

# Pale Reflection

**Sleepless Ones, Part 2 of 2**  
(or Something's Wrong in Kuda Mura, part 5 of 5)

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

Month of Akodo, 1342 (Late Spring)

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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

Just over twenty years ago, Hiruma Kawakami was part of a routine scouting expedition deep within the Shadowlands when something happened to his unit, and only he made it back, two days late. Kawakami was given over to the Kuni for examination and interrogation, but he was unable to tell them what had happened south of the Wall.

While Kawakami tested negative for Taint and was released fairly quickly, the experience left him changed. Withdrawn and cold where he had once been a charismatic and promising sensei, it was readily apparent to his commander that something was wrong. Unfortunately, Kawakami was left unable to speak of who and what he had encountered.

In an attempt to help the scout deal with whatever trauma he had endured, his sensei recommended Kawakami for a mission as part of a group assisting a young Yasuki shugenja during an investigation at sea.

During the course of that investigation, something began calling to Kawakami; something dark. Deep under Yakamo's Heart lay a chest protected by an ancient and powerful guardian. A large pearl rested inside the chest, almost completely black and larger than a man's head.

The pearl called out to Hida Maizen, as well. It had been doing so for months, filling her dreams with hissing promises. She had an excellent reputation, and was able to call in some favors to get stationed at Yasuki Yashiki as a yojimbo for the Crab Clan's diplomats and guests. When Yasuki Otari announced an investigation into the disappearance of several local pearl-diving vessels and a possible tie to the Sea of Shadows, Maizen volunteered immediately.

The other investigators were unaware that anything was amiss, and so were caught off guard when Hiruma Kawakami turned on them, murdering two of the other yojimbo, and threatening to kill them all if they said anything about what had actually happened.

Cowed by the horrific murders, and embarrassed by their failure to act against Kawakami, the surviving Crab samurai never spoke of the incident again.

Secrets never stay hidden for long in Rokugan, but this one lasted for nearly two decades before finally weighing so heavily on the souls of those involved that they began to crumble. Now, only three remain: the Murderous Hiruma, the Dishonored Hida, and the ronin Captain of the boat used in the original investigation.

In a seemingly unrelated incident, the Great Kumo's recent rampage across the Empire's northern coast not only destroyed a number of major cities and cost thousands of lives, but its effects are still being felt. Hundreds of kumo spawn were released during the assault, and many of those escaped destruction.

The Jade Magistrates have been following several reports and rumors, all leading them to believe most of the remaining spawn have infiltrated the densest portion of the southern Shinomen Forest.

In an effort to end this threat for good, the Kaiu daimyo worked with the commander of the Jade Legion to arrange a large-scale sweep of the Shinomen, including a Twenty Goblin Winter style recruitment offer for any ronin that choose to participate.

Using this spider hunt as cover, the daimyo plans to send a group of samurai most familiar with the preceding events into the forest to locate Hiruma Kawakami, determine his plan, and recover the Dark Naga Pearl.

The PCs will have to deal with several threats over the course of searching for the Hiruma, including but not limited to kumo spawn, several traps laid by Kawakami, bands of less-than-honorable ronin, and even the Shinomen's primal guardians.

And maybe some undead Naga.

## 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 time 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

Please determine if the players meet any of the following conditions:

- Have they played any of the previous mods in this series?
- Do they have Ikoma Robun as a Sworn Enemy?
- Blessed or Cursed by Chikushudo or Sakkaku
- Does any PC have the **Mark of the Spider**?

### 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 player base 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, each PC loses **two 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 **20**. 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, any ronin PCs lose half of their koku. This cannot reduce their accumulated wealth below an amount of bu equal to their highest Skill.

### 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

Please allow the PCs to read Player Handout #2 - The Invitation

*“Honorable Samurai,*

*The Kaiu family once again extends its gratitude for your help with the recent troubles in Kuda Province. With this in mind, Kaiu Hiroyo-sama requests your further assistance in bringing this matter to a more permanent resolution.*

*He will be presiding over a gathering of samurai outside of the village of Maemikake near the Lake of Cherry Blossom Snow. I believe you have visited here before. This gathering will take place at the beginning of the month of Akodo, and you will be given further instructions at that time.*

*A version of this invitation has been sent to your daimyo, and to others who have experience with this situation.*

*I look forward to informing Kaiu Hiroyo-sama of your plans to attend.*

*Kaiu Chino, on behalf of Kaiu Hiroyo*

When you visited Maemikake several years ago, the Crab were raising walls and defensive fortifications against a possible Lion incursion. While no major fighting took place near the Lake of Cherry Blossom Snow, the large and growing encampment currently occupying the fields outside the village gives the appearance of a siege. You were not held up long by border guards along the way, so clearly this is something different.

