harriers, determines that the time has come to confront the aspect of the threat that no others in the Empire seem to be striking at: the intelligence network of the Crane's ancient rivals, the Scorpion. She discretely moves her forces west into the Chinsei Mori, responding to reports of movement there.

The forest is alight with the flash of blades and fiery explosions as the two normally subtle forces engage in direct combat. Their private war proceeds unseen and unheard by the rest of the Empire, though those heimen unlucky enough to be near the forest cringe in their huts as the quiet night is split by the occasional clashing of blades and sudden ear-splitting detonations.

The explosive weaponry of the Daidoji, while hideously effective against enemies of flesh and blood, proves to be of varied lethality to beings comprised of Nothing but shadows. However, unbeknownst to the Daidoji, certain independent parties support the Harriers' offense, and the crystal shards lacing the bombs prove enough to even the playing field between the tenebrous ninja and their mortal opponents. The battle continuous in tentative strikes and skirmishes for the better part of a month, until the Crane win a telling victory and seize valuable information as to the placement of Spider forces among the Empire.

The Scorpion Champion, in response, directs the shadow-compromised elements of the Clan to the Mori. Whoever emerges victorious, the Scorpion will prosper.

SUMMER 1213

THE HUNT FOR THE ORACLE

The Oracles of the Elements, having given up on the futile effort giving council to the Clans, go out amongst the people of the Empire in an attempt to find one of their number who had been missing for many years. Their search continues unimpeded by such unimportant things as armies and war, for the Oracles walk with power that bows to no mortal influence.

Their search brings them to the bay where the great maelstrom marks the place of the Fire Dragon's fall, and they find what remains of their colleague in a seaside cave. The Oracle of Fire is gone, and only Ibara remains. Not an Oracle, not even a Crane, nothing remains of the once-powerful being

save for the empty shell of a woman who feels compelled to come to the shoreline each morning and contemplate the boiling hole in the sea.

WINTER 1213

THE FROST DRAGON'S DISMAY

The Crab Clan offensive continues pushing further into Lion territory, driving the disorganized Spider before them. Among their recent conquests is the grand shrine to Inari, the Fortune of Rice. However, upon seizing the shrine, they find it corrupted and defiled. Infuriated, the Crab raze the building and the Kuni sanctify the ashes where the structure once stood. Naturally, rumors spread that the Crab would defy even the Fortunes in their violent campaign. Their army settles around the ruins for the Winter.

YEAR 1214

SPRING 1214

TREMORS

The Crab campaign suddenly comes to a screeching halt as their efforts to purge the Spider from Lion lands is suddenly met with coordinated resistance rather than disparate warlords striking individually. On the borders of the civilized Empire, scouts from the Wall fail to return. On the coastline, the Last Legion begins to meet with their first defeats in the field, severely affecting morale among the varied forces. All throughout Rokugan, the disorganized forces of Jigoku suddenly reunite, though whether out of servility or fear, perhaps only they and the Scorpion know.

Out in the Shadowlands, a new wave of demons pours from the darkest corners of the blighted lands, laying waste to whatever untouched remnants of purity they come across. Though the Kaiu and Khol walls manage to hold against the tide, the forces do not continue to throw themselves against the barriers. Instead, marshalled by some unknown force, they roll along the edges of the walls through the occupied Unicorn provinces, and from there strike at the heart of Crab lands.

Though the Crab put up a valiant defense, the bulk of their armies are either on the Wall itself or on campaign in Lion territories. The Walls are surrounded, and despite the defenders holding out, they are the sole beacon of Crab power to remain in their homelands.

Bolstered by connecting their fronts via Scorpion lands, the forces of the returned Daigotsu Kanpeki double in strength.

SUMMER 1214

HOME COMING

Yoritomo Ichido, using the stolen power of Yoritomo and the wealth of Broken Wave City, has rebuilt a small but formidable fleet. With the few dozen remaining Yoritomo with vengeance in their hearts commanding fleets of Ronin and mercenaries with gold in their hearts, he sets sail for the miserable spits of land that have become known as the Shattered Archipelago. There, his fleet moves from small island to island, killing and salvaging as they go. Over the course of the season, they manage to reclaim all of the remains of the Mantis Isles save for the floating debris of the Shrine of Yoritomo, which is corrupted beyond all hope. Out of flotsam and whatever labor he can buy, he begins construction on makeshift docks, sending out the call to all disparate children of the Mantis that their home is returned to them.

