

Fires on the Sea

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**A [Mid]-Rank Adventure for
Heroes of Rokugan: Champions of the Ivory Throne**

Month of Akodo, 1342 (Summer)

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Investigation, Combat

An investigation into missing magistrates reveals more questions than answers.

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This module is written for the Legends of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game Fourth Edition, originally published by Alderac Entertainment Group.

Please refer to the *Heroes of Rokugan 4: Champions of the Ivory Throne Campaign Primer* for information on how to run official campaign modules. In addition to the basic setting information and house rules for this campaign, it details the various administrative necessities of the living campaign. GM reporting is crucial to players' ability to engage with the setting and to increase their characters' influence.

Adventure Background and Summary

A brief description of the background elements that lead to the events of the module goes here. A few relevant comments on the history of important people, or groups of people such as clans, may be important to set the context for the GM. Likewise, a mention of the primary locations to establish where the PCs will be going is helpful (though, of course, full descriptions should be located in those sections of the adventure where the characters actually go to those places).

From there, a rough description of what sort of events or circumstances bring the PCs together should be included. Most modules begin with the conceit that any given PC, as a samurai under the authority of their superiors, has been sent to further the interests of their lord (or potentially family or clan), though other motivations may be appropriate. In general, either some NPC will have a task to perform or the PCs are in a public venue and tasked with representing their groups as appropriate to the occasion.

The next major data point is a brief discussion of the projected events of the module. If there are a large number of different choices available to the PCs, it will necessarily require the summary to be more vague, but providing a mention of the key scenes for the module will give the GM an idea of what will be the most important situations to focus on. This can help with pacing, and will ensure that the GM will have them in mind as they run the players through the establishing scenes.

A thumbnail description of the climax may be useful as a conclusion to the summary, again, simply to stress to the GM what the module will be building toward. Specifying the primary choice or challenge the PCs must face by the end will help the GM set the proper tone through the entirety of the slot.

Upkeep

The events of the modules are certainly of primary importance in the lives of the characters, but many of them will have been working on a variety of tasks in the times between modules. At the beginning of the module, several things will need to take place (though some are obviously dependent on the actual needs of the PCs at the table).

Character Notes

The GM should take a few minutes to examine the players' character sheets in order to have an idea of the nature of the PCs at the table. It is frequently helpful to have a list of specific mechanics that come up in the course of the module determined at the start of the module so the GM does not have to slow down play to check and see which parts apply to which PC. These can be Advantages, Disadvantages, Schools, Skills, or any other particularly relevant mechanics.

- The Spider's Mark

News from the Empire

While the GM is looking over sheets, it's a good time to distribute the first player handout of most modules. The News of the Empire is an overview of the recent events of the Empire in a fashion that shares the ongoing story with the playerbase without requiring a Skill Roll or interfering with the actual plot of the module. Any plot-relevant Rumors will belong in the appropriate section of the module to be learned during play.

Inactivity

Time passes, and though the PCs' deeds will earn them a reputation, the Empire is a large place and lasting fame is a long-term goal not easy to achieve. At the start of the module, the PCs lose 2 points of Glory. This cannot reduce a PC's Glory Rank to less than their Insight Rank, and the Fame Advantage increases their Insight Rank by one for these purposes.

Taint Progression

If a PC possesses the Shadowlands Taint, they will need to roll at the beginning of the module to see how much it has grown over the intervening time since the last module. The TN of this raw **Earth Roll** is 10+(Taint Rank*5). Failure on this roll causes the PC to gain a point of the Shadowlands Taint. If a character is growing close to being Lost (Shadowlands Taint Rank 4.5+) , it is recommended that the player have another PC ready to replace them.

Crafting

The Crafting rules are detailed in the Campaign Primer, based largely on the Crafting rules in the core book (page 258). Unless explicitly indicated otherwise, a PC may only make one Crafting Roll per module, and any Void Points or other character resources (spell slots, Luck, etc) spent on the roll do not refresh for the duration of the module. Any successful roll is noted on the provided sheet with the description.

Preparation Techniques

Techniques like the Agasha Shugenja or Yogo Wards do not quite fall under Crafting, but still can benefit from pre-planning and the Upkeep is a good opportunity. However, unlike Crafting, this is not the only time these Techniques may be used during a module – this is just a chance for the GM to remind the players and get it out of the way.

Ronin Survival

Life is difficult for ronin in the Empire at the best of times. PC ronin are no exception to this. At the start of the module, a PC ronin must roll **Hunting (Survival) / Stamina** at a TN of 25. Failure on this roll gives the ronin the Permanent Wound Disadvantage for the duration of the module. Koku may be spent on this roll to gain a Free Raise for every koku spent before the roll is made, or one Free Raise for every two koku spent after the roll is made.

Experience Expenditure

Finally, the players should be given one last chance to spend any experience they wish before the module begins. Unless the module specifically allows it, experience may not be spent during the adventure.

Introduction

The PCs have been gathered together at the main castle of Earthquake Fish Bay, by the request of Bayushi Tenno, Senior Emerald Magistrate. Any PC that has played a module that includes Tenno (Winter Court: Shiro Ide, The Balance Shifts, or Bleak Portents) receives a personal request from Tenno, even if they have him as a sworn enemy. If for some reason, a PC has not played one of those mods before this one, Tenno entreated their lord who sent them.

Servants lead you into a large tea room in the center of the castle. Already sitting there are two samurai: the first is an impressively handsome Scorpion man, already enjoying a hot cup of tea as you enter. Resting on the wall behind him is a rather ornate cane, and it is

striking how much he uses his left hand as he reaches to start pouring tea as you sit. Sitting next to him is a young, pretty woman, her mons indicating her as a member of the Daidoji Trading Council.

“Ah, my friends,” Tenno smiles as he offers you a seat. “Please, join us. And be introduced to Daidoji Kierisan, of the Daidoji Trading Council.”

Kieri offers you all a bow, standing to do so where Tenno remained seated. “It is my pleasure to meet you, Samurai-sans. Please, sit and enjoy the hospitality that the Yasuki have so graciously offered us.

Servants enter soon after the PCs and begin setting out more cups and food as necessary to ensure that there is enough for everyone. Bayushi Tenno is fairly quiet, but will answer questions to be polite and asks vague questions about how PCs have been. Kieri will be more cheerful and sociable, immediately recognizing any PC with a glory of 4 or higher.

