

The Cost of Duty

**A One-Round Low-Rank Adventure for Heroes of
Rokugan (Champions of the Emerald Empire)**

by Jeremy Johnson

Edit/Rewrite by Rob Hobart

A Crane magistrate has been murdered, and her daughter is lost in the City of Lies. Can you rescue her in time? And why do fires keep breaking out?

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A four-hour time block has been allocated for playing this game. The actual playing time should be about three and a half hours.

It is a good idea to ask each player to put a name tag in front of him or her. The tag should have the player's name at the bottom, and the character's name, race, and gender at the top. This makes it easier for the players to keep track of who is playing which character.

The players are free to use the game rules to learn about equipment and weapons their characters are carrying.

Some of the text in this scenario is written so that you may present it as written to the players, while other text is for your eyes only. Text for the players will be in ***bold italics***. It is strongly recommended that you paraphrase the player text, instead of reading it aloud, as some of the text is general and must be adapted to the specific situation or to actions of the player characters.

GM's Information

THIS SCENARIO SHOULD NOT BE RUN COLD! Please read the scenario thoroughly before attempting to run it.

This adventure is a Low-Rank adventure. This means that only Rank 1 or 2 Characters should be allowed to play. This adventure was not written with Rank 3 through 5 characters in mind and cannot anticipate all that these characters may bring to the table.

All bulleted information is just that, pure information. Feed it to the players through an NPC when appropriate. Sometimes, reading it straight just doesn't sound right.

The world of Rokugan is a cross between feudal Japan and China. It is set in an age of honorable samurai, serving their Lords (Daimyos) and Empire. Remember that family names come before personal names. Akodo Toturi is from the Akodo family and his personal name is Toturi.

A note on female designations: If a samurai has the designation of -ko, then the samurai is a female. For example, if you see Samurai-ko, then this denotes a female samurai.

A note on commerce in Rokugan: Samurai are not supposed to care about worldly possessions,

especially money. A samurai pays a commoner as if the money is meaningless, a concession to the commoner's silly needs. Between samurai, the exchange of money and merchandise is an exchange of "gifts."

Glory and Honor Awards and Penalties

This adventure contains suggested Glory and Honor awards (and penalties) for dealing with the challenges presented herein. However, at times the players may take extra actions which the GM judges worthy of additional reward – or punishment. The following may be considered as guidelines:

- Performing an act of selfless, sacrificial loyalty to one's daimyo or clan: +1 point of Honor.
- Abiding by the tenets of bushido when one could gain an obvious advantage from breaking them: +1 point of Honor.
- Betraying or disobeying your duty, Clan, or family: lose 1-10 points of Honor and Glory, depending on the severity of the failure.
- Crying out in pain when injured: lose one point each of Honor and Glory.
- Using sneaky, underhanded, or treacherous methods when at an Honor rank higher than zero: lose 1-5 points of Honor.
- Using poison: lose 1-10 points of Honor, depending on the circumstances (there is always an Honor loss for using poison).
- Performing a socially acceptable public act of extreme courage and skill: +1 point of Glory.
- Drunk, insulting, or otherwise ill-mannered in public: lose 1-5 points of Glory.
- Made ronin: Glory drops to zero.

Adjusting for Party Strength

This is a Low-Rank adventure, and thus can involve parties of widely varying capabilities. The encounters have been optimized for a party of average Rank One, but with at least some experience.

Although most of the challenges here are role-play oriented and thus not terribly dependent on party strength, a few changes can be made to adjust the adventure difficulty for low-end and high-end parties, as follows:

Low End Party (most/all characters have no experience):

- If the PCs fight the Goju, there are only two of them.
- Ganzuburo has Earth of 3 and no Strength of the Earth.
- There are only five regular thugs in the House of the Plum Blossom.

High End Party (most/all characters Rank Two):

- If the PCs fight the Goju, there are four of them.
- Ganzuburo has Reflexes of 4 and Quick.

Adventure Summary and Background

This scenario takes place in Scorpion lands, primarily in the city of Ryoko Owari, the notoriously vice-ridden “City of Lies.” The day before the PCs enter the story, an arrogant Crane magistrate named Kakita Yomiko abuses the local eta. Yomiko is an emotionally high-strung woman, accustomed to the lowly and subservient eta of her own lands. When she passes an eta family near Necessary Village (the eta settlement outside the Scorpion City), she decides they did not bow to her quickly enough. In a fit of temper she orders the family slaughtered, and her two bodyguards have no choice but to obey. The family’s sole survivor is an eta named Niku, a member of an opium smuggling gang in Ryoko Owari. He learns of the incident from friends in the village, and vows revenge for the unjust murder.

Niku gathers a few of his fellow gang-members from Ryoko Owari, ruthless young men who resent their position in the Celestial Order. The next day this desperate band manages to ambush Yomiko’s traveling party, catching her by surprise and murdering her along with her guard and servants. Niku spares only Yomiko’s twelve-year-old daughter, Beppin. He plans to sell her as his final act of revenge – to sell her not to a simple Geisha House, but to a secret and corrupt establishment called the House of the Plum Blossom.

The PCs, who are traveling through Scorpion lands on other business, arrive less than an hour after this incident. The dying Crane magistrate will charge them to save her daughter, an honorable mission which only the most disreputable samurai would refuse.

Sub-Plot: The Shadow Lengthens. While the PCs are following the trail of Kakita Beppin and her kidnapper, they will encounter several peculiar incidents – fires and street-fights – which appear to be part of an opium war between Ryoko Owari’s crime syndicates. In actuality, this “opium war” is being concocted by the sinister force known as the Living Darkness, in order to cover its own assault against a secret dojo of its enemies, hidden within the City of Lies.

The PCs may or may not be able to realize that something dark and sinister underlies these incidents. If they do discover it, they will have the chance to join the larger struggle against the Living Darkness, in addition to rescuing an innocent young Cran girl from a bitter fate.

Player’s Introduction

The scenario begins late in the month of the Dragon, the month of Onnatongu to nobles (and May to gaijin). The PCs have been offered the chance to accompany an Imperial poet, Otomo Hatsuyo, who is traveling through the western Empire in search of inspiration. Having just enjoyed the Cherry Blossom Festival in Kyuden Miya, he now travels south through Scorpion lands, planning to reach the Crane territories in time for the Doll Festival in the middle of next month.

The PCs’ daimyos have leapt at the chance to have their samurai escort a famous poet from the Imperial house. After all, there is the chance that Hatsuyo might write a poem about them as a reward, bringing great Glory to their house.

Ronin PCs have been hired by Hatsuyo himself as yojimbo (bodyguards), at the rate of 2 koku.

The journey has so far been uneventful, although the PCs have been able to witness the composition of several magnificent poems. The GM should use this as an opportunity for the PCs to describe and introduce themselves, and to role-play with each other and with Otomo Hatsuyo.

Otomo Hatsuyo is a young and handsome man, of average height. His most striking physical feature is a four-foot-long mane of raven-black hair, which he wears loose. He wears a fine but understated kimono, and carries a wakizashi as the mark of his membership in the samurai caste (he does not know how to use it well.)

Hatsuyo is charming and elegant in his manners, and for the most part does not indulge in any Clan prejudices (although he will become cold and distant toward boorish or crude samurai). He is more than a little vain of his appearance, especially his long hair. He is accompanied by a middle-aged servant, Genzu, who serves him hand and foot.

PCs can learn more about Hatsuyo by rolling **Poetry/Intelligence** at TN 10, **Bard/Intelligence** at TN 15, **Courtier/Intelligence** at TN 15, or a suitable **Lore** skill (Imperial Families, Poetry, etc.) with **Intelligence** at TN 15. He is a talented poet specializing in epic works about the beauty and splendor of the Empire and the noble deeds of the samurai who serve it. His reputation rose considerable after Emperor Hantei the 38th praised one of his works. After the Emperor's tragic death, Hatsuyo gained great prestige as the 38th Hantei's "last favored poet," and his works are now much in demand at every court of the Empire. A favorable poem from him can be enough to transform a samurai's career. Small wonder that the PCs' daimyos were eager to curry favor with him.

Scene One: On the Road

After several pleasant days at the Cherry Blossom Festival, you have traveled south from Kyuden Miya into the Scorpion lands. Travel along the Mountain Goblin's Rest Road has been smooth, the traffic light and the weather clear. Lady Sun's bright afternoon face bathes the land, and the chill wind which blew across the land in recent days has now abated. Instead, a light breeze rustles the leaves of the trees, harmonizing with the song of birds.

The pleasant day is abruptly spoiled as you follow a bend in the road, circling a small grove of trees, and see a terrible sight: spread out before you like abandoned toys are broken, bloody bodies. A pair of crows rise from the corpses, cawing angrily at being interrupted with their feasting.

Otomo Hatsuyo will be shocked and horrified by the scene and will hold back, fanning himself.

Once the PCs move forward to investigate, they will see that two of the bodies are clearly samurai, dressed in kimono of light blue and wearing swords, while the other three are commoners. Three dead

riding ponies lie among the human corpses, and a smashed palanquin lies next to the commoners. An obvious trail of blood and trampled grass leads off the road to one side.

Neither of the samurai managed to draw their katana. They are obviously Crane, and can be identified as Kakita by any Crane PC, or by another PC rolling **Heraldry/Intelligence** at TN 10.

Kakita Yomiko

If the PCs remain in the area for long without following the blood-trail into the grass, they will hear a faint moan from that direction. If they follow the trail, they see the following:

Half-hidden in the grass is another fallen Kakita samurai, this one a woman. Her white hair is matted to her head with blood, and her sword arm drags limp and broken beside her. Her other arm is stretched out in front of her, and as you approach she moans weakly and claws at the soft, muddy earth, trying to pull herself forward.

This is Kakita Yomiko. She has been critically injured and is only two Wounds away from Dead, Wounds she will soon lose from bleeding and shock. Only her determination to save her daughter has kept her alive this long. Unless a PC immediately casts the spell *Regrow the Wound* on her, she will die within a few minutes. The spell *Path to Inner Peace* (or the **Medicine** skill, rolled at TN 30) will ease her pain and stabilize her condition for a few minutes, but will not prevent her death.

Regardless of what the PCs do, as soon as Yomiko realizes she is not alone, she begins to whisper:

"You... you're... please... help me please. In the name of the Emperor you must help me. My baby, my child... they took her... you must save her."

If the PCs ask for more information, Yomiko will continue as best she can, gasping out a few bits and pieces of information before she dies. Her account will not be complete or coherent – Yomiko has suffered brain damage from repeated blows to her head. Even if the PCs do manage to heal her enough to save her life, she will be unable to function normally, and gives only a fragmentary account of recent events.

Yomiko can dribble out the following information:

- Her daughter: *“Please save her, you must save my little Beppin... she’s only twelve.”*
- Who is she? *“Please... I... I am Kakita Yomiko, a magistrate ... yes, you must obey... I charge you, in the name of the Emperor.”*
- Who did this? *“They took her. The eta, they killed my guards and stole Beppin from me... left me to die. Please... he laughed, he said he would take her to Ryoko Owari and sell her, my precious flower...”*
- Who is he? *“He... he has a scar, a crescent moon on his face...”*

If the PCs examine Yomiko closely, or turn her over, they can roll **Heraldry/Perception** or **Law/Perception** at TN 10 to notice the mud-stained badge of an Emerald Magistrate on her kimono.