Dozens of tents are scattered throughout the area, but the majority of them lack any clan markings. Most unusually, there are three larger Unicorn-style yurts, but bearing the mons of the Crab clan and Kaiu family. Crab or Unicorn Clan PCs may recall that their two clans were close, and often trained with each other's troops.

As they get closer, the PCs will begin to see several unusual banners spread around the encampment. **Lore: Heraldry / Intelligence TN 25** or **Lore: ronin / Intelligence TN 20** reveals these to be the insignia of several well known ronin otokodate, with the others likely belonging to lesser known bands.

The PCs will likely arrive at Maemikake separately over the course of several days, so there is plenty of time to catch up on what's been happening locally. After describing the current state of the village, allow the players to choose which skill they want to use to gain information.

## Rumors

Courtier (Gossip) / Awareness:

- **10:** (Crab and Jade Magistrates don't need to roll): Kaiu Hiroyo and Seppun Ashitako have called for a purge of the Shinomen Forest, targeting the large number of Kumo Spawn that made their way here in the months following the Great Spider's assault on the coast. The Crab have offered a position in their clan to any ronin who returns with proof that they killed twenty or more of the fiendish spiders, similar to a Twenty Goblin Winter
- **20:** Fear of bandit raids has increased with the arrival of so many ronin to the area, which has resulted in more ronin being hired as caravan guards. The Crab have increased patrols along the main trade routes, though there have been fewer than a dozen executions.
- **30:** (Crab and Unicorn Samurai TN 20) Most of the Shinjo responsible for patrolling the Shinomen Mori have been recalled, possibly

explaining why the Crab are seeking help from the ronin for this hunt.

- **35:** There are whispers about a strange, green-skinned woman travelling as part of the Seppun's entourage. Some have gone so far as to connect this woman to rumors of a massacre in Unicorn lands.

### **Lore: ronin or Lore: Underworld / Awareness**

Ronin characters have these TNs reduced by 5, but Clan samurai only get this information if they expressly state they are talking to ronin.

- **15:** The primary topic of conversation among the ronin is a rumor indicating that there aren't really that many of the Kumo spawn in the forest, but the Crab are trying to keep skilled ronin interested in clan membership from joining up with the recently-depleted Owl clan.
- **20:** Several otokodate are using this event as an opportunity to recruit new members, as well. The only prominent otokodate not having any obvious presence here are the Forest Killers, who were recently subject to their own purge from the northern reaches of the Shinomen. (Characters interested in joining a specific band should be instructed to contact Admin)
- **30 (ronin only):** There's a former Clan samurai asking around about [PC at the table with Ikoma Robun as a Sworn Enemy].

Once the PCs have settled their belongings at their lodgings provided inside the city (or out in the camp, if ronin), they each receive a visit from a young Miya bushi bearing Jade Legion insignia.

After confirming the PC's identity, the messenger continues:

"Lord Seppun-sama requests your presence at her earliest convenience. She will be prepared to receive you as soon as you think prudent."

"Lord Kaiu-sama would also like me to inform you that he has taken up residence in one of the large, Unicorn-style tents in the middle of the ronin camp. I am to lead you there, if you wish, or to carry you there if you ask me too many questions."

Either by following the Miya messenger or on their own, the PCs eventually find themselves outside the largest of the three circular tents. The guards announce their presence, which is met with a jovial, "Come in, come in."

Once inside the yurt, you can see it is divided into several ‘rooms’ separated by heavy sheets of linen, which hang like sails from the roof supports. Passing through a small entryway, you are led into the much larger central meeting room.

Seated in the center of the room on a slightly raised platform are **Kaiu Hiroyo, and a stern-looking Seppun woman wearing both the sash of the Jade Magistrates** as well as the command insignia of the Jade Legion.