Given the grave nature of the matter, Bayushi Tenno will keep up the charade until the very moment that it is politely allowed to drop it.

As the last sip of tea is finished, before servants can even arrive to start cleaning off the table, Tenno takes a pausing breath and begins to speak. “Samurai-sans, a few months ago, an agreement was made between four clans. With tensions between the Crab and the Mantis rising these last few months, War has seemed as something of an inevitability. The Crane,” he pauses to nod to Kieri, who gives a bright smile as he does, “have ever sought to assist their allies in the avoidance of such if it is at all possible. As such, they made an arrangement with the Dragon: they would supply ships and crew to allow Kitsuki Magistrates to investigate the reports of ships going missing in Mantis lands.”

Tenno takes a heavy breath. “They left two months ago, and were supposed to return to Ootosan Uchi two months ago. As you might imagine, their disappearance has only exacerbated the issue. The Crab have claimed that the Mantis sank the ship to hide evidence of wrong-doing, while the Mantis are claiming that the Crab have done the same to implicate them further in these disputes.

“I am, of course, wholly disinterested in who is right. But the fact remains that unrelated Samurai have become potential victims in this dispute, which has caught the attention of Makibesu-dono. Because of this, I have been asked to commission a ship to follow their route, find out what happened to them, and report

my findings. Unfortunately,” he turned his head, indicating the cane behind him. “I am not particularly sea-worthy. As such, I look to friends and trusted confidants for assistance. You Samurai will act as my Yoriki in this matter, and will follow the same route that they did as we seek an answer to this most pressing riddle.”

At this point, Tenno will pause and allow PCs to ask any questions that they might have:

What is the name of the Ship we are searching for?

At this point, Kieri will speak up - *“Exceptional question, Samurai-sans,”* Her voice is musical as she speaks. *“The name of the ship is the Crystal Blossom. It’s Captain, Daidoji Masayori, was a good friend of mine, and an effective Captain. If something did happen to him, I would greatly hope to know what.”*

If a PC is (for some reason) wary of Kieri’s intentions, they may roll Investigation (Interrogation) / Awareness at TN 45. With a success, they realize that her interest is deeper than she is letting on, but will not get more details as to why.

How will we know where to go to follow them?

At this question, Kieri produces a map, rolling it out on the table. *“The ship left from Earthquake Fish Bay. If it had gone the intended route, the ship would have gone out to the southern edge of the Mantis isles. From there, it would have followed the islands north and west, eventually circling to Kyuden Gyotei. The Magistrates would have reported any findings to Kyuden Gyotei and then reported to Makibesu-dono at Otosan Uchi. We do know from preliminary investigations that the ship had not made it that far. As such, following their route will likely be the best place to start.”*

What ship will we be taking?

Tenno: *“A friend of mine named Daidoji Takehide has agreed to serve as captain for this voyage. His ship is called the Haggard Yojimbo. You may find it... appropriate.”*

As PCs make their way to the docks outside of Earthquake Fish Bay, they can have an opportunity to hunt for local gossip.

Rumors

The following information is available with a Courtier (Gossip) / Awareness roll. A Crab PC earns a Free Raise on this roll:

- 10: Overheard from a random Crane Samurai: “Bayushi Tenno is so dreamy! How such a man is still unmarried boggles the mind!”
- 15: Hiruma Miraiko has barely left the Wall since the death of Hida Oturi. Though she is not quite the battlefield commander Oturi was, her presence is still rather inspiring to many of the troops.
- 20: Yasuki Ranmaru, meanwhile, has been busily traveling the Empire. He has left much of the daily dealings of the Yasuki family to his karo as he works diligently to try to secure additional supplies to an increasingly beleaguered clan.
- 25: The local Crab are quietly rather concerned about the consequences a Mantis/Crab war might have. After the battles against the Shadowlands that lost Toturi IX and war with the Lion, the Crab simply do not have the personnel to keep fighting war after war... especially one that would stifle Crab trade.

The Haggard Yojimbo is larger than most Rokugani Kobune. Clearly made for long sea travel, it has a full lower deck, and a second large sail to assist in swift traveling. A full two dozen sailors work to make preparations for the voyage, a clear sense of urgency in every step.

...Save for one man, a tall, Dashing man dressed in a powder blue gi, the sleeves tied down with rope. The man is drinking from a jug of sake, and as he notices you, he waves to one of the sailors, who in reaction runs below deck. “Samurai-sans! Come, join me on the ship!” His bow is sloppy, and he almost falls off the dock as he rises, but keeps his balance still. “I bid you welcome on the Haggard Yojimbo. Before we begin, there is a ritual of sorts that we all must see to!”

The sailor returns, a tray full of sake cups in his hands. Takehide bids you each take a cup, lifting his jug into the air. “In thanks to Suitengu-no-Kami, we each drink! In this, our bellies are filled with the fire needed to overcome the waters of Suitengu!” He lets out a loud ‘Kampai!’ and then takes a large swig of his drink, not waiting to see if you do the same.

Despite the apparent seriousness of this claim, Takehide does not pay great attention to if the PCs drink or toss it overboard. Observance to his odd ritual (even if the sake is dumped overboard) seems to be all that he requires.

Part One: The Ghost Town

Despite the initial boisterousness of Takehide, once the ship sets sail, the journey is all business. It takes about a week to get from Earthquake Fish Bay to the Southern Edge of Mantis Lands. During this time, any remaining sake is locked up and kept under careful key, and the originally boisterous Takehide becomes calm and composed.

If someone asks about the sudden shift of behavior, any of the crewman can answer. *“The Haggard Yojimbo is far used to travel to Balishnimpur, Samurai-sans. Takehide-sama likes to keep things... frenetic during these journeys, as a lighter tone makes the length of the journey less arduous. But this is... a more serious thing. And when things get serious, even Takehide-sama knows when to shut up and stick to the duty.*

As the Southern tip of the Mantis lands come into view, have the PCs roll Investigation (Notice) / Perception at TN 20. Any PC with a rank of Craft: Sailing gains a free raise on this roll, and any PC with at least 3 ranks of Craft: Sailing notices without a roll. Any PC who succeeds realizes that Mantis Lands are typically relatively full of ships. By contrast, however, not a single ship beyond the Haggard Yojimbo has been seen in perhaps two or three days. If no PC notices this, the sailors will begin commenting on it, with many of them starting to make occasional signs of warning after a third day of not seeing even one other ship.