Any PC who is an Emerald Magistrate themselves will recognize that this is a crime against the Emperor (in the person of one of his Magistrates), as well as falling under the “civil disorder” and “general lawlessness” categories of crimes which an Emerald Magistrate has jurisdiction over. Regardless, since the PCs have been charged by Yomiko to rescue her daughter “in the name of the Emperor,” they are duty-bound to obey. Refusing constitutes a dishonorable action, costing all PCs 3 points of Honor.

Other Clues

If the PCs examine the overall scene of the ambush, a **Battle/Intelligence** or **Investigation/Intelligence** roll at TN 10 will deduce that the ponies were hamstrung and their riders attacked when they were stunned by the fall from their mounts. The commoners, obviously servants, tried to flee but were struck down.

If a PC tries to examine the injuries to the samurai and commoners (without touching the bodies, of course), they can roll **Medicine/Perception** or **Investigation/Perception** at TN 15 to deduce that the ambushers attacked crudely, without skill or style, and the weapons were probably peasant weapons and/or tools (clubs, hoes, kitchen knives, and so forth).

If the PCs look for tracks or other signs of the attackers, they can roll **Investigation/Perception** or **Hunting/Perception** at TN 10, or **Simple Perception** at TN 15, to discover several sets of tracks (a mixture of bare feet and sandals, and probably about a half-dozen people in all) leading

away across the nearby rice fields. The tracks are soon lost in the rice paddies, but from the direction they went, the PCs can easily see that they were headed toward a large village just visible on the horizon (Necessary Village).

If a shugenja PC *Communes* with the elements in this area, s/he can gain a description of the ambush which matches with the clues available: several men stood by the road, bowing low, then hamstringing the ponies as they rode past, slaughtered everyone, and dragged away a small girl from the palanquin. If the PC *Communes* with Water spirits, s/he can get a visual account of these events, including a good look at the leader of the ambush, a young man with a crescent-shaped scar on his face. Either way, the spirits can confirm that the men headed in the direction of the nearby village.

Otomo Hatsuyo

The Imperial poet will hold back, looking appalled and slightly nauseous, while the PCs investigate the scene and question Yomiko. Once the PCs return and explain what has happened, he will be shocked and horrified (“hinin attacking samurai, how dreadful!”). He will not object to the PCs going in search of Yomiko’s daughter, and will offer to wait for them in Ryoko Owari, which is only a day’s travel away. “I shall visit with the Governor, and enjoy her hospitality while you undertake this honorable task.”

If Yomiko’s life was saved, Hatsuyo will also offer to look after the poor brain-damaged woman while the PCs pursue their task.

Scene Two: Necessary Village

It will take the PCs about an hour to reach Necessary Village (half an hour if they are all mounted). It will be late afternoon, approaching sunset, as the PCs reach the outskirts of the village.

The village is a large one, spread along the shoreline of Kawa No Kin, the River of Gold. The setting sun blazes from the surface of the river, which is over a hundred yards wide at this point. It blazes, also, on a pillar of smoke rising swiftly from near the center of the village.

As you pass through the torii arch which marks the village boundary, the sounds of panic and fear reach your ears, and you can see many villagers

running to and fro, carrying buckets and shouting for more water. They race past you without a second glance.

Presumably the PCs will go to help with the fire, or at least to see what is happening. They discover a large riverside warehouse, flames shooting up from the walls and roof. In front of the conflagration, one young villager is struggling with an older man. The elder man, Kano, is trying to rush into the warehouse, but is being held back by the younger man, his cousin Yoshi, who is headman of the villager. The old man shrieks: "Miko! Miko, can you hear me? Out of my way, boy!" Yoshi refuses to let him into the warehouse, shouting that it is too late and the danger too great.

As the PCs approach, a female shriek of fear echoes from inside the burning building. Kano collapses to the ground, weeping hysterically.

Any PC who rolls **Simple Intelligence** at TN 10 can tell (primarily from the clothing worn) that all of these people are eta (the Rokugani "untouchables," who cremate corpses and handle leather).

Kano's daughter Miko is trapped in the warehouse. It is up to the PCs whether to assist – the virtue of Compassion would suggest that they should help, but on the other hand, these people are eta, hinin (non-people), and as such are not entitled to the same protections as, say, a peasant.

Helping Put Out the Fire

By the time the PCs arrive, the warehouse only has five more rounds before it collapses in on itself. Almost all of the eta villagers are in a "bucket brigade," some attempting to extinguish the fire while others frantically soak the adjacent warehouses with water, hoping to keep the blaze from spreading.

If the PCs attempt to organize the bucket brigade and put out the fire, they will need to role-play their actions. Depending on what sort of approach they take, they can roll either **Intimidation/Willpower** at TN 10, **Oratory/Awareness** at TN 10, **Battle/Awareness** at TN 15, or **Simple Awareness** or **Simple Willpower** at TN 20. With a success, they manage to get the bucket brigade running smoothly and extinguish the fire within a few minutes. However, unless a PC goes inside the building within five rounds, Miko will perish in the blaze and collapse.

Shugenja PCs may be able to assist with spellcasting. The spell *Extinguish* will contain the fire with a single normal casting, and end it with two castings or a Raise. (If this is done within five rounds, Miko will be saved.) Casting *Summon Water* will help, but is unlikely to produce enough water to extinguish the fire unless the PC can cast it with a large number of Raises (probably at least five). Casting *Castle of Water* with at least one Raise will seriously impede the fire, and three or more Raises will extinguish the fire.

Finally, during this time, all of the PCs will notice an odd, distinctive odor to the smoke coming from the warehouse. This can be recognized as opium with a **Medicine/Intelligence** or **Poison/Intelligence** roll at TN 10, or **Simple Intelligence** at TN 20. A PC who is already addicted to opium will not need to roll.

Rescuing Miko

To rescue Miko, one or more PCs will have to brave the flames and go inside the warehouse. Each round spent in the burning warehouse will cost 1k1 wounds, although PCs can reduce damage by half (rounded down) if they take sensible precautions such as soaking themselves in water, covering their faces with wet cloths, etc.

Miko, an ordinary eta girl in her mid-teens, is trapped beneath a fallen crate, her legs pinned. The fire has not reached her yet, but it is drawing closer moment by moment, and she is shrieking in terror, her face flushed red as she strains helplessly against the heavy weight of the crate.

Lifting the crate requires an **Athletics/Strength** roll at TN 10, or **Simple Strength** at TN 15. Up to three PCs can combine their efforts. Each attempt takes one round. Once they free Miko, she will be able to move only at a slow limp – her legs are badly bruised, the muscles half-paralyzed with pain – but can get out in a single round if the PCs help or carry her.

As mentioned, the PCs have only five rounds before the building collapses. After three rounds, they will begin to hear ominous creaking and snapping from the building, warning that it is soon to fail. If the PCs are fleeing on the round the building collapses, they can probably still make it out (4k2 damage). If they are still inside, however, they will take 6k4 Wounds, which is quite likely to be fatal (it will

certainly kill poor Miko, who has only 16 Wounds left).

PCs who go into the burning warehouse are exposed to intense opium fumes. They must roll **Simple Earth** at TN 5 or become addicted to opium (gaining the disadvantage Compulsion: Opium).

Aftermath of the Fire

If the PCs take no action to help with the fire, the eta will be unable to prevent the building from burning to the ground, Miko dying inside. Although the villagers will be unable to retaliate directly against the PCs for being so cold-hearted, they will offer only minimal cooperation with any PC inquiries, and mostly claim to know nothing about any kidnapped girls or men with crescent-shaped scars.

If the PCs did take action to help extinguish the fire, the villagers will be much more cooperative, especially the old man Kano and his cousin, headman Yoshi. If the PCs actually managed to save Miko, she and her father will be downright enthusiastic in their assistance, and word of the PCs' kindness will quickly spread to the eta community in Ryoko Owari, possibly helping them later.

Regardless, once the fire is resolved (one way or the other), Yoshi the headman will approach the PCs, bowing humbly: *"Noble samurai, please forgive this inconvenience you have suffered. I beg you to take pity upon our village for not properly greeting you when you arrived. How can this lowly one help you?"*

What the Villagers Know

If the PCs failed to help in any way, their questions will all generally get a variation on the following response: *"We are good eta, noble samurai, please forgive our ignorance."* PCs who threaten (or inflict) violence will still get little to no response, although the theft of the fisherman's boat (see "Other Clues" below) will eventually provide a hint as to where Niku and his comrades went.

The only question which uncooperative eta will answer honestly is: What is this village? *"This place is called Necessary Village, honorable samurai. We gather and process the seeds of the poppy, to make opium for medicines. Only lowly eta such as ourselves are fit for such work – proper farmers would never dirty their hands with opium."*

If the PCs did help with the fire, they can get much more cooperation:

A Man with a Moon-shaped Scar: *"Ah, yes, that would be Niku, samurai-sama. Poor man, his family died yesterday. He usually stays in Ryoko Owari, has some friends there, but he came back last night for the funeral."*

Niku's Character: Most villagers describe Niku as a brash, angry young man who was not content with his place in life. *"Not like us, samurai-sama, we understand our role in the Celestial Order."* Miko will speak more about him and his life story, if she survives. See below for details.

Death of Niku's Family: The villagers all know how Niku's family died (executed on the whim of Kakita Yomiko), but will be very reluctant to speak openly about this. If the PCs press them, they will explain what happened, but intersperse their description with much hemming and hawing about how "it was of course her right to punish them as she saw fit, samurai-sama" and "we do not question the judgment of our betters, samurai-sama."

Niku's friends in Ryoko Owari: *"Niku moved to the Leatherworkers' Quarter in the city last year. Said he had friends there, and that he would make a better life for himself."* The villagers make disapproving sounds about this, and indirectly express the notion that the "friends" were probably thugs and criminals.

Did anyone see Niku with a little girl? If the PCs roll **Kuenai/Awareness** at TN 10, **Investigation/Awareness** at TN 15, or **Intimidation/Willpower** at TN 10, they will find a pair of eta who saw Niku pass through the village in mid-morning. *"There were some other young men with him, I didn't recognize them, and a little girl, yes. She was quite pretty, had a nice kimono. I made a compliment about that, and Niku just snarled at me to mind my own business."*

If any PC mentions the possibility that the girl might be sold to a geisha house, the eta will look properly appalled that such a fate could befall a samurai's child. *"Perhaps they have taken her to Teardrop Island, samurai. I have heard that is where the, ah, unsavory businesses of Ryoko Owari are located. They say the whole island is nothing but geisha houses, opium dens, and gambling halls."*

At least, that's what I've heard, samurai-sama, of course none of us have been there ourselves."