One of the Miya offers a formal introduction, naming the woman as **Seppun Ashitako**, Miharu Sensei, Taisa of the 3rd Scout unit of the Imperial Jade Legion and Senior Jade Magistrate for the areas South and East of Shinomen Mori.

Following the introductions, Kaiu Hiroyo invites you to join them around the low table at the base of the platform, stepping down and motioning for one of his servants to begin serving tea.

Perhaps sensing the PCs' reaction to having one of the Jade Magistrates present following the betrayal of the Jade Champion, Kaiu Hiroyo jumps right to it.

“First things first: I have known Seppun Ashitako-sensei for the better part of two decades, and she has my implicit trust. Despite this, **I assure you that upon her arrival, I had her entire entourage tested for... outside influence, and all but two of her party came away clean,**” the daimyo states, before adding, “Those two did not come away at all.”

“Again, I must offer my most humble apologies, Hiroyo-san,” Ashitako replies, sadly. “This has all been horribly sudden. Had I suspected the very core of the Jade Magistrates had begun to rot, I would have dealt with it long ago.”

Turning to you, she continues. “I understand you may distrust me, Samurai, but Lord Hiroyo has set aside his doubts, and I ask that you do the same. Especially given our reason for being gathered here.”

**“Let me stop you there, Seppun-san.” interrupts Hiroyo. “If any of these samurai feel my trust is misplaced, they are free to leave. Now.”**

Allow any player who does not wish to work alongside the Jade Legionnaires to leave the table. They will receive 1 XP for leaving at this point of the

module, and lose D3 Honor. Once everyone has decided to leave or stay, continue.

“Please continue, Seppun-san.” Hiroyo urges.

“Thank you, Kaiu-sama.”

“As you are no doubt aware, we’ve gathered these ronin here in an effort to clear the remainder of the Great Kumo’s spawn from the Shinomen. While this is an important task, and will ensure the Crab do not have to worry about a poorly timed attack from behind, it’s not why you are here. I suspect you have some idea, but I have a tale to tell, first.

“During the reign of Toturi the First, a small unit of Naga arrived at Otosan Uchi carrying a gift for the Imperial family. They were met at the gates by a very astute court functionary, who narrowly avoided a political travesty by accepting this gift on the Emperor’s behalf. Inside the ornate chest lay an enormous, golden pearl, roughly the size of a person’s head. The Emperor receives many, many gifts every day, so the diplomat turned the pearl over to the Seppun for inspection and storage in the Imperial vaults.

“Years later, that courtier would raid those same vaults, taking powerful nemuranai as part of his bid to usurp the throne. Just as history has largely forgotten his name, the Empire eventually forgot about the Naga’s Golden Pearl, which remained hidden in the Imperial vault for nearly two centuries.

“About twenty-five years ago, however, my duties included accompanying the daily inspection of the Imperial Vault. During one of these inspections, we heard the sounds of a screaming child echoing from the vault’s interior. Inside, we found a newborn child, naked and squirming in the remains of a shattered pearl. It was clear, even then, that this was no ordinary baby. She had skin the color of spring grass, and her eyes were golden yellow and slitted, like those of a serpent.”

At this moment, there is a polite cough from one of the tent’s side chambers, and a strikingly beautiful, green-skinned woman steps through a curtain into the main room, followed by a ronin woman wearing an orange silk eye-patch. The ronin deftly grabs a soft bun from a passing servant’s tray.

“Forgive my impatience, Oba-san, but I think I should take over the telling of my own story from here.”

Appearing to be in her mid-twenties, the woman smiles as she approaches, bowing deeply to Kaiu Hiroyo and then to Seppun Ashitako, before offering each of the PCs deferential bows. She wears modern travel clothes in the Seppun colors, with her long, dark hair held up by a silver comb studded with amber.

**“I am Seppun Akasha, and it is easiest to say that I was born through the power and magic of my people, the Naga. I am named for the mystic bond that connects all Naga, and I speak to, and for them.** The Naga are grateful that the Seppun have treated us well, and have granted us the opportunity to assist in locating the Ebon Pearl.

“Some of you may know **my companion, Kouki, captain of the ship that carried the Crab investigators in search of the missing pearl divers.** Her reasons for being here are her own, though she has pledged her knowledge of past events related to the discovery of the Ebon Pearl, and it’s probable location today.”

