Saving Face

By Jason Flowers

Challenge

In the Scorpion village of Shimomura the gempuku of the local Bayushi lord’s eldest child has finally arrived! The Player Characters have received an invitation to this celebration due to political connections, a direct association to the Bayushi lord, or some other feasible reason to be invited to a huge festive occasion in Scorpion lands. A Scorpion gempuku is accompanied by a large party to which all are welcome, regardless of Clan.

When the PCs arrive, they are greeted as honored guests and enter a lavishly decorated home. The food and entertainment are excessively extravagant. Those in attendance are primarily Scorpion, but there are several Crane representatives and even a member of the nearby, but still relatively new, Wasp Clan. Each guest is greeted personally by the samurai candidate and presented with a gift. Those guests who were personally invited receive an individualized gift chosen or created specifically for them. Unexpected guests are welcomed as well but receive only “face gifts”; generic gifts reserved for those who were not expressly invited.

Focus

After the PCs have received their gifts and greeted the host a commotion draws the attention of all in attendance. A Crane clan samurai of the Daidoji family is outraged to receive a “face gift!” He was invited and expected to be treated as such. When the Scorpion lord points out that the guest was not, in fact, invited, the Crane presents a personalized invitation in the Lord’s own hand. Despite the confusion the Scorpion apologizes for the error and promises to rectify the situation. Mollified for now, the Crane samurai nods in appreciation and returns to the party.

Later after mingling with the other guests and enjoying the numerous musicians, dancers, and jugglers on display, an uproar is again heard. The Crane samurai guest who had caused the scene earlier has been found dead.

Strike

While outsiders are not typically trusted, the PCs, whether due to their connections or positions, will be approached to lead the investigation. Was the death an accident? Did he die of natural causes? If it was messy, was this meant as a message or warning? It would not be beyond the Kolat or perhaps even another Great Clan to poison an enemy? Did the Crane samurai anger the Moon Cult, thus drawing the ire of a maho-tsukai? Here, in the den of the Scorpion, the culprit could truly be anyone or anything.

Thanks to Robert Denton for the inspiration for this CFS.