What Miko knows: If Miko survives, she can supply a great deal more information about Niku, with whom she was a childhood friend. *"Niku used to be a good boy, samurai-sama, but when he was ten a horse kicked him in the face. After that he became bitter and angry. When he was at the funeral yesterday, he was so angry I feared he might strike those who spoke with him. He left right afterward, I thought to go back to Ryoko Owari."*

She also knows a bit more about Niku's friends in Ryoko Owari: *"Niku told me once that his friends were strong and had a lot of money and many allies. They even had their own house on Teardrop Island, he said."*

Other Clues to Beppin's Fate

Some PCs may prefer to rely on their own investigative abilities rather than depending on the words of eta. It will be impossible to track the kidnappers' footprints through the mud and confusion of the village, but smart PCs may think of checking around the edges of the village, or along the riverbank, for any further sign of fresh tracks. Such PCs can roll **Hunting/Perception** or **Investigation/Perception** at TN 10, or **Simple Perception** at TN 15, to discover a cluster of tracks in the soft mud of the riverbank, next to a post where a boat would normally be tied up. Among the footprints is the print of a child's bare foot.

The boat belongs to the local eta fisherman, Tako. He will discover the theft before night, and will be quite distraught about it – if the PCs are still in the village after an hour or two, they will hear him lamenting the loss of the boat. Since he is the only fisherman in the village and many folk depend on him for food, the loss of his boat will cause quite a commotion.

If a shugenja PC *Communes* with the spirits by the riverbank, they will supply a description of six men dragging a young girl onto the boat and setting off upriver toward Ryoko Owari. Again, the water spirits can clearly show the leader of the group, an angry-looking young man with a crescent-shaped scar on his face.

If a shugenja interrogates other spirits in the village (in hopes of tracking the kidnappers), three Raises

will be required in order to find spirits which remember six men with a girl. A successful shugenja will be able to track the men to the riverbank.

Investigating the Fire

Some PCs, particularly Scorpions or those who are magistrates, may decide to investigate the warehouse fire.

If the PCs ask the eta about the warehouse:

"Yes, the warehouse was filled with opium, samurai-sama. It is one of the buildings where we process the raw poppy extract into medical form. Most of the village works in the various opium warehouses." PCs who examine the other warehouses in the village (there are seven others) will notice that they each display a Scorpion mon – Shosuro, Bayushi, or Soshi – in a nondescript location. The eta explain that opium from different warehouses is collected by different wagons, although all of it goes to Ryoko Owari. If anyone asks, the burned warehouse displayed the Bayushi mon.

The fire: *"It was very sudden, samurai-sama, we do not know how it started."* However, if a PC rolls **Kuenai/Awareness** at TN 10 or **Sincerity/Awareness** at TN 15 while speaking with the villagers, they will notice a couple of the villagers shifting anxiously when the topic of the fire comes up. If these villagers are questioned, they will confess that they saw two men "dressed all in tight black clothing, with silk masks over their faces" fleeing the building right before the fire started.

If the PCs examine the burned building (or its ruins), they can roll **Investigation/Perception** at TN 15, **Siege/Perception** at TN 15, or **Herbalism/Perception** at TN 20 to find odors and burn marks suggesting that the fire was started by an incendiary device, possibly a small bomb of gaijin pepper (gunpowder).

If the PCs search the area where these dark figures were seen, they can roll **Investigation/Perception** at TN 10 (or **Simple Perception** at TN 20) to notice a small knife trampled into the muddy ground. Close examination reveals that the hilt of the knife is inscribed with the mon of the Shosuro family.

If any shugenja PCs use *Commune* or similar magic to try to learn what happened to the warehouse, they

will find it a frustrating experience. There are no Water spirits near the warehouse which remember before the fire, and the residual Fire spirits in the ruins are grumpy at having been extinguished (two Raises will be required to get them to even answer any questions). Only Air and Earth spirits are freely available.

None of the spirits clearly remember what happened – they only know that “someone” (who they cannot properly describe) threw something into the back door of the warehouse, starting a fire. Two or more Raises will result in the spirits being able to comment that the attackers were “dark” and “hard to see.” (The fire-setters were actually Goju, servants of the Living Darkness, and the spirits cannot properly identify them because they are separated from the Celestial Order.)

Where to Next?

The PCs should now know with certainty that the kidnappers took young Beppin to Ryoko Owari by boat. If they decide to immediately head toward the city, it will take them six hours on foot (four if the entire group is mounted) to reach it, putting their arrival well after midnight. Since the city gates are closed after dark, they might be wiser to stay in Necessary Village until morning.

Some PCs may think of trying to reach the city by boat. There are no other boats in the village, however (fishing on the river is restricted).

If the PCs stay in the village, they will be given the use of the headman’s home for the night. If they go directly to the city, they will have to wait outside the gates until morning.

The PCs can also notify the eta of the dead bodies on the road (including Kakita Yomiko, if she died). They will cremate the bodies and have the ashes returned to their proper families.

A troop of Thunder Guards from Ryoko Owari will arrive in the village the next morning. Their commander, Bayushi Chozo, will question the PCs briefly and listens carefully to their accounts before compiling his report and returning to the city.

Scene Three: Arrival at Ryoko Owari, the City of Lies

As stated, it will take the PCs six hours on foot (four on horseback) to reach Ryoko Owari. The PCs approach from the south via Mountain Goblin’s Rest road.

You reach the top of a small hill. Laid out below you, like a beautiful gem housed in a frame of jade, is Ryoko Owari, the City of Stories, called by the less charitable the City of Lies. The city is surrounded by tall walls of black granite, which makes you wonder why the place is so often called the “City of Green Walls.” The roofs of fine temples and splendid buildings rise from within, and you can see just why they call this city the jewel of the Scorpion Lands. Running through the middle of the city is Kawa no Kin, the River of Gold, the main artery of trade through the western Empire. South of the main city, the river is guarded by two high stone towers, a legacy of the Crab Clan, which briefly occupied the city during the reign of Hantei the 17th. Just above the towers, the river broadens and passes around a large, teardrop-shaped island, tightly packed with buildings. On the far bank, past the island, you can see a grubby, lower-class neighborhood that crouches outside the city walls – probably the city’s notoriously large eta district.

Your road leads straight to one of the six different gates which pierce those thick black walls. This is the Gate of Oni’s Teeth, named for the dozens of blackened stones imbedded into both the gate itself and the roadside approaching it. Scorpion guards stand to either each side of the gate, checking the travel papers of the merchants and travelers passing into the city.

If any PC is interested in the story of how the Gate of Oni’s Teeth got its name, they can roll **History/Intelligence** or **Lore: Scorpion/Intelligence** at TN 10, or **Bard/Intelligence** at TN 15, to recall the story. See “The Gate of Oni’s Teeth” in Appendix 2: Stories of Ryoko Owari.

The two Thunder Guards at the gate are polite and businesslike, asking the PCs their purpose for visiting Ryoko Owari. If the PCs are honest (saying they are here to seek the kidnapped child of a samurai), the guards will be sympathetic and will do

their best to help the PCs. If the PCs offer a false reason for visiting, they will need to roll **Sincerity/Awareness** at TN 10 to convince the guards. Otherwise they will be refused access to the city (“your papers are not in order, samurai-sama”) and will have to circle around and try to enter at one of the other gates.

If the PCs speak with the guards, they can gain the following information:

Niku and Beppin: If the PCs ask about a man with a crescent-shaped scar, or about one or more men traveling with a child, the guards have not seen any such person. If the PCs mention that the targets were traveling by boat, the guards suggest that the PCs visit the Towers of the Eyes and ask the garrison there. If the PCs mention Niku’s threat to sell Beppin, the guards will shrug: “There are plenty of houses on Teardrop Island which would buy a girl, no questions asked.”

The Leatherworker District: If the PCs express interest in visiting or searching the city’s eta district, the guards will give them directions. “It lies on the far side of the city, across the river. The fastest way to get there is to cross the Merchant’s District to the Dragon’s Gate, and then cross the Bridge of the Dragon.”

Teardrop Island: If any PC asks about Teardrop Island, the guards will smirk knowingly. “You cannot go there during the day, samurai-san. In the evening, however, you will find an abundance of riverboats ready to carry you to the floating world. Do you require an invitation to one of the geisha houses?” The guards will provide invitations to anyone who asks for a “minimal consideration” – a bribe of one koku.

Who is in charge? Some of the PCs may wish to report in to the local authorities or request help. The guards will inform them that Governor Shosuro Hyobu resides at the Shosuro Palace, and the local magistrate, Bayushi Kagoni, is at the Civil Hall. Both are located in the Noble Quarter, and the guards will notify the PCs that they will need to pass through either the Gate of Condescension or the Pious Gate to enter that part of the city.

If any PCs ask about Emerald Magistrates, the guards will snort and inform them that the local Imperial law-enforcer, Shiba Tomodachi, has been absent from the city since the death of the Emerald Champion last autumn.

Inside the City

Ryoko Owari is a huge city, a bustling metropolis home to over 10,000 people – the second largest city in the Empire, after the Imperial capital of Otosan Uchi. Internally, the city is divided into five main districts, three on the east bank of the river (where the PCs arrive) and two on the west bank. Teardrop Island, located in the middle of the river, forms its own world separate from the rest of the city.

The eastern districts are the Temple Quarter, the Merchant District, and the Noble Quarter. The Gate of Oni’s Teeth (where the PCs arrive) accesses the city on the border between the Temple and Merchant districts. The Noble Quarter is separated from the rest of the city by its own wall.

On the far (west) bank of the river are the Fishermen’s District and the Leatherworkers (Eta) District. Three bridges connect the two halves of the city – two from the Merchant District to the Fisherman’s District (the Moment’s Edge Bridge and the Bridge of Drowned Lovers), and one from just outside the Noble Quarter to the Leatherworkers District (the Bridge of the Dragon).

The city is kept extremely clean, and bustles with commerce and industry, much of it of dubious legality. Ryoko Owari is the center of the Rokugani opium trade, both the legal medicinal trade and the illegal smuggling run by the Scorpion opium cartels. Four years ago, a semi-secret clash known as the “Opium War” resulted in the destruction of the Soshi cartel, leaving the trade in the hands of the Bayushi and Shosuro families.

Law in the city is enforced by the Thunder Guard, a force of bushi commanded by Shosuro Jocho, the son of Governor Shosuro Hyobu. They are headquartered in a fortified tower at the Dragon Gate, which stands just outside the Noble Quarter and controls access to the Bridge of the Dragon.

GMs seeking additional information on Ryoko Owari should consult the “City of Lies” boxed set (Alderac 1998).

Visiting the Authorities

If the PCs decide to try to visit the Governor, they will have to enter the Noble Quarter and approach the Shosuro Palace. A vast, low, sprawling building which mingles several different architectural styles,

the Palace is a mystery even to many of these who inhabit it. The guards and servants who greet the PCs at the Palace doors are polite and considerate, but regardless of when the PCs arrive or what they say, they will not be able to meet with the Governor. Shosuro Hyobu has far too much on her mind to spare any time for a group of low-rank samurai searching for a kidnapped girl. Of course, nobody will say this aloud; instead, the servants will offer a euphemistic excuse such as: ***“I regret to inform you that Governor Hyobu is indisposed at the moment. If you wish to leave your chop and message I shall alert her as soon as she is available.”***

If any of the PCs are Scorpions trying to share information on the fire, the guards will only respond favorably if the PCs are Shosuro or Yogo family. Such PCs will be briefly admitted to the palace, and allowed to tell their story to Governor Hyobu’s son, Shosuro Jocho, the commander of the Thunder Guard. Jocho has no interest in the kidnapping, but will ask for every possible detail on the fire, and will be especially interested in any reports of possible “ninja” (especially evidence pointing at one or another of the Scorpion families).