“I can see you have questions for us, and we would like to ease your concerns and curiosity, but for now we should focus on the task at hand. We will have time to answer what we can during our trek into the Shinomen.”

The two women join the group around the low table, and Seppun Akasha nods to the Kaiu daimyo, signaling readiness for him to take over the discussion.

“You are all aware of the situation surrounding this so-called Ebon Pearl. Following your recent interrogation of Hida Maizen, she became so obsessed with relocating Hiruma Kawakami that she is now unfit to assist us in our search, and is under the care of the very monastery where the Hiruma once resided. She did indicate that she could ‘hear’ the pearl calling her from the direction of Shinomen Mori. Knowing that Seppun-san was preparing her unit of Jade Legionnaires to scour the area for the remnants of the Great Kumo’s spawn, I reached out to her to offer the Crab’s assistance, and ask for hers.

“It then came to my attention that Kouki’s most recent testimony revealed some of what happened to Hiruma Kawakami and the pearl while the other members of that expedition were meeting with the Yasuki daimyo. Which is why she is here, as well. “Since Hida-san cannot be here,” Hiroyo repeats,

turning his full attention to Kouki, who flinches reflexively, “you will help guide these samurai to the pearl, and assist them as necessary in the completion of their task. Is that correct, ronin?”

“Y.. yes, Kaiu-sama,” the startled older woman agrees, dropping a handful of rice crackers and staring at the floor. “I failed the Crab before, but I will not do so again.”

“Good.” Hiroyo holds her eyes steadily for a moment before continuing. “Now, Seppun Akasha-san says there should be an abandoned temple somewhere to the northwest of the Naga city of Siksa, but none of the scouts sent to map the area have returned. We’ve drawn up a map from the reports of earlier scouting missions, as well as those of our friends in the Unicorn, but the Forest is known to change rather quickly, so I can’t promise its accuracy.

“You leave for Siksa tonight, across the Lake, and should reach the probable location of the temple in two days, allowing for the terrain and any opposition you encounter along the way. Ask your questions now, then head to the quartermaster’s tent to get any basic gear you might require. It’s the one with the kabuto painted on it just west of here. We can probably spare a couple sets of ashigaru armor, if your lords haven’t seen fit to equip you properly.”

#### **What about the Kumo spawn?**

“Not your problem, but I don’t expect you to be the type of samurai who would let blasphemy survive without a fight. Am I wrong?”

PCs who succeed at **Investigation (Notice) / Perception TN 20** can see that Kouki was about to ask a question, but then thought better of it.

#### **Will the Jade Legionnaires be joining us?**

“Not all of them, no. Seppun Akasha will act as guide and offer insight into what to expect from the forest and the Naga, and Kouki will assist by doing whatever it is she does, but otherwise you will be on your own. Don’t get lost, don’t get eaten, and for Fortune’s sake don’t eat anything you didn’t see something else eat - and survive! - first.”

Once the PCs have exhausted their questions, Hiroyo will dismiss them with a wave. Seppun Akasha waits until all of the PCs have exited the command tent before agreeing to meet them later that day at the docks on the far side of Mamaekaki Mura.

Give the PCs time to acquire basic equipment (climbing gear, torches, etc) from the supply tent. Characters without armor may borrow a set of ashigaru armor, but nothing more extravagant is available.

That evening, the entire group sets out across the Lake of Cherry Blossom Snow, arriving at a modern mooring outside of the vine-covered Naga city of Siksa. **The nearly full moon is high overhead as Seppun Akasha leads you towards a squat stone tower on the north side of the ruins.**

“This is where we will sleep this evening. I suggest you keep your curiosity under control and avoid wandering around, as our guardians do not take kindly to those who would interrupt our slumber.”

As Akasha builds a fire in the center of the large central chamber, the PCs can roll **Craft: Armor / Intelligence TN15 or Investigation (Notice) / Perception TN 25**. Akasha is wearing a mismatched set of Ashigaru armor, but succeeding at one of the rolls reveals that the armor is pieced together from several different sets with different levels of craftsmanship, and shows signs of scorching and extensive repair. The back-piece is marked with the kanji for ‘wife’..

Kneeling next to the fire, Akasha sets her ornate kabuto aside, and smiles.