Along the Southern tip of the southernmost Mantis Isle, a small dock can be spied in the distance. As the ship closes, a village can be seen just beyond the dock, no more than twenty or thirty buildings, with a tall watchtower set near the dock itself.

The closer you get to it, however, the faster you realize that something is... wrong. There are no ships on the dock. No merchants moving around the docks. In fact, as you can see down the single main street that leads towards the town square, you realize that you haven't seen a single soul moving around the village.

As the realization of how empty the town is sets in, several sailors make panicked hand signals of warding, looking around for any sign of life. Unfortunately, outside of some livestock and other small animals, there is nothing of the sort to be seen from the ship. And so Takehide motions to dock the ship.

The Watchtower

The watchtower on the south dock is in fairly good repair. It lifts just over the cliffs on either side of the village, allowing a decent view around the island.

There is not much to be seen here, save that they still do not see any people outside... though now they have a full view of the village to see how empty it is. In the distance to the northwest, they see the tell tale signs of a wood fire... a sign of civilization for sure.

The Streets

As you walk towards the main street of the village, two buildings immediately catch your eye. The first is a small two story inn, notated so by the name kanji for 'inn' on it. The second, just across the street, is a smaller building with a picture of a smith's hammer.

The rest of the buildings leading up to the center of town are fairly simple, though sturdy and well made, houses. The road leads to a small village square with a well at its center.

Still, the streets are entirely empty of people. It is quiet as you look around, not even a hint of the hustle and bustle that even a small village like this should see. Looking north of the square, a single building sits on a low hill overlooking the rest of the village.

There is little new to glean from the streets themselves, save that they are completely empty. PCs might notice tools having been set down, but no signs of struggle or violence.

Some PCs may try to look for tracks. There isn't much to find (the peasants have been gone for days at this point, and the roads are well paved), but with a Hunting (Tracking) / Perception roll at TN 30, they can find the barest hints of footprints moving towards the ocean... and disappearing around where high tide would hit.

The Inn

It would be somewhat difficult to call the inn an inn strictly by looking at it. Outside of the identifying sign, it otherwise looks like a normal house. The door creaks with a slight creak, leading into a small common room.

Inside the common room, several long cold meals sit on the few tables, including cups of sake. A large bowl of previously prepared rice sits at each table's center, the rice showing signs of decay.

As the PCs explore, allow them to make investigation (Search) / Perception. The PCs can discover the following things:

- TN 15: Spider webs have started to form on the corners. Given the size of them, it looks like the spiders have not been bothered in at least several days.
- TN 20: Notably, there is no signs of any struggles within the inn. The more the area is studied, the more striking it becomes that it is as if everyone just... calmly left.
- TN 25: Hidden near the small bar is a small lockbox. It is easy enough to open (the lock is somewhat fragile and more for show), and inside are about 4 bu in various coins.

If the PCs head to the room upstairs, most of them are completely empty, though fairly clean. The farthest room from the stairs, however, notably has a daisho stand... with a Ronin's Daisho resting on it, clearly not having been disturbed in a few days. If a PC makes an investigation (search) / Perception roll at TN 20, they can find a letter from the Ronin. Give the PCs Player Handout #1: The Ronin's Letter.

The Spider's Mark: Some PCs may have the advantage "The Spider's Mark." If such a PC enters the inn, one of the Spiders that had been making webs swings its way down onto their shoulders and speaks to them (A PC can see it coming with an Investigation (Notice) / Perception roll at TN 30. Wary applies to this roll). *"I remember you,"* it whispers. *"You assisted my Mistress."*

The Spider can only be heard by the PC, but it knows the following:

- About four days ago, some men came to the village. The spider saw them come to the inn and be merry with the villagers. That night, one of them left late into the night, and came back in with his left arm bandaged heavily.
- The next morning, the men left. A few hours later, all of the villagers in the inn put down whatever they were holding and walked outside. The people have not been back yet. The Spider is pleased by this, as the innkeeper's wife keeps breaking her webs.
- Her Mistress has been concerned, as a familiar presence has been stirring. The Spider does not know quite what this means, but her concern is notable to all of the Spiders around.

- One of the men who came with the others did not leave with them, but left when the other villagers did.

The Spider is eternally friendly, and will try to answer other questions as much as she can, but ultimately is limited by the knowledge of a small house spider who just watched a large group of people walk out of their homes. If a PC decides to squash it and has the Spider's Mark advantage, they immediately lose the advantage.

The kami:

Some PCs might try to utilize the kami to try to seek answers. However they try to commune, the answer is largely the same: the people who were in the inn left the inn three days ago. Some kami, however, may have some different flavors of information:

- Water kami will generally know the least, at least within the inn itself. If asked, water kami that come from the sake can vaguely show images of the people who came to the village: two samurai in Mantis clothes, one in Crane clothes, and the last is a wave man carrying the same daisho that is sitting in the room on the second floor. It should be noted that the best source of water kami in the inn will be the sake bottles, and that all of the sake is untainted.
- Fire kami will know very little. At this point, most of the fires that may have been going the day that everyone left would be reduced to not even embers.
- Earth kami can tell the PCs that the people went from the inn to the beach, though its awareness is limited enough that it doesn't quite know what happens once it got there. It also specifically mentions the presence of something "unclean" in the people.
- The air kami can explain that the people who came in played a bad joke on the people in the village, and then the people in the village walked into the water. It cannot expand on the nature of the joke.

The Smithy

Stepping into the Smithy, one might be used to walking into a place of intense heat. But this smithy is... cold. The fires of the forge have dampened, completely cooled from not having been lit in several days.

There is not much to find in the Smithy itself, but there are some interesting pieces of information:

- Like with the other buildings, there are no signs of any sort of a struggle. In fact, several pieces of metal are set aside, ready for smelting. Just like with the inn, it has clearly been several days since the place had been occupied.
- Studying the forge itself, as noted the forge has cooled. The coals that would stoke the flames had been burned to ash, as if the forgemaster had not bothered to quiet the forge before he left.
- Sitting in the forge is a melted piece of metal. It is hard to tell what it was being forged into: the metal has melted into the forge.

If PCs entreat the kami here, they will find information much the same as the information that they had found in the inn.

