

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.