**“Now is the time for questions, my allies. We will answer what we can about the Naga, the Akasha, or both.”**

Akasha will answer the players’ questions as best as she can, and will use singular and plural pronouns interchangeably when speaking about herself or the Naga as a whole. She doesn’t see a difference between the two, unless speaking of her physical being directly.

**What is the Akasha, exactly?**

It is difficult for most humans to understand, but your priests may have some idea. Imagine being able to speak to all of the kami in this room, at the same time, using emotions and impressions instead of actual words. All Naga everywhere are connected in this manner, as is the Yakamo, your Lord Sun.

**You hatched from a pearl? Do Naga normally hatch from eggs?**

Most Naga are born from an egg, yes, but I am.. different. I was created in the form of a Golden Pearl

by our Jakla - our priests - using powerful magic, but something caused the Pearl that contained me to shatter, which resulted in my change to this form. Why I came into existence when I did is one of the things we wish to find out during the coming days.

**You referred to Seppun Ashitako as Oba-san. Why is that?**

Ashitako-sama is my guardian, and closest friend. She was given the charge of being our protector, and overseeing our training until I completed my gempukku. We are fond of her.

**Why has no one heard of your existence until now?**

The Seppun, being rightfully suspicious, wished to keep me hidden from the Empire-at-large until they could determine the Naga’s purpose for creating me. Once they understood that we intended no harm, and only wished to co-exist with humanity, the Empire suffered a terrible loss to the Foul One, and the Seppun decided that perhaps it would be best to wait.

I have only been allowed to leave the Seppun holdings at Otosan Uchi at this time because of the Ebon Pearl.

**Are there other Naga searching the forest? Why aren’t the Naga taking part in hunting the Kumo Spawn?**

There are very few of us who remain awake, and fewer of us can be spared from our duty to guard Those Who Sleep, especially now that the Children of Shinjo have withdrawn from the forest.

**Why is your armor called “Wife”?**

Both my armor and this spear were carried by a peasant woman whose service to the Imperial Magistrates earned her the attention of the Moshi, who honored her as one of their own, following her death. She called the spear “Husband” in life, and the armor was named “Wife” in honor of her passing.”

## Part One: Three Paths

The Shinomen is constantly changing, especially near the southern swamps, and some areas that are green and vibrant one day may be overcome by the bogs the very next.

Setting out at dawn the next morning, the PCs soon find themselves in a clearing on the north side of one of these marshes.

In addition to the path behind them, they see a path headed to the northwest and another headed east towards a bridge over the swampy terrain. Remind the PCs that they were given a map of the area, though Hiroyo was unable to guarantee its accuracy.

A PC who refers to this map can roll **Craft: Cartography, Lore: Battle / or Sailor (Navigation) / Intelligence TN 20** to notice a fourth path leading away from this clearing to the northeast. A cursory look around the area shows no indication of such a path.

**Hunting (Trailblazing) / Perception TN 30 (Toritaka-trained characters TN 25)** allows the PC to notice the cleverly concealed path, hidden behind a screen woven from still-growing vines and branches.

Succeeding at **TN 40** reveals an additional surprise: Several sharpened bamboo poles bound to young branches have been bent back so that anyone who pushes blindly through the screen will be speared by the cruel spikes. The trap can be disabled with **Engineering / Agility TN 25** or **Engineering / Void TN 20**.

Failure to disable the trap or neglecting to do so before pushing through the vine screen results in the first PC triggering the spike trap. The PC must roll **Athletics / Reflexes TN 25** to jump out of the way or take **3k3 damage**. **If the trap misses the first PC and a second PC is right behind them, that PC must also attempt the Athletics roll, at TN 20.**

There are three options leading away from this clearing, each one leading to a different encounter in **Part 2**. If the PCs can't decide which way they should go, Seppun Akasha will suggest that as long as they are headed towards the North, it may not matter which path they take.

Before arriving at those encounters, however, the PCs must deal with their first battle against the Spawn of the Great Kumo.

Once you have chosen your path, the Shinomen quickly closes in around you, blocking Lord Sun's light and casting deep shadows by mid-day. The forest surrounds you with a chorus of bird songs, whirring insects, and the creaks and groans of ancient trees slowly turning towards the light.

It isn't until the Shinomen goes suddenly quiet that you realize you aren't alone.

PCs can roll **Investigation (Notice) / Perception TN 20** to hear a chittering sound coming from the undergrowth around you. Each PC who succeeds at this roll hears the sound coming from a different direction, but all can tell the chittering is getting closer.