The Well

The small well sits in the center of town. A wooden bucket is hanging empty. At first, some might not even give the well any thought. However, if the PCs decide to draw water from the well, have them make an Investigation (Notice) / Perception roll at TN 25. With a success, the PCs can detect the faintest hint of copper... the telltale smell of blood.

The water has been infected with blood, as noted above. The consequences of drinking that blood occur with a taint roll at the end of the mod... but also alerts Yoritomo Hien that someone has drank his blood again. Such a PC will be vulnerable to the effects of blood domination later in the module.

If a PC tries to commune with the water:

Calling upon the water kami is something you have done many times before. You are used to the sight of the water rippling and changing as you ask for its aid. But this time is different. The water still ripples, but then it begins to bubble, as if boiling. The bits of blood seem to permeate through the water, and a small being oozes up and out of the water. It looks almost... impish in the way it grins at you. "Hello..." its voice rings in your mind like a bell. "You wish for knowledge... yes? I can give you knowledge... for a price."

Any shugenja PC can accept the Kansen's offer. Doing so allows the PC to learn the following information... at the cost of gaining three points of taint.

- The Kansen came from a Lost Samurai named Yoritomo Hien. Hien has been traveling on ship and recently started visiting villages.
- He deposited the Kansen four days ago. The Blood he dropped was drank by the villagers. The villagers were then told to walk into the ocean.
- The Kansen does not know what the goal is sending the people into the ocean.

Part Two: The Child

As you make your way into the headman's house, the scene is different than any other building. Whereas every other building is serene and untouched... the house has been ransacked. The drawers in the small desk have been pulled open, a small pantry area thrown open. A bag of uncooked rice has been knocked over, and a small tin of tea has been opened, but apparently found empty.

A cursory examination can find that, while the place seems to have been searched, nothing seems to have been taken. If they take the time to look through the records strewn around the table, they can find a scroll that lists out recent visitors to the island. There are several names, but the three most recent are:

- "Daidoji Masayori - Captain of the Crystal Blossom"
- "Yoritomo Hien - Captain of the Midnight Storm"
- "Yoritomo Kaisetsu - First Mate of the Midnight Storm"

In addition to this, the PCs

As the PCs are looking around, have them make an Investigation (Notice) / Perception Roll at TN 20 (the Missing Eye disadvantage does not affect this roll). With a success, they can hear a crashing noise in the next room.

As the PCs enter the next room, they see much the same. A small dresser has been pulled open, several garments thrown around. In addition, the bedroll seems a bit... lumpier than normal.

Assuming the PCs examine the bedroll, if someone touches the bedroll, it starts to shake fearfully. Pulling the roll open reveals a young girl, no older than 7 or 8 years old. She looks scared as she pushes away from the Samurai.

It isn't... hard to calm the child down. As long as the PC is not trying to be scary or intimidating, a few moments of reassurance will calm her down.

Once the PCs calm her down, the little girl will attach herself to the most sympathetic PC. She will answer any questions the best she can.

- Her name is Ryoko. Her mother was the village's apothecary.
- She had slept in the day that everyone had disappeared. As she woke up, she saw her mother walking out the door. She called out good morning, but her mother did not respond.
- She followed her mother outside and grabbed her hand, trying to get her to respond. But no matter what she did, her mother kept walking down to the beach and eventually into the water.
- She saw others walking in as well, but once her mother disappeared in the water, she ran back to the house.
- Everyone had a strange, blank expression, and not a single person responded to her when she tried to rouse them.
- She tried to get water from the well, but she can't quite get to the bucket and didn't want to fall in. (Any PC with ranks of medicine can tell that she's not likely had more than a few sips of water in the last few days)
- She saw the Samurai visitors who came before the PCs, but didn't interact with them. They were large and scary.

For any number of reasons, someone may be suspicious of Ryoko or concerned that she might be tainted. Being a child, however, her capacity to effectively lie is very low, and anyone can tell she is being very earnest ("Mama always told me to be honest with Samurai!"). Any tests to see if she is tainted come back negative - Ryoko by the fortune of waking up late avoided drinking any blood-tainted water.

Once they have found the girl, there should not be much left to find within the village itself. Ryoko will not insist on going with them, but will happily go with them if they ask her to.

Ryoko is an earnest and excitable child. As noted before, she will attach herself to whichever PC is nicest to her, following them around and generally trying to be helpful however she can be. She is not tainted. She

Part Three: The Second Village

As you return to the Haggard Yojimbo, Daidoji Takehide takes your report with grim silence. He pours a cup of sake from his jug, pouring the cup then out into the sea. "It is a tragedy indeed, but there is nothing more that we can do for them now. We should continue on."

If, for some reason, the PCs do not decide to take Ryoko with them initially, Takehide will bring her onto the Haggard Yojimbo.

An hour of Sailing north and west brings another village soon in sight. While this village also seems to be lacking in ships, a quick glance over to the dock allows you to readily notice several men working on or near the docks. The layout of the village is very similar to the previous one - two central streets crossing into a town square, with a well in the middle. However, unlike the previous village, the signs of a thriving community are evident.

As the Haggard Yojimbo docks, a middle-aged peasant man with a long mustache approaches, offering a low bow even before any Samurai begin to disembark.

If Ryoko is present:

"UNCLE IKI!" Ryoko's voice cuts through before anyone else's, and the moment getting off the boat is possible, she runs off the ship and leaps to hug the man.

"Ryoko-chan? What are you doing with these Sam-?" He cuts off his question quickly, looking to regard all of you. "Ah... pardon, Samurai-samas. I do not mean to offer any disrespect, but... may I ask what is happening?"

PCs are, of course, able to interact with Iki however they like. Presumably, though, they will quickly begin discussing the previous village with him.

- The villages are close enough that they are easy to visit with a few hours walk. They meet about every ten days for trade, and had last met about eight days ago.
- Ryoko is indeed his niece. He has some training as an apothecary as well, and his sister (her mother) and he decided it would be easier for them to tend to one village's needs

instead of traveling between them all the time.

- The two villages mostly deal in livestock, but also serve with some fishing and mining. They do not have their own boats because fishing has always been profitable without them, but have the docks so that Mantis magistrates and tax collectors can meet as needed.
- When asked, Iki can tell the PCs that a few ships have docked in the last few weeks. The first was full of samurai in shiny green kimono or powder blue kimono.
- The second ship stopped by yesterday, and had a few mantis samurai in them. Iki thought it was odd that only the Captain and First Mate disembarked, but it is not his responsibility to question Samurai.
- Iki is not the headman, but would be glad to take the PCs there.