Meeting with the City Magistrate

If the PCs go to the Civic Hall and request a meeting with the magistrate, they will be allowed to cool their heels for a good two hours – unless some of the them are Scorpion of the Bayushi or Soshi families, in which case those PCs (only) are granted a prompt and private meeting.

The servants lead you into a small audience room where a nondescript man in Scorpion colors awaits you. He wears a small mask that covers the upper half of his face, showing his lips quirked in a smile. “Greetings, samurai-sans. I am Bayushi Kagoni, magistrate of Ryoko Owari. How may I assist you?”

If the PCs ask for help with investigating the kidnapping, Kagoni will look grave and make many friendly and sympathetic comments, but never offers any actual help. By the end of the conversation, it should become clear that the Scorpion have no interest in helping a Crane Magistrate (Emerald or otherwise) who has fallen afoul of some local criminals. The PCs probably do not have the rank to overawe Kagoni, who is Glory Rank 4.5.

If the PCs mention the fire in the village (or the ones in the city, if they have already encountered them), Kagoni will be much more attentive. He listens carefully to everything the PCs say, especially questioning them about any evidence which might pin the blame for these fires on the Shosuro family.

With Scorpion PCs from the Bayushi or Soshi families, he will be more open, and indicates that he regards the fires as a power-play by the Shosuro. “Four years ago, in the so-called ‘Opium War,’ the Soshi opium cartel was destroyed. This may be a move to inflict similar harm on the Bayushi cartel.”

Scene Four: Fire and Shadow in the City of Lies

While the PCs are in Ryoko Owari, several more fires will take place. These will all target various opium warehouses in the city, located along both banks of the river.

The first three fires will be set by the Goju, in order to further provoke the Scorpion cartels and cover their own planned assault on a different target within the city: the Crystal Tears Dojo, a secret anti-Shadow organization.

The later fires will be caused by direct clashes between the Bayushi and Shosuro cartels, and will result not only in property damage but also alleyway and rooftop battles between rival Scorpion bushi and assassins.

Fire #1: Merchant District (North)

This fire will be visible to the PCs as a pillar of dark smoke rising in the northern part of the city, well away from any of their possible destinations (which are all in the south). The fireman gangs will respond fairly quickly, extinguishing the fire before it can consume more than a couple of buildings.

If the PCs should decide to investigate, they will discover a dockside warehouse which has burned to the ground. The smell of burned opium hangs in the air. (As before, the odor of opium can be recognized with a **Medicine/Intelligence** or **Poison/Intelligence** roll at TN 10, or **Simple Intelligence** at

TN 20. A PC who is already addicted to opium will not need to roll.)

If the PCs ask questions, they can soon learn that the warehouse belongs to a merchant sponsored by the Shosuro family. The locals will profess well-practiced shock at the discovery that this respectable merchant was smuggling opium. Some Thunder Guards will quickly show up to investigate, but depart after asking only a few questions.

PCs who search the area for physical clues will find none that were not consumed by the fire. *Communing* with the spirits can determine that the fire was started by an incendiary bomb flung through a back window. The perpetrators were men in dark, shadowy garb who slipped away via alleys and rooftops.

Fire #2: Leatherworker's District

If the PCs head straight for the Leatherworkers' District, this fire will occur shortly after they arrive.

If they go somewhere else first (such as the Towers of the Eyes) the fire will already be underway when they reach the Leatherworkers' District, and they will see a thick cloud of dark smoke boiling up, blotting out the afternoon sun.

The target of the fire is a large, decrepit building near the riverbank, to outward appearances abandoned. However, once it begins burning, it quickly becomes apparent that this "abandoned" building was actually storing opium. The inside of the building is full of large cloth bales of processed opium, and if any PC goes inside and sees them (or investigates after extinguishing the fire), they can roll **Heraldry/Perception** at TN 10 to spot small kanji with the Shosuro mon stenciled on the bales.

The eta of the Leatherworkers' District do not have any official fireman gang, but the locals are informally led by an older man named Oigoe ("Raspy") who will do his best to organize a response to the fire. Much as in Necessary Village, the PCs will have the choice of whether or not to intervene.

- If the PCs do nothing, the fire spreads to several adjacent residential buildings and claims three lives before the eta finally manage to bring it under control.
- If the PCs intervene by organizing the firefighting efforts, Summoning water, and so

forth, they will be able to confine the fire to the building where it began. The heavy fumes of opium will afflict the PCs, again requiring a Simple Earth roll at TN 5 to avoid succumbing to opium addiction.

- If the PCs manage to cast a powerful anti-fire spell (such as Extinguish or Castle of Water) with one or two Raises, the fire will be put out completely, and the building will be intact enough for the PCs to investigate later.

PCs who investigate afterward can learn that the building is actually owned by a rich merchant in the city, a man sponsored by the Bayushi family. (The merchant, if contacted, will deny any knowledge of opium in his building, and invokes the protection of the Bayushi family against persistent interrogators.)

As before, the fire was started artificially, with an incendiary device. With an **Investigation/Perception** roll at TN 10, or **Hunting/Perception** at TN 15, the PCs can find a few sandal tracks and a dirt-spattered mask of black silk in the muddy alley behind the building. *Communing* with the spirits will get a similar account from the other fires (shadowy figures starting the fire and then fleeing).

Fire #3: Merchant District (South)

This fire will take place in the evening, when the minions of the Living Darkness can use their full power. As before, the fire strikes a dockside warehouse which is a storage place for opium (in this case, for the Shosuro family), but this time the arsonists see to it that the blaze spreads almost immediately to several adjacent buildings and private residences. Under cover of the ensuing panic, they strike at a private dojo located on the grounds of one of those residences.

Since this fire is located in the southern Merchant District, close to the Bridge of the Dragon, the PCs may well pass close by it. If possible, the GM should arrange for this incident to occur while the PCs are in the area.

Due to the proximity of this fire to the Dragon Gate, the district firemen will respond quickly, as will troops from the Thunder Guards. If the PCs respond, have each of them roll **Simple Perception** at TN 15. A PC who succeeds will spot the following:

A small noise draws your attention to a nearby alley, almost pitch-black compared to the bright light of the fire nearby. A masked man in dark clothing staggers away down the alley, clutching a katana that droops so low the blade almost drags the ground. A moment later, something indistinct moves in the darkness behind him – a figure, or perhaps several figures, scuttling along the alley and the walls to either side, closing in on the man like predatory insects.

The wounded man is Bayushi Namoro, master of the Crystal Tears Dojo, a secret organization battling the minions of the Living Darkness. His dojo has just been destroyed, his family slain, and he himself badly wounded in the fight, and now he is fleeing a pack of Goju (shadow-ninja).

PCs who have previously encountered Goju or other minions of Shadow (such as in the adventures *A Foreign Legacy*, *Darkness Beyond Darkness*, *Fist of the Earth*, or *A Walk Through the Mountains*) can roll Simple Intelligence at TN 10 to realize these are similar creatures.

If the PCs do nothing, this mysterious scene vanishes from sight, leaving them wondering if the whole thing was a trick played by the flickering light of the spreading fire. If at least one PC chases after the strange scene, however, things get more interesting. The Goju quickly trap Namoro in a side-street, and the samurai turns at bay, preparing to fight for his life. The Goju slink in from all sides, their movements eerily plastic and inhuman, sharp blades glittering in their dark hands.

If the PCs intervene, they will have to fight two of the Goju (one if they are a low-end group or if only some of them intervened, three if they are a high-end group). The Goju are physically weak, but nonetheless terrifying opponents – they will use their “shadow-leap” ability to warp in and out of the darkness, coming at the PCs from different directions and striking by surprise whenever possible. They scuttle along walls and overhangs as readily as they use the ground. The Goju have no faces, only suggestive blanks which they can shape and twist as they wish. If any of the PCs have Lost Loves, Sworn Enemies, or other such persons haunting their past, the Goju will shape their faces to resemble those persons.

Normal weapons and magic only do half damage to the Goju, who bleed hissing black smoke. Crystal weapons do double damage, and light focused

through a crystal will do 3k3 damage to them. When slain, they collapse like balloons and dissolve away in a cloud of smoke.

Bayushi Namoro will defeat his Goju attackers in four rounds. At that point, if the PCs are still fighting, he will begin striking down their Goju opponents at the rate of one per round.

Aftermath: Bayushi Namoro

Once the Goju are defeated, Namoro will look around warily, then bows briefly to the PCs (without sheathing his sword). His face is covered with a mask, and his dark clothing bears no mon. He is wounded, but not critically, and does not allow anyone to examine the injury. Unless some of the PCs speak to him, he will depart without saying anything.

If the PCs do speak with him, Namoro will answer softly and cautiously, trying to figure out what they know and whether they will be useful allies. Some PCs may have met him before (he is a player character) – they will be able to recognize his voice with a **Simple Intelligence** roll at TN 10.

If the PCs seem genuinely curious or frightened about what they just fought, and if they are smart enough to make a connection between this incident and the wave of fires afflicting Ryoko Owari, Namoro may consider recruiting them for the struggle against the Living Darkness. Have him make a **Contested Roll** of his **Investigation/Awareness** (4k4) against the PCs’ **Sincerity/Awareness**. If he beats the PCs, the GM should ask the players for their characters’ true attitudes on what they have just seen. If they are genuinely interested in learning more about this strange foe (or genuinely frightened of it), Namoro will offer to meet the PCs later “on a more civilized occasion.” Give those PCs the cert for an Invitation to the Crystal Tears Dojo.

Regardless of whether he invites any PCs into his dojo or not, Namoro will quickly depart on his own business, thanking the PCs for their help and then melting into the shadows almost as easily as his attackers did.

Later fires: Fisherman’s District and Merchant District

There will be several additional fires over the next two days and nights, striking at opium storehouses

in the Merchant and Fisherman's Districts. These later fires will be the result of "retaliation" by the Bayushi and Shosuro families, each of which believes it is being attacked by the other. They are caused by Scorpion saboteurs, not Goju. None of them have any connection to the scenario, but they will form a constant backdrop to the PCs' remaining time in the City of Lies.

Scene Five: Hunting for Beppin

Setting aside the troublesome problem of the fires, the PCs will still have to search for Beppin. They should know that Niku brought her here by boat, and that he has "friends" in Ryoko Owari. They may even know that these friends are supposed to be based on Teardrop Island.

The Towers of the Eyes

PCs trying to track Niku's stolen boat will probably realize that the Towers of the Eyes are a good place to ask. To visit the Towers, the PCs will have to either leave the city and head south along the eastern bank of the river, or cross into the Leatherworkers' Quarter and then follow the riverbank south from there.

Either way, the PCs will be greeted by the Scorpion bushi who commands one of the towers. He cooperates readily enough, answering the PCs' questions openly and honestly.

- Some of the garrison bushi can confirm that a boat with several men and a child came upriver last evening. The men had valid identity papers to live in Ryoko Owari – they said they had left the city to attend a funeral. One of the men did have a crescent-shaped scar on his face. He identified the girl as his niece.
- The guards did not see where the boat went. They remember that some of the men aboard were eta, and suggest checking in the Leatherworkers' Quarter.
- Again, if any PCs ask where someone would go to sell a girl, the guards will direct them to Teardrop Island. "The madams are always on the lookout for pretty young prospects."