The PCs will have essentially one round to determine how to respond to the unseen threat. **The Kumoling Swarms will arrive on their initiative in the second round.** There are three Swarms if all of the PCs are Insight Rank 3, and five if all of the PCs are Insight Rank 5. In any other case, there are four Swarms.

The forest seems to spew spiders from all around you. Each individual creature is only about two feet long, but there are hundreds of them and they move in inexorable waves toward you.

#### **NPC Initiatives:**

**Kumoling Swarms - 35**

**Seppun Akasha - 26**

**Kouki - 10**

#### **Kumoling Swarm (3-5, depending on party)**

**Armor TN: 27**

**Reduction: 20** unless Fire, Jade, or Nemuranai

**Wounds: 75 (Dead)**

**Attacks:** On their Initiative, the swarms climb over every creature within their reach, biting exposed flesh and crawling under armor, doing 2k2 damage to any creature within a 20-foot radius. This attack ignores the PCs' Armor TN, but they can apply Reduction from sources other than armor as normal.

**Weak Kumoling Poison:** Anyone who takes damage from a swarm should roll raw Stamina TN 10. Failing this roll means the PC takes -1k0 on all rolls until they receive an antidote, or receive magical healing. This poison effect is cumulative. Crafting an antidote requires **Medicine (Antidotes) / Intelligence** at TN 30 and can be attempted once per day per PC; otherwise, the penalty remains for the rest of the module.

**Regrow the Swarm:** During the Reactions Phase, a Kumoling swarm reduced to 15 HP or less will merge with a nearby swarm, healing the larger swarm of 2k2 Wounds.

During the first round of combat, Seppun Akasha activates her armor by whispering, "We will be together soon, my love." At these words, she is surrounded by a nimbus of fire, as per the spell *Fires of Purity*.



She does a total of 23 damage to the swarms on each round.

Kouki wields a pair of matched warfans made from the same orange silk as her eye patch, and takes up a defensive stance in front of an unguarded PC shugenja or courtier, though this will not offer any real protection from the swarm. She will end combat with two levels of poison, for -2k0 on her rolls, until healed or given an antidote.

After the swarms are destroyed, Kouki collects several of the spider corpses and places them in a woven bundori bag fastened to her obi. There are easily enough bug bits here to fulfill the Crab's requirement, but if asked why she's not taking more, she explains that she doesn't feel right claiming anything she didn't actually help destroy.

Later that evening, the expedition sets up camp at the base of a large boulder. If the PCs discuss setting up watches, Kouki will volunteer to help with the first rotation (if they don't discuss it, Akasha will bring it up.).

"Pretty sure I'm not getting much sleep tonight, anyway. This place has changed a lot since I was here last, but it's still terribly familiar." Kouki explains, pulling a sweet bun out of her sleeve. (Kouki has a ready supply of sweet treats tucked in the sleeves of her kimono.)

This should encourage the PCs to ask her about the events that brought her here last time, but if they don't ask her about that last visit, she reluctantly, and somewhat apologetically, begins to tell her story anyway.

Throughout her story, Kouki speaks haltingly and almost pleadingly, looking each of the PCs in the eye. There is no attempt to hide her emotions, nor is there any indication that she's lying about anything.

"It's been a while; a lot of the detail is a little hazy, so please bear with me. After I dropped off the other four Crab at Yasuki Yashiki to make their report, Hiruma Kawakami demanded by knife-point that I take him as far up river as I could.

"My boat.. she wasn't built for river travel, and.. got caught up in the Ueba Marshes. Suppose she's still there, to be honest. Anyway, Hiruma-san dragged me off the boat, and again forced me to accompany him. He didn't seem to know where we were going,

insisting that the pearl did.. but just kept us headed north for what seemed like weeks.

"I tried to run a couple times, but he would always be there.. knife at my throat, pushing me forward. Said he'd let me go once we got where we were going, but he didn't seem to know where that was. I was positive he was going to kill me, so I went along. Eventually we ended up here... or near here... I think. There was a temple with a big eye on it. I remember mentioning that to the ... to Hiruma-sama.. and. that's when..."

Kouki places her hand over her eye patch..