At first glance, everything seems to be fairly normal around the village. If the PCs opt to explore, they don't see anything out of the ordinary - indeed, the PCs seem to be the most out of place thing here. However, once the PCs go to either talk to the headman or investigate the well:

Iki leads you up towards the town square, laughing with Ryoko all the way up. And then, just as you reach the clearing, the well in sight... his hands drop to his side. Iki begins to turn, taking single steps to do so. And then, once he is facing the water, he begins to walk.

If Ryoko is Present:

"Uncle Iki!" Ryoko cries, grabbing his hand and trying to dig her small feet into the sand. "Uncle Iki please!".

Either way:

It is not just Iki whose expression suddenly changes. One by one, villagers calmly set down their tools and begin walking towards the ocean. Doors to houses open, more and more peasants stepping outside, the ones on the second street walking into the square before taking the road down towards the beach.

Out of one of the doors steps an older woman. After only two or three steps, legs that are clearly intended to be supported by a cane give up and she falls. But a moment later, she begins using her hands to pull herself ever towards the water, her clear goal. One of

her eyes looks a bit worse than the vacant stares of the others, having swollen to an unnatural degree

What the PCs do here is up to them, but presumably PCs will begin taking some measures to try and save as many as they can.

- Any spell that restrains or inhibits their progress will generally work. The most successful option would be to cast Wall of Earth with 3 raises to ensure the entire beach is covered. As usual, GMs should reward creative options, keeping in mind the above.
- Unfortunately, social options are ineffective here. The peasants are completely subsumed by the effects of the Blood Domination Shadowlands Power, and will follow its instructions until they complete the task or til Hien's concentration on the task ends (after about twenty minutes).
- If the PCs try physically attacking or restraining the peasants, they will find that the Peasants' are surprisingly dedicated to their suicidal task. Not only will they resist against to restrain them, they will try to drag people who touch them in with them.
 - If a PC uses lethal force, there is no attack roll necessary. Even at their most hardy, these peasants are offering no resistance. Such an option is met with horror, both by Ryoko and by the crew watching.
 - If the PCs use any nonlethal physical means, have them roll the relevant skill / Strength. There is no TN, however this is contested against the Peasants' 9k2. If they fail the roll, in the process of trying to restrain them, the peasants get a good hold of them and start dragging them into the ocean. However, the physical strain of the initial push against the PCs tears their muscles, and the PC can then make a second attempt against 2k2 (unexploding). If they fail at this point, Takehide will step in and tackle the PC and the peasant to stop them from going into the ocean. This will cost the PC an L3 glory loss.

The crew will jump into action as well, trying to stop as many as they can from walking into the ocean. Unfortunately, barring magical interference or out and out killing villagers, there is no way to save all of

them. Those who are not stopped will walk calmly, unceasingly into the ocean. Where one might expect them to float, something seems to be keeping them held to the ocean floor, and one can only watch as their heads eventually disappear under the water. If Iki is not stopped, he will walk into the Ocean, tightly clutching little Ryoko's hand if nothing is done to save her.

Eventually, any living peasants will snap out of their apparent trance, shocked and confused at their predicament. They do not remember anything that happened from the moment the blood domination happened. Just a small popping sound, and then it was as if they had fallen asleep.

If the PCs have any way of testing for taint, the villagers will all be confirmed as tainted. Even if they do not have a way of confirming, any PC with Lore: Shadowlands can notice some of the signs of steadily advancing taint in the older villagers. Many of them have visible deformities, bulging eyes and misshapen noses that simply cannot be attributed to things like age or disease.

If the PCs study the well at all, they will find it in the exact same condition as the well in the previous village. The water has the tell tale sign of blood, and trying to commune with the water gives the telltale sign of a Kansens.

What the PCs do with the villagers now is up to them. If a PC is looking for guidance, they can make one of a few rolls:

- Lore Shadowlands / Intelligence (TN 15): Most, if not all, of these Peasants are tainted, and the length of time they have before becoming Lost could not be more than a few weeks judging by the advancement of many of them.
- Lore: Law / Intelligence (TN 20): It is not against the law to be tainted, only to knowingly hide it. However, Peasants are not considered to have the same will to be able to resist Jigoku's influence that Samurai have.
- Lore: Bushido / Intelligence (TN 20): Compassion takes many forms. One of it's hardest is doing what's best for someone when that pertains to the end of their life. Sometimes, it is better to kill a man before their spirit can be fully corrupted or their Karma darkened.

If the PCs do opt to slay the peasants mercifully, most of them will be saddened, but understanding. The

Headman, an older portly man named Taka, will ask only that they be allowed final moments to pray and say goodbye to loved ones first.

If Iki was saved and is allowed to say goodbye to Ryoko:

Iki kneels down to Ryoko, giving her a reassuring smile as he puts a hand on her shoulder. "Ryoko," his voice is a hoarse whisper, barely able to let any words come out.

"Uncle Iki," Ryoko's eyes widen as she feels his touch. "Uncle Iki, the Samurai are going to help you, right? They aren't going to let you walk in like Okasan did?"

Iki smiled, shaking his head gently. "Of course not, Ryoko-chan. The Samurai are going to help your Uncle Iki. Make things better. But..." He takes a deep breath, "That does mean that Uncle Iki has to go away for a long time. And we won't see each other again."

"But..."

"No buts, Ryoko-chan." Despite his words, Iki's voice remains ever soft. "The places we are going are very different. And these Samurai will take better care of you than I can now." He leans in, kissing her forehead before standing up. "I love you, Little One. Be Brave for me?"

Ryoko nods her head, concern evident, but lacking the understanding of what is about to happen to him. "Yes, Uncle Iki! I love you, too! Have a safe trip, OK?"

Once the peasants have been dealt with, Takehide pours another cup of sake into the sea for them. And then the Haggard Yojimbo sails again.

Part Four: "Skeleton" Crews

The Haggard Yojimbo sails north for two days, skirting the edge of the southernmost island of the Mantis lands. At its northmost point, a second island sits just north of it, fitting neatly into a concave curve on its southern neighbor.