Magical Searching

Shugenja PCs may think of *Communing* with spirits in the river to learn where Niku and his friends took their boat.

It will take two Raises to find a Water spirit in the huge river who remembers the boat and its passengers. It will take four Raises to find a spirit which actually knows where the boat went (Teardrop Island). No Air spirits stayed around long enough to remember the boat.

The PCs do not have enough information on Niku or Beppin to use spells like *Ties That Bind* or *Reflecting Pool*.

The Leatherworker's Quarter

Given that Niku is an eta, going to the Leatherworker's Quarter to search for him is a logical step (especially if the PCs do not have any clues which point at Teardrop Island). It is likely that when the PCs first arrive in the quarter, they will have to deal with a fire (see Scene Four above). Regardless of how that turns out, the PCs will eventually find themselves in a conversation with Oigoe, a bald, stooped old man with gaps in his teeth. Oigoe is the nominal boss of the informal Leatherworker District firemen, and in practical terms he runs the district.

Oigoe (which means "Raspy") speaks in a rough, rasping voice, and usually adopts a subservient but worldly-wise attitude. He often speaks of himself in the third person ("old Oigoe hears much, yes, samurai-sama"). He is properly respectful of samurai, but does not cringe or grovel in the way that many village eta do. He is extremely well-informed about what happens in the city (the survival of his community depends on it), but how much of this information he shares with the PCs depends on how they treat him, and how they have behaved toward the other eta they have met (including those in Necessary Village).

- If the PCs have been compassionate, and gone out of their way to help, then Oigoe will be very cooperative and even volunteers additional information (see "Bonus Help" below).
- If the PCs have been proper and honorable, but have not gone out of their way to help above and beyond what is required (such as helping put out fires, but not risking anything to rescue Miko), Oigoe will tell them what he knows, but

will not volunteer any extra information or help.

- If the PCs have all been callous and uncaring about the eta (ignoring the fires, etc.), Oigoe will tell them as little as he can get away with.

What Oigoe Knows

Niku: Oigoe recognizes Niku from the description, and can name him if the PCs do not already know his name. He confirms that Niku has a few friends in the quarter, and describes them as “thugs who try to survive on small shake-downs and thieving.” If the PCs are not on his bad side, he also says that they sometimes hire out their services as strongmen to a gang of toughs on Teardrop Island.

Niku’s Friends and Teardrop Island: Oigoe does not know where the toughs on the island live, although he’s heard rumors that they work as bouncers for the various businesses there. “People of that sort have no permanent home, samurai-sama. You would have to ask for them in some of the... less reputable establishments there.” If the PCs mention Miko’s story of a “house on Teardrop Island” Oigoe will snort and suggest that “hiding in the back of some merchant’s warehouse is probably closer to the truth.”

Niku and the Attack on Kakita Yomiko: Although Oigoe knows nothing about the crimes which Niku and his friends have committed, he does know that Niku left the city two days ago when he received word that his family was dead, “supposedly slain by a Crane samurai, although we had no way of guessing whether that was rumor or slander, samurai-sama.” Niku was clearly angry about this, and left for Necessary Village in the company of his thuggish friends. If Oigoe has a positive impression of the PCs, he also adds that some of the other eta heard Niku talking about getting revenge. “A foolish thing for an eta to say, samurai-sama. Revenge is a thing for the buke, not for the hinin.” A **Contested Awareness** roll against Oigoe’s Awareness of 3 will sense that he finds something secretly funny about that remark, although he will deny any such thing.

The Girl Beppin: If any PCs mention Niku’s alleged kidnapping of the girl Beppin, and/or his threat to sell her, Oigoe will nod thoughtfully. “Oh yes, it is possible to sell girls to the geisha houses there, just like anywhere in the Empire, or so Oigoe hears.” If the PCs have made a good impression,

Oigoe adds some advice: “Be careful on Teardrop Island, samurai-san. There are many there with secrets they would kill to protect.”

The Fires: Oigoe is very concerned about the fires, since fire is a deadly hazard in a densely populated city like Ryoko Owari. He suspects that the cause is a turf war between the opium cartels, but will be wary of talking about this with the PCs, especially if they are straight-arrow types. If the PCs mention anything resembling “ninja,” the old man will chuckle and shrug. “Old Oigoe has never seen a ninja, great samurai, but there have been many, many folk in this city who have pretended to be ninja. Why, there was a rash of crimes a couple of years ago that seemed to be committed by ninja, until the local magistrate proved it was just yakuza dressing up in black costumes.”

Bonus Help

If the PCs saved Miko in Necessary Village, word of their good deeds has already reached the Leatherworkers’ Quarter. In this case, Oigoe may volunteer more information and help for them. He will certainly do this if the PCs helped deal with the fires in both Necessary Village and the Leatherworkers’ Quarter.

“Samurai-sama, if you plan to enter Teardrop Island there is something you should know. No one is allowed on the Island with weapons, at least not if they enter through the normal means. There is only one dock, and access from the dock is controlled by a ronin, Kado, who collects all weapons until the visitors leave. It is supposed to protect the peace on the Island.”

If the PCs express concern about this, Oigoe continues: *“If you feel you must go armed to the Island, perhaps I might be of service to you.”*

The eta chieftain will offer to float the PCs across the river on one of the handful of boats kept in the Leatherworkers’ District. The eta have their own dock on the island, one which is not guarded or checked for weapons.

Scene Six: Teardrop Island

The PCs should eventually figure out that Niku is most likely to be on Teardrop Island, especially if he plans to carry out his threat to sell Beppin.

If the PCs enter Teardrop Island through the usual legal route, they will have to hire a riverboat (at the rate of 1 koku per passenger) to carry them there during the evening hours (the island shuts down during the day, when the entertainers rest from each night's activities). PCs who insist on visiting during the day will find they are unable to do so – Kado (see below) will politely but firmly turn them away, asking them to return in the evening.

If the PCs have gained the assistance of the eta, they can smuggle themselves onto the island via the small dock on its southern tip, where the eta go to collect garbage and refuse (and the occasional corpse). This can only be done at night – the eta will not dare to try this during the day. By taking this route, the PCs can get onto the island with at least their swords. (The eta will not be able to transport mounts, of course, and they will warn the PCs that it will be a bad idea to try to bring large or heavy weapons such as polearms or bows – these will quickly attract attention.)

The Legal Approach: Swords Polished

The trip to Teardrop Island takes about fifteen minutes. The surface of the river is covered with the bobbing lanterns of other boats carrying guests to and from the licensed quarter, and Teardrop Island itself is a wonderland of colorful lights. Perfume, music, and laughter drift across the surface of the river toward you. You find yourself recalling a story that Teardrop Island is responsible for the life inside a geisha house being named “the Floating World.”

PCs who roll **History/Intelligence** or **Bard/Intelligence** at TN 10, or **Lore: Scorpion Clan/Intelligence** at TN 15, can recall the story of the founding of Teardrop Island. See Appendix #2.

You land on a long wooden pier, alongside many other visitors. A large wooden structure rests at the pier's end, blocking the only access to the Island. The guests all flow into the building, above whose door is a simple sign reading “Swords Polished.”

Inside the building, the PCs will find a wooden counter with a muscular, bare-chested ronin standing behind it: Kado (“Gate”), the owner of Swords Polished. Kado will politely ask the PCs to hand over their weapons for “cleaning and

polishing,” promising to return them “in the most splendid condition” when they leave the island.

This somewhat unusual arrangement allows the various establishments on the Island to avoid the annoyance of asking every visitor to set aside their weapons. Kado will be polite but insistent, and will make no exceptions for rank or position – only Thunder Guards on official business are allowed to enter the Island armed.

Clever PCs may be able to conceal small weapons (such as tantos or tessens), but anything larger will have to be handed over. Kado will also request the PCs leave their armor, since wearing it on the Island would be a great breach of etiquette. He will not, however, demand other non-military items, nor will he trouble shugenja about their scrolls.

If the PCs are foolish enough to pick a fight, they will discover that Kado and his many assistants are quite skilled at unarmed combat, and do not hesitate to subdue the PCs and toss them out of their business (and off the Island). They will not be allowed to return without offering a proper apology.

Once the PCs have handed over their weapons, they will be free to explore the entire Island.

The Secret Approach: The Eta Dock

The trip to Teardrop Island takes twenty nerve-wracking minutes. The surface of the river upstream is covered with the bobbing lanterns of boats carrying guests to and from the licensed quarter, and Teardrop Island itself is a wonderland of colorful lights. Your own simple raft, however, has no lights, and the eta use long bamboo poles to guide to toward the darkened southern tip of the Island, steering well clear of the other vessels. As you approach, perfume, music, and laughter drift across the surface of the river toward you. You find yourself recalling a story that Teardrop Island is responsible for the life inside a geisha house being named “the Floating World.”

The eta finally bring your raft to rest against a small, crude pier, sticking out of a darkened slope. As they begin to load bales of trash onto their raft, one of them turns to you and bows low. “Up the path, honored samurai-sama, and you will be in Licensed Quarter. Please, remember, weapons are not permitted on this island, and you may be

arrested if the Thunder Guards learn what you are doing.”

If any PCs wonder about how they will leave the Island once they find Niku and Beppin, the eta will remark that “I believe that the Island gate only checks for weapons on those arriving, not those departing, samurai-sama.”

As the eta warned, the PCs will not be able to openly parade around the island with weapons and armor – this will soon cause them to be reported to the Thunder Guard. However, if they go without armor and keep their weapons concealed, they should have no difficulty.

The Floating World

You look around at what is literally a small city, bustling with energy. You quickly realize why this island is seen as the true heart of Ryoko Owari. The energy and exuberance here is powerful and intoxicating. Every street is colorfully lit, lined with teahouses, sake venders, gambling dens, and other establishments (many of them no doubt quite disreputable or illegal). Street criers stand before each business, calling out the virtues of their wares and often almost literally dragging customers inside. On the main north-south street of the island, a half-dozen large geisha houses compete for attention, some of them garishly lit while others take a more traditionally restrained approach.

Looking around at this appalling chaos of commerce and entertainment, you wonder how you will find one small girl and her captors.

Teardrop Island is a world apart from the rest of Rokugan. Here, vice is practiced openly and without guilt, so long as it does not overly disrupt the peace. The Thunder Guards have only a small presence on the island, commanded by a stout middle-aged samurai named Bayushi Masato, and they spend most of their time dealing with the frequent small brawls brought on by having many drunken or opium-addled samurai in the same place.

Strict or idealistic samurai will probably find the entirety of Teardrop Island to be an assault on their sense of morals and honor. Of course, they will have to endure it if they want to save Beppin.

Investigations: General Questions and Gossip

The PCs may simply decide to circulate around the island and “ask around” for Niku. Those PCs who take this approach will need to spend at least one koku in drinks and purchases, and roll either **Investigation/Awareness** at TN 15, **Intimidation/Willpower** at TN 10, **Kuenai/Awareness** at TN 10, or **Simple Awareness** at TN 15.