FALL 1214

CAT AND MOUSE

With the advance of the dark army, individual efforts against the darkness become all the more dangerous. This holds especially true for the survivors of the Harriers' assault on the Nothing, as they find themselves cut off from support. Their guerilla war becomes a desperate battle for survival as the very forest turns on them. The few that fight their way free of the nightmare tell stories of horrors comparable to the Shinomen Marshes, and beg the Crane for additional reinforcements. The Doji are initially hesitant to weaken their own defenses in this time of the Tainted advance, but Akeha overrules them and sends units of the Iron Warriors to retrieve her commandos. Unfortunately, the Iron Warriors and Heavy Regulars prove uniquely unsuited to the trench warfare and explosive duels that happen in the forest, and the surviving Harriers are only retrieved at great loss among the more conventional forces. Akeha is reprimanded heavily by her fellow Daimyo, and she retreats from court to the front lines in disgust.

YEAR 1215

SPRING 1215

DESPAIR MARCHES

In the early days of 1215, it seems as though the armies of Daigotsu Kanpeki have become unstoppable. They push the borders of occupied territory out on all sides, simultaneously fighting on every front where the demonic entities might find samurai to kill. The Yasuki provinces act as a staging ground from which the Crane are assaulted. Dragon holdings outside of the mountains are sacked, the Tonbo lands put to the torch. What remains of the Lion and Crab armies have no choice but to join in a desperate alliance to hold what shreds of soil remain to them.

Darkness has come, and the Empire knows the Shadowlands' fury.

SUMMER 1215

NO LOVE LEFT

The summer of 1215 brings one of the hottest seasons in known history. The heat is as unwelcome as it is uncomfortable, for the air carries the scent of rot and corruption far beyond the battlefields where it originates. Funerary incense is burned day and night to purge the wind of the foul vapors, and the sharper scent of ancient wood heralds the blasphemous burning of ancient shrines and temples as Kanpeki's army desecrates whatever dedications to the Fortunes and Kami that they come across.

In the furthest reaches of the Phoenix lands, the most devout among their shugenja find their prayers to the Heavens no longer answered, their cries and devotions going unnoticed. As was prophesied, Ningen-do is anathema to Tengoku, no longer blessed by the Celestial Realms.

FALL 1215

A REVENANT'S JOURNEY

With the Second City firmly in his grasp, Arashi leaves the Colonies, setting sail with a small fleet for the shores of distant Rokugan. Determined to bring proper glory back to the Mantis name, he brings with him only those Colonial samurai and ronin that passed both his scrutiny and that of his right hand: Iuchi Namida, Oracle of Thunder. As one, they make for the Empire through storms and

sea monsters, finally landing after an arduous journey. They stash their boats in the ruins of an old smuggler's cove, one known only to the eldest members of the former Mantis (and even then, only from the stories of their ancestors), and make their way inland.

Through trials and combat aplenty, they fight their way to the Palace of the Emerald Champion, where their force joins with that of the Last Legion. It is unknown exactly what transpires between the members of the Legion's leadership and the Colonial Warlord, but he and his samurai are accepted into their ranks, and together they hold back the encroaching darkness.

WINTER 1215

SILENCE ON THE BATTLEFIELD

The campaign of Kanpeki's greed continues unchecked in the last dying days of autumn, and all throughout the Empire, tacticians and commanders prepare to brace themselves for a long couple of months before the snows bring them a brief reprieve from the year of death and bloodshed. However, when things seem to be at their lowest point, the advance of the Shadowlands simply... stops.

Cautiously, suspiciously, the officers at the front do not drop their guard. They keep their ragged soldiers at peak readiness, or at least as close to such as they can manage, prepared for raids and skirmishes that never come. As time passes, they grow bolder, sending scouts that never return. Eventually, they simply have to accept the fact that, for whatever reason, Kanpeki's armies have chosen to grant them respite. Confused, they turn their efforts to stockpiling for a long winter.

YEAR 1216

SPRING 1216

THE ILLUSION OF PEACE

Flowers bloom and crops are sown. The peasantry of Rokugan celebrate a winter undaunted by the horrors of Daigotsu Kanpeki's wrath. All the while, the Samurai look inland with caution. Many lords use the season to reinforce their fortifications and seize the opportunity to send out scouts. They find the enemy stands still at their defensive positions. The lords of the Lion advise their Shogun to reconquer farmlands and ensure the Empire's food source. Akodo Kano however, responds with patience. He refutes the suggestion and concentrates efforts towards further consolidating the Clan's remaining strength.