On the northern edge of this second island, you catch a site that you have not seen in four or five days now: Other ships docked on a village dock. The first is a standard kobune, not unlike what one might see traveling Phoenix or Crane waters. The second is a

kobune of clear Mantis make. Neither carry any obvious heraldry from the distance you initially catch them from, and their presence on the main village dock makes it impossible to dock the Yojimbo on the tiny dock. Crew members immediately begin prepping a small boarding vessel for you to be able to investigate the village.

The Haggard Yojimbo crew plan to maintain the vessel while you continue your investigations. Takehide promises to be watching just in case more people start trying to walk into the Ocean. If requested, one member of the crew can be spared to row the boat to the ship.

The Dock

As you make it to the dock, two villagers approach and bow. “Ah, Samurai-samas!” The first says, “It has been some time since we have had so many Samurai visiting at the same time! Is there a gathering that we had not been made aware of?”

Now that you are standing near the ships, two things are striking: On the inside, heraldry indicating the ship names seems to have been partially scrubbed. The Mantis Ship only shows the kanji for “storm,” while the other only shows the kanji for “blossom.”

The villagers only know a small amount about each ship:

- The smaller Kobune is captained by one Daidoji Masayori. None of the other crew chose to disembark, and the villagers have not even seen any.
- The larger one is captained by a Yoritomo Hien, and his First Mate Yoritomo Kaisetsu. Like the other Kobune, only those two have been seen off the boat.
- The villagers were advised not to go into the boats, and being peasants, they were not going to argue with the Samurai-sans.

The Ships

It is possible that PCs will wish to investigate the ships. The villagers will initially be resistant to this unless the PCs have already fought the Captains and First Mate. But, ultimately, they will relent to the PCs if they are insistent.

The Crystal Blossom

The deck of the Crystal Blossom is typical for a traditional Kobune. Once the PCs go to the hold area, however...

There is a phrase that is often used with ships. “Skeleton Crew.” Typically, this is meant to describe a minimalistic crew that can keep a ship moving but not much else.

In this instance, it seems that the phrase is a bit more literal. Standing in the ship hold are half a dozen skeletons, all dressed in powder blue kimono, with wigs that seem designed to make them seem less obvious from a distance. As you enter the hold, their attention turns to you and they begin to walk in your direction.

If the PCs decide to fight the skeletons, have them roll their relevant attack roll at a TN of 30. If the PCs fail, they take wounds equal to the amount they failed their roll by.

If they decide to leave, the skeletons will only pursue to the edge of the hold, then stop and return to their position in the hold.

Regardless, the skeletons are fairly quickly dispatched. Once they are gone, the PCs are free to inspect the hold. However, there is surprisingly little for them to find. Any sign of the magistrates themselves must have been scrubbed from the area. However, in a writing desk that appears to be held for the captain, the PCs can find what appears to be a log of sorts. Hand out Player Handout #3: Daidoji Masayori’s Captain’s Log.

The Midnight Storm

While larger than the Crystal Blossom, the Midnight Storm has a similar skeleton crew to the Crystal Blossom. Feel free to skip the box text below if PCs have already visited the Crystal Blossom.

There is a phrase that is often used with ships. “Skeleton Crew.” Typically, this is meant to describe a minimalistic crew that can keep a ship moving but not much else.

In this instance, it seems that the phrase is a bit more literal. Standing in the ship hold are half a dozen skeletons, all dressed in sea green kimono, with wigs that seem designed to make them seem less obvious from a distance. As you enter the hold, their attention turns to you and they begin to walk in your direction.

If the PCs decide to fight the skeletons, have them roll their relevant attack roll at a TN of 30. If the PCs fail, they take wounds equal to the amount they failed their roll by.

If they decide to leave, the skeletons will only pursue to the edge of the hold, then stop and return to their position in the hold.

Once the skeletons are dealt with, the PCs are free to explore the hull. There are a few more notable things within the ship:

- On the center of a large desk is a map of the Isle of Silk and Spice. The locations of three villages - the two you visited previously and this one - have all been marked on the map.
- A letter from Yoritomo Arashi, detailing the need to sink crab ships and putting the order to Hien to do so. An investigation / Perception roll at TN 25 can identify this as a forgery. Any PC with the forgery skill gains a free raise on the roll.
- PCs may also make an Investigation (Search) / Perception roll. At TN 35, they find a letter hidden in a small compartment under the table. Provide the PCs with Player Handout # 4: Letter to Yoritomo Hien

The Well

At this point, some PCs will likely want to beeline for the well. If they do so, it is just as in part one and two. Hien spilled his blood into this place last night, and the smell of copper is stronger than it was in the last two villages.

The Inn

Presumably, the PCs will want to confront Hien, Masayori, and Gaisetsu.

Like with the other villages, the peasants of this village seem to have determined that the name 'inn' is perfectly acceptable for the only inn in town. As you enter, about a dozen peasant men are sitting around the common area, laughing and joking with each other. They barely even seem to notice your arrival.

Your arrival has been noticed, however, by two men sitting at tables in the center of the common area. The first is a strikingly handsome man, a perpetual five o'clock shadow only seeming to give him more allure. Sitting next to him is another man, still handsome but lacking some of the... panache. Both are wearing the

sea green kimono often seen among the Mantis. Finally, in the far corner, a single man in a powder blue kimono sulks in the corner.

The striking man rises as he sees you. "Samurai-sans! We did not expect to see such an eclectic group here. Please, come join us! We were just enjoying a last cup of water before we returned to our duties!"

PCs may speak to them however they wish. Hien will deflect any knowledge of the previous villages, and seems well liked by the local populace. Once it becomes clear that the PCs know that he is responsible:

Hien stretches his neck, back straightening as he gets as tall as he can. "My friends, don't you think that it is time that these Samurai left?"

As the last word leaves his lips, the people's hands drop briefly to their side. They all begin to walk towards you, hands reaching to you as they step ever closer.

"Yoritomo" Hien

Poisoner of the Well

Air 4 Earth 5 Fire 3 Water Void 2*
4

Honor 0.0

Status -5.0

Taint 6.0

Initiative: 8k4

Attack: 9k3 (knife, Complex)

Armor TN: 33
(defense)

Damage: 4k1 (knife)

Reduction: 15

Wounds: 95 (Dead)

School/Rank: Self-Taught Shugenja (Earth) 4

Techniques: Irrelevant.