- With a success, the PCs can find a few people who remember sometimes seeing a “low-life thug” who matches Niku’s description. They describe him as part of a group of head-breakers who take on enforcement jobs for some of the less reputable businesses on the island. “You know, samurai-san, the sort of businesses that aren’t legal even here in the licensed quarter.”
- If a PC beats the TN by 10 or more, they find a bartender at a sake house who remembers seeing Niku walk by a few hours ago dragging a pretty young girl.
- If the PCs want to find such “less reputable” businesses themselves, for a few extra silver *bu* they can get directions to various gambling houses, brothels, and other seedy establishments, most of them concentrated on the so-called Street of Lesser Pleasures. See “Investigations: Disreputable Places” below for details of what they can learn there.

Investigations: Geisha Houses

There are several geisha houses on the island, but the two most prominent are the House of Foreign Stories and the House of the Morning Star. These establishments are located at opposite ends of the main street, the so-called “Road of Glory,” and their rivalry is a central facet of life and gossip on the island.

The House of Foreign Stories is owned by a Unicorn family, and specializes in offering geisha born in foreign lands – a highly exotic and controversial variation on a traditional geisha house. The mistress of the house, Magda, is a beautiful woman from a Nordic land far across the sea. She speaks Rokugani well (albeit with an accent) and can be quite charming to those who can overlook her foreign birth. Although her establishment technically requires an invitation for anyone

visiting, Magda will cheerfully issue one herself to any PC who can pay at least 2 koku.

The House of the Morning Star is a traditionalist geisha house with all the classic style and mannerisms, run by a crafty old madam named Hoseki (Jewel). She will be much more strict than Magda about customers following protocol – including the requirement that any visitors have invitations from previous customers. If the PCs have not already secured invitations, they will need to convince Hoseki of the importance of their investigation before she will speak with them.

The other geisha houses are generally traditionalist in their attitudes, although their smaller customer bases mean they cannot afford to be as strict and elitist as the House of the Morning Star.

Regardless of which house the PCs wind up visiting, they can learn the following:

- None of the geisha houses have been visited by a man with a crescent scar asking to sell a girl. However, Hoseki and several of the smaller house madams will recognize the description as matching Niku, a “vile little man” who belongs to gang of thugs on the island. Magda has never seen Niku, but knows there is a small gang of thugs on the island. “This Niku fellow sounds like he would fit right in with them, hmm?”
- If any PCs ask if there are any other places on the island where anyone could sell a girl, some of the geisha will admit (with many contemptuous sniffs) that there are some “low-class” establishments on the island which would purchase a pretty girl.
- If the PCs express an interest in tracking down Niku’s gang, or in locating such “low-class establishments,” the geisha madams will all suggest checking the Street of Lesser Pleasures, located on the southern half of the island. “The less... reputable establishments of the quarter are found on that street, samurai-sama. I am sure someone there will know how to find this gang.” See below (under “Investigations: Disreputable Places”) for details of what the PCs can learn there.
- Magda will be more informative, if the PCs have been friendly, respectful, and spent some money at her establishment. She tells them that

a gambling den called the House of Blessed Ivory often hires the thug gang to break the heads of debtors. “The place is run by a woman, you see, so of course she finds it difficult to enforce her own debts.”

Investigations: Disreputable Places

Some PCs (especially Scorpions, Crabs, and ronin) may decide on their own to seek out the less proper businesses on Teardrop Island, such as gambling dens, opium houses, brothels, and so forth. Other PCs may seek them out after speaking with others on the island, such as the geisha madams. Either way, asking around among these establishments (most of which are concentrated on the Street of Lesser Pleasures) will require wading through many repellant offers to “try your luck,” “chase the Dragon,” and so forth.

To get any fruitful results in these dens of iniquity, the PCs will have to either spend at least 2 koku in gambling/purchases, or role-play appropriately to earn a **Kuenai/Awareness** or **Intimidation/Willpower** roll at TN 10, or **Simple Awareness** or **Simple Willpower** at TN 15.

- Niku is fairly well-known in some of these establishments. He is a frequent drinker and gambler, although he avoids the temptations of opium. He is described as belonging to a gang of thugs known as the Bitter Dragons.
- The Bitter Dragons are also well-known, and anyone asking around about gangs or thugs will soon hear about them. They are a collection of low-lives who take advantage of Teardrop Island’s prohibition on weapons. Their name comes from their habit of tattooing images of a vomiting dragon onto their bodies. Niku is a fairly new recruit and hasn’t gotten a tattoo yet.
- If the PCs ask anyone in this district where to find Niku or the Bitter Dragons, they will be directed to the House of Blessed Ivory. “Run by an old hag named Hishoko. She hires them to break heads for her sometimes.”
- If the PCs mention a girl, or the possibility of Niku trying to sell a girl, some people will remember seeing Niku the previous evening, dragging a pretty girl around. “Very pretty, looked like the type you’d sell to a geisha house.” If the PCs point out that the geisha

houses have denied seeing the girl, their informants are surprised, and wonder aloud what Niku was doing with the girl.

- If the PCs ask about other places which would buy a girl, they will be sent on the rounds of various brothels, as well as opium parlors and gambling dens which offer women “on the side.” A few of these places remember a visit from Niku and a girl, but they were not interested in buying her. “A girl that young, no use to me. Besides, she was too pretty, the customers would remember her. Can’t have that.”
- If any PC asks anyone in this district whether there is any other place where a girl could be sold, the answer will be “no”... but have the PC roll **Simple Awareness** at TN 10. With a success, the PC senses that something is being left unsaid. Pressured, their informant will eventually break down: “I have heard... rumors, samurai-sama. Of a secret house on the island, a place down by the riverbank, a place where you can have anything you want. You understand, samurai-sama? *Anything*. They say it’s called the House of the Plum Blossom.”
- To get directions to the House of the Plum Blossom, the PCs will have to be persistent: most of those who claim to know where it is are lying, and those who do know are frightened about telling the wrong person. In total the PCs will have to spend another 3 koku in purchases and bribes, and make a **Sincerity/Awareness** or **Intimidation/ Willpower** roll at TN 15 (or **Simple Awareness** or **Simple Willpower** at TN 20) to get accurate directions. Their informant will warn them anxiously: “Don’t tell them who sent you, and don’t make them angry. Folk who mess with the Plum Blossom, they don’t come back.”

The House of Blessed Ivory

A large gambling den located in a two-story building in the back half of the Street of Lesser Pleasures, near the riverfront wall. The proprietor, an ugly, pot-bellied, seedy-looking commoner woman named Hishoko, lives upstairs, but spends most of her time on the main floor watching her customers and counting her koku. The actual gambling tables are run by her three equally ugly and seedy daughters. The servants in the house, on the other hand, are pretty girls who serve as

companions to the gamblers as well as serving them sake, food, and opium.

Hishoko will be very nervous if the PCs come in and start asking questions, and starts querulously demanding that they go away and stop bothering her customers. “I pay my licensing fees and my taxes, samurai, just ask the magistrate! What do you want, now? You’re spoiling the luck of the tables!”

The PCs can gain Hishoko’s cooperation by one of three methods: they can threaten and frighten her (**Intimidation/Willpower** at TN 10, or win a **Contested Willpower** roll), they can bribe her (2 koku will do the trick), or they can flatter or charm her (**Sincerity/Awareness** or **Seduction/Awareness** at TN 15). Any of these results can extract the following information from her:

- The gang works for her often, tracking down and beating up customers who fail to pay their debts. In return, she provides them with a flophouse a few blocks away, on the riverfront. She can give the PCs directions to the flophouse.
- She doesn’t think well of Niku and his friends. “They want too much, think too highly of themselves. The Bitter Dragons’ll probably throw them out soon, and then Niku will have to slink back down whatever hole he crawled out of.”
- If the PCs mention why they are here, or that Niku is trying to sell a girl, Hishoko will reluctantly admit that he did bring a pretty girl here, hoping to sell her. “I don’t need a new girl right now. Besides, she was too pretty.” She will be quite alarmed to realize the girl was of samurai blood. “Phew! Daikoku be praised I didn’t buy her, then!”
- Hishoko knows about the House of the Plum Blossom, and where it can be found. If the PCs ask her about where else a girl could be sold, her reaction will be the same as that of others who know where the Plum Blossom is located.

The Bitter Dragons’ Flophouse

Fumbling around in the narrow, smelly back-alleys of Teardrop Island, you finally locate the place Hishoko described. It is a narrow, decrepit three-story building which seems to be home to several dozen residents. Some muscular-looking men in commoner garb are lounging near the two

entrances, and eye you as you approach. Scrawled across the wall behind them, visible in the light from several cheap lanterns, is a huge picture of a dragon vomiting up a ball of vile green stuff.

The thugs will be surly and defiant, but not openly violent, and will back down quickly if the PCs display weapons or magical power. If the PCs are unarmed and peaceable, the thugs will be much more aggressive and insulting, but will not initiate violence unless they think they have a chance to quickly win and steal a lot of money.

Smart PCs will negotiate. There are over fifteen thugs, and battle will soon draw the attention of the Thunder Guard, who will arrest everyone and throw the PCs off the island for brawling.

If any PCs think to ask, none of the thugs here resemble any Water-spirit images the PCs may have seen of Niku's attack on Kakita Yomiko.

If the PCs do negotiate, the thugs will eventually summon out their boss, a hulking shaven-headed brute with a surprisingly cunning mind beneath the muscle: Gojita. He will be willing to tell the PCs a great deal, for the right price.

A bribe of at least two koku will work. Clever PCs can also use intimidation tactics (especially if they brought weapons) or other negotiating techniques. The GM should reward any good role-playing approach. Regardless of what the PCs do to gain his cooperation, Gojita can share the following:

- Niku and a few of his friends joined the gang a few months ago. Gojita never completely trusted them – they were too angry and ambitious. Still, he needed a few more men, so he let them join up. Since they were eta, he made them stay in the Leatherworkers' Quarter when they weren't working for him. "We have our standards, you know."
- He knows that Niku left the city two days ago, ostensibly for a family funeral, then came back that night and got his friends. They all returned again last night, and Niku had a girl with him. He spent the evening trying to sell her, but had no luck.
- Gojita knows that Niku took Beppin to the House of the Plum Blossom, but he will be uneasy about sharing this information with the PCs. They will have to role-play well to get

him to open up. "That place... listen, samurai, just the rumors I've heard about it are enough to make me lose sleep. If Niku really took the girl there, it may already be too late to rescue her."

- Gojita can give the PCs directions to the House of the Plum Blossom for a bribe of one koku.

Fighting on Teardrop Island

If the PCs get into a fight on Teardrop Island (for whatever reason), it will take about five minutes for a squad of the Thunder Guard to arrive. The ten bushi will trot up, weapons in hand, and issue the following command:

"Halt! By order of Governor Hyobu you are under arrest for civil disorder against the safety, peace and well-being of Ryoko Owari."

If the PCs surrender and have no weapons, the guards will simply politely escort them off the Island with orders not to return for one week. If the PCs have weapons, the guards will attempt to arrest them and take them to the jail in the Civic Hall, there to await the judgment of the magistrate and Governor.

If the PCs resist arrest, the guards will attempt to subdue them and beat them to a pulp before removing them from the island. If the PCs resist with weapons, the guards will be far more ruthless and simply try to kill them, arresting any survivors.