SUMMER 1216

FORESIGHT

Amidst the celebrations, one clan is curiously dour. The emissaries of the Dragon emerge from their mountainous home for the first time in many seasons, and they bring with them gold in amounts that have rarely been seen. The coin and raw material acts as a series of expensive gifts in exchange for offerings of basic foodstuffs, salt fish and dry grain, which are swiftly spirited away to their distant hills. The emissaries come and go as swiftly as the wind, and the lowland clans that are still in possession of their lands redouble their rejoicing in their newfound wealth.

FALL 1216

THE EXODUS RETURNS

From the west rides yet another group of stragglers. The Unicorn expedition to the Sands does not return to the Colonies and their Khan, but rather skirt the edge of Yobanjin territory through mountainous paths and hidden passages known only to Shinjo's children, re-joining the Empire at last. With them ride a force of Gaijin warriors and sahir, emissaries from the Jewel of the Desert and her various factions, here in the Empire both to assist the Unicorn and for secret purposes of their own. Further assistance comes from more secretive allies, as certain members of the returning forces are mask-bearing Rokugani clad in black and red under their riding furs. Taking their secret roads, they manage to avoid entering the so-called Onyx Empire, and send outriders forward to herald their return.

WINTER 1216

THE BEGINNING OF THE END

The Empire slows their many celebrations, as the joy of a year without loss of life is muddled by the coming of yet another winter of uncertainty. Furthermore, the outer edges of the yet-unoccupied territories speak of a poor harvest the previous season, yet none can spare the food to alleviate it, regardless of the amount of coin offered. The peasants of Rokugan are used to weathering periods of want, however, and steadfastly resign themselves to tightening their belts and burying a few unfortunates that do not survive the winter.

The Samurai caste settles in for the season, undisturbed and unaware.

YEAR 1217

SPRING 1217

DEATH AND TAXES

A famished Winter gives way to the toil of Spring. Across the Empire, the peasantry opens their stores of dried fish. What they find is a spoiled ruin. The stored food from the prior year's fishing harvest reeks of the Taint and the rot of Kanpeki's plan bearing fruition. In addition, the Tainted food has spoiled the mixed stores from years prior. The fishers of the Empire begin to panic over how they will pay their tithes. Discontent echoes through the remains of Rokugan as tax assessors are met with hostility, and the hands of the magistrates clench into fists to keep order. Despair twists into anger and mistrust towards their Samurai masters, sworn to protect them. Meanwhile, the Last Legion, composed mostly of combat-hardened ashigaru, seize Kyuden Seppun and claim its farmland in the name of the People of Rokugan. News of their prosperity spreads, and more and more heimin trickle out of their lords' lands to take up arms with the Legion.

SUMMER 1217

FOOLS RUSH IN

Several of the more brash commanders of the Lion Clan, displeased with Akodo Kano's refusal to start a campaign against the Onyx Empire, plot on how they would go about staging such an offensive themselves. They cooperate with like-minded members of the Crab army who are trapped in their lands, who inform them of exactly what such a campaign would require. Interestingly, their quartermasters discover that some unknown party has surreptitiously doubled their jade stores, allowing them access to enough of the sacred material to attack.

In the middle of summer, the force sets out without their Daimyos' permission to attempt to seize back portions of occupied Lion territory. With the jade to reinforce their troops, they smash into Kanpeki's frontline, but shortly find themselves routed after their initial success. No amount of jade can account for the sheer numbers advantage that the Spider possess, and the force retreats with heavy losses.

Kanpeki sends emissaries to the court of Akodo Kano, bearing glad tiding that the Onyx Emperor has magnanimously chosen to forgive the Lion their slight against him, and will be taking no retributive action. Naturally, this only infuriates the Lion further.

FALL 1217

CALL OF THE NINE DRAGONS

Togashi Noboru, Lord of the Togashi, leaves from a meeting with the Emperor. In his hands are a collection of scrolls that he promptly hands over to members of the ise zumi order who spread the new across Rokugan. After a delay of many months, the Emperor has announced his next Winter Court will be held in the halls of Shiro Mirumoto.

Strangely enough, some of those invitations reach Toshi Ranbo and the court of Daigotsu Kanpeki himself.

WINTER 1217

THE LAST COURT?

The Winter Court of 1217 promises to be one of the most interesting events of the century. As delegates come from across Rokugan, none are quite sure who they can trust. Hands are pressed firmly to the hilts of swords, at least those that do not clutch grumbling bellies. Suspicion is the watchword of those who make the climb to Shiro Mirumoto, and as they eye their fellow travelers, many wonder just what it is the Dragon have planned...