Skills: Spellcraft 5, Knives 5

Mastery Abilities: +1k0 on Spellcasting rolls, may call a disarm with a jitte or sai for one less raise.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Dangerous Beauty / Shadowlands Taint, Dark Paragon of Perfection

Shadowlands Powers: Hien's called raises are limited by his Shadowlands Taint Rank, not his Void. Additionally, Hien has several Shadowlands powers that produce the following effects:

- +15 Reduction
- No Wound Penalties

In addition, Hien has both the Blood Knows Blood and Blood Domination Shadowlands Powers. The first allows him to know where any person who has

ingested his blood is. The second allows him to command anyone who has ingested his blood. This command can be resisted by a contested willpower roll against Hien (5k5).

Hien has the Unholy Beauty Shadowlands Power.

Finally, Hien in his torture of Masayori has made the Crane intrinsically linked to him. As long as Masayori is still alive, Hien does not take damage. Instead, Masayori takes half of the damage Hien would have. This damage bypasses reduction.

Spells: No Pure Breaths (Maho Earth 4, 10k5): Chosen PCs take their AirKAir in wounds. Such PCs suffer a +10 TN penalty to rolls until they receive magical healing.

Earth (10k5): Armor of Earth, Earth Becomes Sky

Water (8k4): Path to Inner Peace, Regrow the Wound

Air (8k4): Wind Borne Slumbers

Fire (6k3): Fires From Within

***Being Lost, Hien has no void points and cannot spend void for any reason**

Hien will always start encounters by casting No Pure Breaths on the most dangerous bushi he can see. If he has 10 or fewer wounds remaining, he will offer the remainder of this blood to hit the three most dangerous bushi instead.

On the next round, he will begin using his blood soaked knife to try and attack PCs and infect them with his blood. He will always start with “soft” targets - PCs who likely have low Armor TNs, and work from there. Then, with a free action, he will give them a command (the command must fit in to five words. “Kill the Magistrate” or “Guard me” for example).

“Yoritomo” Gaisetsu

Tainted First Mate

Air 3	Earth 4	Fire 5	Water 3	Void 2*
Reflexes 4			Strength 4	
Honor 0.0	Status -5.0		Taint 5.8	
Initiative: 8k4		Attack: 10k5 (Katana, Simple, Emphasis)		
Armor TN: 25		Damage: 8k2 (Katana)		
	Reduction: 5			
	Wounds: 76 (Dead)			
	School/Rank: Yoritomo Bushi 2 / Maho Bujin 2			

Techniques:

Yoritomo Bushi 1: +1k0 to attack rolls, may fight with a small or medium weapon in the offhand with no penalty.

Yoritomo Bushi 2: Every time you hit an opponent in melee, his armor TN is reduced by 5, up to twice.

Yoritomo Bushi 3: Simple action attacks with

Skills: Kenjutsu 5, Athletics 4

Mastery Abilities: May draw katana as a free action. +1k0 to damage rolls with katana.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Shadowlands Taint
Shadowlands Powers

Gaisetsu's called raises are limited by his Shadowlands Taint Rank, not his Void. Additionally, Gaisetsu has several Shadowlands powers that produce the following effects:

- +5 Reduction (figured in)
- No Wound Penalties

Gaisetsu also has the Unholy Beauty Shadowlands Power.

***Being Lost, Gaisetsu has no void points and cannot spend void for any reason.**

Despite having the ability to call several raises, Gaisetsu is fairly conservative in the first round of combat. On his first attack, he will choose the most threatening PC and call 2 raises for knockdown. He will target the same PC with his second attack, only calling one raise for extra damage.

On the second round, he will target any shugenja, or the PC who slew Hien if Hien is dead. He will use the same strategy, though he will call three raises on the second attack instead of one. In general, his attention should remain divided instead of allowing him to rail several rounds of attacks into one PC. He will repeat this tactic in subsequent rounds until killed.

Daidoji Masayori

Lost Captain

Air 3	Earth 3	Fire 2	Water 3	Void 2*
		Agility 3		
Honor 0.0	Status -5.0		Taint 5.0	
Initiative: 5k3		Attack: 8k3 (Katana, Complex)		
Armor TN: 20		Damage: 9k2 (Katana)		
	Reduction: 5			
	Wounds: 65 (Dead)			
	School/Rank:			

Techniques:

Daidoji Iron Warrior 1: +1k0 to attack rolls in attack stance. Wounds per rank increased by honor-4 (minimum 1, already adjusted).

Daidoji Iron Warrior 2: When guarding, give both himself and his guard target an additional +5 TN

Skills:

Mastery Abilities:

Advantages/Disadvantages: Paragon of Duty/Shadowlands Taint

Shadowlands Powers

Gaisetsu's called raises are limited by his Shadowlands Taint Rank, not his Void. Additionally, Gaisetsu has several Shadowlands powers that produce the following effects:

- +5 Reduction (figured in)
- No Wound Penalties

Gaisetsu also has the Unholy Beauty Shadowlands Power.

***Being Lost, Masayori has no void points and cannot spend void for any reason.**

Because he is Lost, Masayori cannot help but to fight on behalf of Hien and Gaisetsu. However, what little remains of his personality is fighting against the Taint as best as he can. As such, he will always attack the character that appears most readily capable to dodge his attacks, and will always call three raises to no effect. He will not keep low on his damage.

During the reaction stage of every round, the dominated crowd will attempt to grab the PCs. They roll 4k2 to attempt the grapple. Like with the dominated villagers in the second village, they will push their muscles to tearing, giving them a 9k2 on their first grapple check in the subsequent round. In future rounds, they will only get 2k2 unexploding. Once Hien is killed, they will stop attacking the PCs, releasing any grappled PCs immediately. The peasants will seem dazed and confused.

Unfortunately, due to the nature of the Shadowlands gifts, the Lost samurai will keep fighting til dead. Even if they lose all of their limbs, they will keep finding some way to resist until they are killed.

Conclusion

Thanks to some good fortune, most of the villagers check as untainted, though all of the ones that were present in the inn are tainted and will have to be dealt with accordingly. The villagers will be grateful when it is explained that the water is poisoned, and will do everything they can to assist the Samurai.

Regardless, there are no signs of other tainted Samurai for the remainder of the Journey. Takehide follows the expected route to Kyuden Gyotei, then returns to Earthquake Fish Bay to report.