If the Thunder Guard intervene in a situation where the PCs are battling villains (such as the proprietors of the Plum Blossom), they will be more understanding, but will still require the PCs to submit to nominal arrest until the Governor can review their situation.

Scene Seven: The House of the Plum Blossom

The establishments of Teardrop Island exist to cater to the needs and desires of samurai. Most of these desires are relatively benign – drink, opium, pleasant conversation, a woman's soothing touch. But there are darker desires as well, and the House of the Plum Blossom exists to cater to those. It is a secret den of cruelty, debauchery, and sadistic

violence, a place which not even the Scorpion would tolerate... if they knew it existed.

And it is here, to this den of evil, that Niku has brought the innocent young Beppin.

If the PCs track down the House of the Plum Blossom, there are basically three approaches they can take: diplomacy, stealth, or attack. Furthermore, an attack can either be launched alone, or with the support of the Thunder Guard (who will be happy to dispatch a few squads to destroy such a den of horror, once they are informed of it).

The House Inside and Outside

The House of the Plum Blossom is not marked by any sign or lantern. It is simply a squat, dark, two-story building, tucked into the far corner of an alleyway, one side abutting the waterside wall which surrounds Teardrop Island. The windows are all boarded up, and the only entrances are two heavy oak doors, one onto the alleyway, the other into a narrow, filthy back street barely wide enough for one man. There is also a secret tunnel which leads down out of the building to a hidden boat on the riverside – a bolt-hole for the sinister mistress of the Plum Blossom.

A PC who can make it onto the peaked clay-tile roof of the House will find several chimneys (much too narrow to use for access), but also a trapdoor which leads into the eaves of the building (another bolt-hole). From there, another trapdoor leads to the second floor.

Inside the House, there are two floors and a basement. All three levels are elaborately furnished and decorated, resembling some dark, twisted fantasy of unspeakable luxury and wealth. There are no doors in the Plum Blossom, only silk curtains to separate one room from the next, and the sounds and smells from one room quickly spread elsewhere.

The second floor is primarily individual rooms where guests can stay and “entertain” themselves with the (mostly helpless and unwilling) staff of the Plum Blossom. This is where Niku and his three friends are currently staying, spending the money they made from Beppin’s sale.

The first floor likewise has many “entertainment rooms,” but it also contains quarters for the willing inhabitants of the Plum Blossom: Mistress Saiyuki,

her personal servants, Ganzuburo the bouncer, and the six other thugs and torturers who reside here. There is also a kitchen, a well-stocked pantry, and a small library (holding many foul and forbidden books).

The basement is where most of the “staff” of the Plum Blossom lives, held in locked iron cells (Saiyuki keeps the keys in her private quarters). There is also an extensively equipped torture chamber, used both for “breaking in” new arrivals and for the entertainment of certain guests. We will draw a curtain of gaming ethics over the full horror of what can be found in this place. Beppin is currently held in one of the cells, waiting in terror for her “training” to begin.

The Diplomatic Approach

Some PCs may decide to simply approach the building as customers, or perhaps try to negotiate for the return of Beppin. If anyone knocks at either the front or rear door, a narrow wooden viewing slot with slide open, and a pair of beady eyes look out. “What do you want?”

PCs who give the name “Plum Blossom” in their answer will be admitted through the front door (or directed to it, if they were at the back door). Anything else will cause the view-slit to snap shut, and such PCs will never be admitted to the house.

Inside, you see that the door-guard is a monstrously fat man, dressed only in a peasant’s loincloth, with a short, thick club dangling from his wrist by a short length of rope. He glowers at you ominously but shuffles aside, allowing you to walk down a short hallway and through a heavy silk curtain.

The huge man is Ganzuburo, a eunuch and the bouncer of the Plum Blossom. He will take no action against customers, but will act swiftly and decisively against anyone who troubles his mistress. The house thugs will quickly come to his support, arriving in 1 to 4 rounds.

On the far side of the curtain is a large room, lit by many colored lanterns, the air heavy with the thick scents of incense, perfume, and opium... and with an undercurrent that might be blood. Cushions are heaped along the walls, surrounding a low polished table of dark wood. Exotic carpets from the Burning Sands cover the floors, and beautiful silk-screen paintings hang on the walls – but the

topics of those paintings would shame the crudest Crab or the most debased Scorpion. Music drifts into the room from several other curtained doorways, and with the music comes distant sounds – whispered voices, moans, choked cries of passion and of pain.

A young serving girl glides into the room on soundless feet. Her kimono clings tightly to her frame, revealing more than it conceals, but her face is covered in a tight-fitting black mask which appears to be of leather and has only small slits for her eyes. She lays a tray on the table, on which you see a steaming tea-pot, freshly heated sake bottles, several lit opium pipes, and a plate of candies and rice-cakes. She departs as soundlessly as she arrived.

The girl is not Beppin (she is fourteen, Beppin is twelve). If anyone stops her and tries to look under her mask, she will struggle, making soft protesting noises. A PC who persists in pulling off the mask (it is tied firmly in place with leather cords) will discover a very beautiful girl whose tongue has been cut out. Saiyuki will probably arrive at that point, if she hasn't already. "The child... had to be taught a lesson. A pity, she had a lovely voice, like a bird."

The food and drink are safe, and of excellent quality. The opium is likewise excellent. Anyone foolish enough to sample it must, of course, make a **Simple Earth** roll at TN 5 to avoid addiction.

Saiyuki, the mistress of the Plum Blossom, will glide into the room soon after the PCs arrive. She is a shockingly beautiful woman dressed in a garment which is an open mockery of the modesty of a normal kimono. She wears a feathered mask which conceals only her eyes, leaving her lovely features and red lips plain to see. Her hair is worn long and unbound, a sleek shimmering black tail which trails nearly to the floor. Her arms are bare from the shoulder, and her nails are long and painted blood-red.

Saiyuki is a woman of dark tastes and mysterious past, and she will never reveal any of her true self to her customers, preferring to tease, imply, and hint. An accomplished seductress, she is a master of giving people what they want, no matter what that might be. She will quickly see into the PCs' hearts, discovering all their darkest desires and deepest unspoken needs... and offering to fulfill them.

If the PCs can avoid falling prey to the forbidden pleasures which Saiyuki offers, they can ask her about Beppin and Niku. "Ah yes, the lovely young child. Yes, I bought her from that pathetic little man. He is upstairs now, spending his money."

Saiyuki will not willingly hand over Beppin, and if the PCs try to threaten her she will threaten them right back, summoning Ganzuburo with a snap of her fingers, dropping dark hints of hidden abilities, and generally being as intimidating as possible (while still being incredibly seductive). She has not survived this long by letting her customers push her around.

Smart PCs will offer to buy Beppin off her instead. Saiyuki will make a great show of reluctance ("such a lovely young girl, one seldom sees such a perfect specimen, many of my customers will be quite eager to see her"), but PCs who offer enough money will be able to overcome her. She paid 10 koku for Beppin – anyone who offers the same or a greater amount will be successful.

Saiyuki makes a lazy gesture, summoning the black-masked serving girl. After a whispered conversation, the servant departs. She returns a few minutes later, leading a young girl in a tattered eta's kimono. The poor girl is quite beautiful, even at her age, and you can clearly see her resemblance to Kakita Yomiko.

Once Beppin understands the situation, she will fling herself into the PCs' arms, weeping with relief. Saiyuki allows the PCs to leave, while still offering dark delights and urging them to return if they ever change their minds. If the PCs ask about Niku, she will throw in the villainous eta for a mere one koku more ("I usually try to protect my customers, but who will miss an eta?"). Ganzuburo and his thugs will wrestle the four drunk, opium-addled eta out of the House, leaving the PCs free to deal with them.

The Stealth Approach

PCs who wish to infiltrate the House of the Plum Blossom will most likely need to sneak in through the roof trapdoor – the massive bouncer Ganzuburo guards the front door, and a pair of house thugs watches the back door.

Getting to the roof will require either appropriate magic (*Wings of Fire*, *Call Upon the Wind*, etc) or an **Athletics/Agility** roll at TN 15. A PC who has

access to climbing equipment (grapple and rope, climbing claws, etc) need only roll TN 5.

Moving around undetected inside the House of the Plum Blossom will require **Stealth/Agility** rolls at TN 10 – one roll to get in, one to explore each floor of the House (there are three, counting the basement), and one to leave. Beppin does not have Stealth and a PC who tries to remain silent while carrying her out must add +5 to the TN of each roll.

Ultimately, the GM will have to adjudicate any PC's efforts to sneak around inside the House of the Plum Blossom or to rescue Beppin covertly. Clever use of magic may be very helpful in this regard.

The Violent Approach

If the PCs simply assault the House of the Plum Blossom, they must decide whether to do so on their own or in cooperation with the Thunder Guard. If the PCs can bring credible information on the Plum Blossom to the Guard, they will be more than willing to help, sending two full squads to assault the den of horror.

An assault with the Thunder Guard will not require die-rolls – the Guards swiftly overwhelm the defenders, and manage to arrest several customers. Saiyuki will escape through her underground bolt-hole unless the PCs are specifically watching the river (in which case they can try to intercept and slay her). Beppin will be retrieved unhurt from the basement.

PCs who attack alone will immediately be facing either two thugs (if they go in through the back door) or Ganzuburo (if they come in the front). There are a total of six thugs in the House, the rest of whom will all join the fight in 1 to 4 rounds. The customers (mostly samurai) will generally try to flee the place, hoping to escape in the confusion and protect their reputations. Niku and his three eta thug buddies, however, will fight until half of them are down, then try to flee.

Saiyuki will normally hang back, and retreats to one of her bolt-holes – the ceiling or the basement – as soon as things look too grim. She takes an iron lockbox with most of her wealth, along with the black-masked serving girl.

If the PCs launch an attack after entering the House as customers, they can get into a fight with Saiyuki.

Her skills are considerable, but she will always try to retreat and escape given the chance.

Regardless, Beppin will be unhurt and can be rescued from the basement if the PCs triumph. If the PCs lose the fight, any survivors can look forward to a lingering and horrible death in the basement.

Conclusion

If the PCs rescue Beppin, by whatever means, they have fulfilled their duty to Kakita Yomiko. Although Beppin is shaken by her ordeal, she shows the true poise of a Crane afterward as she bows to the PCs and thanks them properly for rescuing her.

If the House of the Plum Blossom has been destroyed, either by the PCs alone or by the Thunder Guard, the PCs have the gratitude of Governor Shosuro Hyobu for eliminating a blight on her city. The governor, a middle-aged woman, meets with the PCs privately, managing the feat of thanking them while still being slightly menacing. (“I trust you understand the need for discretion in this matter, samurai-san. Such crimes are too ghastly to be allowed to disturb the peace of the general populace.”)

If the PCs were arrested (for fighting or possession of weapons), they will have to wait a couple of days before the Governor hears their case. She will express sympathy while still reminding them that they broke the law. *“I understand the duty charged to you by the unfortunate Kakita Yomiko compelled you to take the actions you did. I must commend you for your sense of duty. However, you still have violated the laws of Ryoko Owari.”*

If the PCs were arrested before they could rescue Beppin, the Governor will promise to scour the city for the poor girl. However, unless the PCs can point her at the House of the Plum Blossom, no sign of Beppin will ever be found.

If the PCs were arrested after their rescue of Beppin, the Governor arranges for the Crane girl to be shipped back to the lands of her Clan.

Regardless, the Governor will offer the PCs an “out” from the consequences of their crime:

“I am not completely without sympathy for the position you found yourself in. Perhaps had I not been so occupied with my own duties, I could have

offered you aid in this rescue effort. You may have noticed the troubles in this city recently. My family is facing some difficult times, and if you were willing to aid us in future, perhaps I might... overlook this transgression of yours."

If the PCs accept the offer, they are free to go, but gain an **Obligation** to the Shosuro family. If they refuse, they are punished for their crimes. If their only crime was fighting/brawling, carrying weapons, or other such minor acts, the punishment is limited to a few days of public cuffing (lose 5 points of Glory). However, if the PCs assaulted any of the Thunder Guard with weapons or spells, they are sentenced to death.

Rewards for Completing the Adventure

At the end of the scenario, any PCs with Shadowlands Taint must make a Simple Earth roll with a TN of 5 + (5 x Taint Rank). If the roll is failed, the PC acquires one additional point of Taint.

Experience Points

Playing through the adventure:	2 XP
Good role-playing:	+1 XP
PCs rescue Beppin:	+1 XP

Total Possible Experience: 4 XP

Honor

PCs who value Compassion gain +1 Honor for rescuing Miko the eta girl.

All PCs who successfully rescue Beppin gain +1 Honor.

PCs who smuggle weapons onto Teardrop Island lose 1 point of Honor for willingly violating the law.

Any PC who is tempted, even for a moment, by the degenerate pleasures offered at the House of the Plum Blossom loses 3 points of Honor. A PC who actually indulges in any such foul appetites loses a full Rank of Honor.

Glory

If the PCs rescue Beppin, Otomo Hatsuyo writes them into his next poem (though without mentioning the more sordid details of the House

of the Plum Blossom), earning each of them +2 Glory.

PCs caught with weapons on Teardrop Island lose 1 point of Glory. If they are actually cuffed/imprisoned for their crime, they lose another 5 points of Glory.

Other Awards/Penalties

PCs who successfully rescue Beppin gain a **Favor** with the Kakita Family.

PCs who help Bayushi Namomo fight the Goju, and convince him of their genuine desire to join the struggle against the Shadow, gain the cert "Invitation to join the Crystal Tears Dojo."

PCs who take Governor Hyobu's "out" to avoid punishment will gain an **Obligation** to the Shosuro family.

If a PC fails any of the Earth checks for Opium exposure, that PC gains **Chemical Dependency: Opium**. The PC needs to feed this opium dependency at regular intervals (at least once a day) or suffer a -1 die penalty to all rolls.

PCs who earn the trust of Bayushi Namoro gain the cert for membership in the Crystal Tears Dojo.

Appendix #1: NPCs and Villains

Goju, faceless servants of Shadow

FIRE 2	AIR 2
EARTH 2	WATER 2
VOID 2	

TN to be Hit: 20

Attacks: 3k2

Damage: Ninja-to (3k2), Shuriken (2k1), or Garrote (2k2). Damage listed includes Strength.

Skills: Stealth 4

Wounds: 24: Dead.

Special Abilities: Shadow Invulnerability (take double damage from crystal attacks and half damage from all other attacks). They can “Shadow-walk” and move instantaneously between any two shadows within 100 feet.

Generic Thunder Guards

FIRE 3	AIR 3
EARTH 2	WATER 2
VOID 2	

TN to be Hit: 20 (15 without Light Armor)

School/Rank: Bayushi Bushi 1

Honor/Glory: 1.5/1.0

Skills: Archery 4, Courtier 1, Defense 2, Iaijutsu 4, Kenjutsu 5, Poison 1, Sincerity 4, Stealth 2, and Yarijutsu 2.

Advantages/Disadvantages: None

Equipment: Light armor, daisho set, yari.

Kado (Gate), Master of Swords Polished

FIRE 3 Agility 4	AIR 3 Reflexes 4
EARTH 3	WATER 3 Strength 4
VOID 3	

TN to be Hit: 20

School/Rank: Akodo Bushi 3 (Clan ronin)

Honor/Glory: 3.5/0

Skills: Athletics 5, Battle 3, Etiquette 3, Iaijutsu 3, Jiu-jutsu 8, Kenjutsu 5, Law 4, Sincerity 5, Wrestling 4.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Social disadvantage (ronin)

Equipment: Clothing, sandals.

Swords Polished Guards

FIRE 2 Agility 3	AIR 2 Reflexes 3
EARTH 2	WATER 2 Strength 3
VOID 2	

TN to be Hit: 15

School/Rank: None (ronin)

Honor/Glory: 2.5/0

Skills: Athletics 3, Etiquette 2, Jiu-jutsu 4, Kenjutsu 3, Law 2, Sincerity 3, Wrestling 3.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Social Disadvantage (ronin)

Equipment: Clothing, sandals.

Generic Thugs (Bitter Dragons , Niku, and Niku's eta Buddies)

FIRE 1 Agility 2	AIR 1 Reflexes 2
EARTH 2	WATER 2
VOID 1	

TN to be Hit: 10

School/Rank: None

Honor/Glory: 0.3/0

Skills: Athletics 2, Intimidation 2, Jiu-jutsu 2, Tonfajutsu 3.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Social Disadvantage (commoner/eta), Bad Reputation (criminal thug).

Equipment: Clothing, tonfa (0k2).

Ganzuburo, eunuch bouncer of the House of the Plum Blossom

FIRE 1 Agility 3	AIR 2 Reflexes 3
EARTH 4	WATER 2 Strength 4
VOID 1	

TN to be Hit: 15

School/Rank: None

Honor/Glory: 0/0

Skills: Athletics 3, Club 4, Hand-to-Hand 3, Wrestling 3.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Large, Strength of the Earth (rank one)/Social Disadvantage (commoner), Dark Secret (House of the Plum Blossom).

Equipment: Loincloth, weighted club (1k2).

Honor/Glory: 0/0

Skills: Athletics 2, Intimidation 2, Jujutsu 3, Knife 3, Wrestling 3.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Social Disadvantage (commoner), Dark Secret (House of the Plum Blossom).

Equipment: Clothing, knife (2k1).

Saiyuki, Cruel Mistress of the House of the Plum Blossom

FIRE 3 Intelligence 4	AIR 4 Awareness 5
EARTH 3	WATER 2 Perception 4
VOID 3	

TN to be Hit: 20

School/Rank: Bayushi Courtier 2 (Clan ronin)

Honor/Glory: 0/0

Skills: Acting, Athletics, Calligraphy, Commerce, Courtier, Defense, Etiquette, Hand-to-Hand, Intimidation, Investigation, Law, Research, Seduction, Sleight-of-Hand, Stealth, Tanto, Torture, Wrestling,

Advantages/Disadvantages: Crafty, Dangerous Beauty, Quick, Servants (Plum Blossom staff), Voice/Cruel, Dark Secret (to say the least!), Social Disadvantage (Clan ronin).

Equipment: Exquisite kimono and mask, tanto (2k1).

Special: Saiyuki's long fingernails are sharpened to points and coated in paralytic venom. If she hits with them (Hand-to-Hand attack), she does 2k1 damage, and the first two targets hit must roll Simple Earth at TN 10 or be paralyzed for 1d10 minutes. (After two hits, the venom has worn off her nails.) Those who succeed in resisting the venom are still at -1 die to all actions for the same length of time.

Thugs from the House of the Plum Blossom

FIRE 1 Agility 2	AIR 1 Reflexes 2
EARTH 2	WATER 2
VOID 1	

TN to be Hit: 10

School/Rank: None

Appendix 2: Stories of Ryoko Owari

The “Green Walls” of Ryoko Owari

The former walls of Ryoko Owari, made of green limestone, were assaulted and breached by the Lion Clan in the reign of Hantei the 20th. The Lion held the city for only a week, but they razed much of it to the ground, including most of the walls (only the walls around the Dragon’s Gate survived, because the Lion commander said it would be a sin to destroy something so beautiful). The Scorpion rebuilt the walls, much higher and thicker than before, with the black granite which stands there today.

The Bridge of the Moment’s Edge

The oldest bridge in the city, a plain, unadorned structure. The bridge derives its name from a famous duel, during the reign of Hantei the 16th, between shugenja swordsmith Togashi Nyoko and bushi Hida Raiden. Raiden had mocked Nyoko for trying to be a swordsmith, a shugenja, and a samurai-ko at the same time. Nyoko offered to show him that all three were the same by dueling him to the death. Raiden accepted, confident that a man who had studied the sword could easily defeat a woman who had split her attentions three ways. When the duel occurred at dawn, Raiden was instantly struck with a fatal blow, and gasped, “Impossible! No one alive is that fast!”

Nyoko replied: “I am alive and dead, dead to the past and dead to the future, because I live at the moment’s edge.” When she saw comprehension in Raiden’s eyes, she took his head.

In later years, a pair of bitter enemies from within the Scorpion Clan also met on the bridge for a duel, but did so in the midst of a thunderstorm. A bolt of lightning struck the center of the bridge and knocked both of them into the water, where they drowned. Their bodies were found still locked in each others’ grip, having drowned to death while still fighting.

The Bridge of Drunken Lovers

Built by the ninth governor of Ryoko Owari during the reign of Hantei the 15th, and designed by the famous architect Kenchikuka. Originally it was called the Magnificent Bridge because of its width and splendid decorations. The name was changed to honor the story of Riko and Okami, a legendary pair of lovers whose adventures and exploits form the basis of scores of folk-tales and legends in Ryoko Owari. Supposedly, the two were married when their fathers tricked them both into a drunken encounter on the bridge, where they were so fuddled by drink that they kissed in full view of everyone.

The Bridge of the Dragon

A spectacular structure which resembles a giant dragon stretching its body across the river, this bridge was also planned and built by the ninth governor of Ryoko Owari, who hoped it would encourage merchants to build on the west side of the river. At first this did occur, but then the west bank of the river became a den of depraved (but highly sought) vices. Eventually the neighborhood was razed during the brief Lion occupation of the city, and the next Scorpion governor passed a law relocating the more shameful industries to Teardrop Island. The district which the Lion had destroyed became the Leatherworkers’ Quarter, with the result that the spectacular Bridge of the Dragon is now the least-used bridge in the city.

The Gate of Oni’s Teeth

This gate was originally fairly small, but was rebuilt and expanded to handle increased traffic. It was renamed to honor the lovers Riko and Okami, who managed to trick an owl-like oni (Oni no Hukuro) that was terrorizing the city. Okami was tricked by the demon and trapped in the Greta Lunar Cave, but his wife Riko disguised herself as Okami and challenged the oni. It demanded that Riko shatter a giant boulder in one night. She set a huge bonfire under the stone all night and dug a trench to allow cold river water to flow onto the hot stone, shattering it. Having lost the challenge, the oni was forced to free Okami from the cave, and once free Okami promptly slew the demon. The lovers returned to the city, bringing the oni’s teeth with them and setting them in the road so they could be stepped on by everyone that entered the city.