Bayushi Tenno takes your report with grim seriousness. Once your final words are spoken, he

takes a breath. "You have done well, Samurai. That the Shadowlands have managed to involve themselves so deeply in our lands is... troubling to say the least. I will be continuing investigations, so that we can find any others who have the same designs as this Yoritomo Hien. In the meantime, you have my thanks, and the thanks of the Emerald Champion. Go with honor, Samurai."

The End

Rewards for Completing the Adventure

Surviving the Module: 1 XP
Good Roleplaying: 1 XP
Finding Ryoko: 1 XP

OR

Attempting to Save the villagers in the second Village: 1 XP
Killing Yoritomo Hien: 1 XP
Total Possible Experience: 4 XP

Favors

Reporting the details of the investigation to Tenno earns PCs 1 Favor.

Honor

Saving the Peasants from Drowning in the Second Village: H8

Mercy Killing the peasants in either the second or third village: H9. This gain can only be gained once, even if the peasants in both villages are killed. In addition, PCs with the advantage "Paragon of Compassion" gain 1 point of honor regardless of their Honor rank.

Glory

Reporting the investigation to Tenno: G7

Being saved from a peasant by Takehide: L3

Cutting down Peasants wantonly in Takehide's presence: Gain 5 points of infamy, regardless of current rank.

Allies and Enemies

If a PC does not have Bayushi Tange as an Ally or Sworn Enemy, he gains him as an ally. Tange is influence 2 / Devotion 1.

Other Rewards and Penalties

Any PC who ingested the tainted water must make an Earth Roll at TN 15. If they fail, they gain one point of taint.

Any PC who was stabbed by Hien's Bloodsoaked dagger must make an Earth Roll at TN 10. If they fail, they gain one point of taint.

GM Reporting

- 1) Did the PCs save Ryoko?
- 2) If yes, was she returned to the Mantis?
- 3) Did the PCs find the Dark Lord's note to Hien?
- 4) Did the PCs spare any of the villagers?

Appendix #1: NPCs

If any NPCs require statblocks not listed elsewhere in the module

Ryoko

Little Peasant Girl

Air 1 Earth 1 Fire 1 Water 1 Void 1

Honor 1.2 Agility 2 Status 0.1 Glory 0.0

Initiative: 1k1

Attack: 2k2 (Fist, unskilled)

Armor TN: 10

Damage: 1k1 (fist)

Reduction: 0

Wounds: 5 (+0), 7 (+3), 9 (+5), 11 (+10), 13 (+15), 15 (+20), 17 (Down, +40), 19 (Dead)

School/Rank: None (IR 0)

Techniques: None (IR 0)

Skills: Etiquette 1

Mastery Abilities: None

Advantages/Disadvantages: Lucky (3)/Social Disadvantage (Heimin)

Outfit:

Player Handout #1: News From the Empire

Samurai of Rokugan,

It has been quite an active spring this year indeed! And as the wheel turns, we are blessed with good tidings from around the Empire!

Shinjo Hazumi has miraculously recovered and resumed control of the clan. She has thanked Moto Sartaq for his exemplary service during her period of incapacitation and declared a renewed focus on foreign magics that might threaten the empire in the future. With the Unicorn having committed to avoiding war with the Dragon, it seems that the northwest, at least, has calmed for the time being.

The same cannot be said within the Owl lands, however. The Scorpion have begun their incursions in earnest, engaging with the First Heichi Army in several minor engagements. The Owl, for their part, seem to be stalling for time while Owl Courtiers try to calm the situation. Unfortunately for the Owl, going against the Scorpion in court is fraught with peril, and word is a couple of Owl Courtiers have committed seppuku for various failures in dealing with experienced scorpion Diplomats.

We should end on good news, though, yes? I am happy to bring to the Courts that Toturi X and his wife have announced the birth of Twins! Young Ichiro and Ichiko are both very healthy young children, and the Astrologers already have very optimistic things to say about their divined destinies.

Blessings of the Summer Upon us all.

Otomo Yusuke

Player Handout #2: The Ronin's Letter

“Dearest Hatsue-chan,

Our time apart from each other is always a great sorrow of mine, but I have good news. I have ended my contract with the Mantis early! I know that you told me that it was best to honor contracts, but I simply could no longer bare to watch the clan that had hired me slander yours so. I will have such interesting things to tell you when I return, I expect. I hope that you will find it useful.

The Mantis have dropped me off in a small village that doesn't even have it's own ships, so I am writing this more to pass the time to anything, I will admit. Still, when you see this, I know it will be you reading it with me sitting near you, as close then as I wish I was now. I will see you soon, my Flower.

Yours,
Goro”

Player Handout #3: Daidoji Masayori's Captain's Log

I suspect that this is the last log I will be able to make as myself. I can feel what few vestiges of me being subsumed by the Taint... but I have not the ability any longer to resist it more than this.

We found what we were looking for. These Mantis... no, not Mantis. These Lost Monsters had been sinking ships for months. Attempting to sow discord among the Mantis and the Crab. And to think how well they had succeeded, not that the Mantis and Crab might not have fought regardless. It is most unfortunate that we had to find them in the way we did. They... boarded us. Slew my crew and captured the Magistrates and myself. Then their tainted Captain forced the magistrates to drink his blood and commanded them to give themselves to the Ocean. And they did! I had never seen such a thing.

I suspect they have designs for me to join their current plots, whatever those might be, and that is the only reason I still live. I write this hoping that, when I do finally turn, I manage to forget about it. Hopefully someone ends my life before I can become too great a threat. Hopefully my... hopefully my daughter need never find out that her father has become a monster.

If you are reading this now, I hope your Honor has defeated my Corruption.

-Daidoji Masayori, Captain of the Crystal Blossom

Player Handout #4: Letter to Yoritomo Hien

“My Loyal Vassal,

The reports that have come from your ship have been promising. That the Crab and Mantis are so close to war, this discord will only serve our purposes greater. Soon, you will stand in my Court in a place of honor, remembered for weakening the Crab beyond the point that they could defend against our Truth. Your great success, even compared to the others who have been sent out, honors Us in ways that We cannot begin to express.

There have been... rumblings of a presence from below. As such, I would like you to adjust your tactics slightly. In your current guise, you should be well able to visit those outskirt villages that do not see great interference from Samurai. I wish you to send these villages to the Sea, as offerings to this great Presence. Jigoku will see fit to ensure that you have the tools to do so.

Soon, we will Rule again, as I have promised.

The Dark Lord”