"I don't know how.. or why .. I survived, but some woodcutters found me wandering at the edge of the Shinomen, and took me to Maemikake. A few years later, I met back up with Hida Maizen, and.. she wasn't doing well, and .. I stuck around. Then you showed up... and we heard about what happened to the others..

"I could.. I should .. have stopped him.. but I wasn't ready to die.. and now .. I just want a good death. I want to make amends to the Crab for letting this happen.. It's why I took the kumo spawn bodies.. I will swear fealty to Lord Hida-sama, and then ask for Kaiu-sama's permission, ya know?"

PCs listening to her story should roll **Lore: Theology / Awareness TN 20** to pick up on themes related to the Three Great Sins of Fear, Regret, and Desire; specifically the Fear of death, Regret for her own failure to act, and the Desire to make amends.

If any PC attempts to divert Kouki's thoughts from dwelling on these things, or to otherwise encourage her not to become consumed by the Three Sins, should be asked to roll **Lore: Theology / Void**. Keep track of any players who attempt this roll, and their results.

Once the conversation has concluded, Seppun Akasha indicates that it's time to get some rest, and for the first watch to begin. The evening passes uneventfully.

## Part Two: Two Destinations

The events in this section depend on which path the PCs chose in Part 1: **The Northwest Passage** into the dense forest. **The Eastern Path** over the swamp, or **The Hidden Path** that was marked on the map but has since become overgrown.

## The Northwest Passage

(Congrats, you found Canada!)

After several hours of trekking along animal runs through dense undergrowth, your trail eventually joins up with a more well-travelled path, showing signs of having been paved with large stones in the distant past.

“We recognize this path.” Seppun Akasha comments. “There should be a clearing about two hours to the northeast where we can make camp for the night,” she estimates.

Before reaching the campsite, however, you find the path nearly completely blocked by a fallen tree. An opening exists near the leftmost edge of the path, but a large ronin leans against the tree nearby, chewing on a twig while watching you approach.

*“Good afternoon, samurai-samas. I trust you’ve had rice today?” the man asks, standing straight before bowing respectfully. “You can call me Doma, and there is a ... bit of courtesy required to continue up this road, here. Y’all are welcome to pass, of course, nothin’ required, but yer one-eyed friend there is going to have to leave her bag a’spiders with us.”*

If there are other ronin in the party who are collecting spider bits, Doma requires those, as well.

Vigilant PCs who succeed at **Hunting (Survival)**, **Investigation (Notice)** or **Battle (Ambush) / Perception TN 25** notice two more ronin in the trees to either side of the path, with bows drawn. Success at **TN 35** reveals the presence of at least 2-3 more people hiding behind the log or in the nearby forest.

Before the PCs can offer a response however, Doma interrupts, apologizing.

“Forgive me, samas, but I forgot my manners. I introduced myself, but didn’t allow y’all the same courtesy. I’d like to know the names of the folks I’m conversin’ with, if you don’t mind.”

If the PCS refuse an introduction, Doma feigns disappointment, but doesn’t press. He doesn’t expect clan samurai to treat him with civility, after all. However, all Social TNs are 5 higher while negotiating with him for the remainder of the scene.

Note that any PC with Sworn Enemy: Ikoma Robun will likely catch his attention, triggering “The Bad Death of Ikoma Robun”, below.

### **The Easy Way**

Should the PCs look to Kouki (and any other ronin) to hand over her collected Kumo parts, she reacts with visible dismay, but does not refuse. If all ronin in the party turn over their Kumo bags, the PCs are allowed to proceed without incident.

“I am honored to have met some truly fine samurai, samas,” Doma says, appreciatively, “and look forward to taking my place among you soon.”

### **The Hard Way**

Refusing Doma’s request will most likely end in combat, but there is an opportunity to convince the ronin to let you pass without a fight.

#### **You haven’t introduced your friends.**

“You’re right, samas, I must once again apologize. The men with the bows are Itsuki (m) and Kaito (m). Kana (f), you, Daichi (m), and Robun (m) should come meet our guests.”

If there are more than 4 PCs, you could use these additional names, or come up with your own: Akari (f), Mei (f), Dae (f), Ujin (m), Yut (m). These additional combatants will reveal themselves from various locations in the forest surrounding the path.

Only Robun is always here.

#### **Why should Kouki turn over her Kumo bag?**

Doma is looking for a way to collect enough dead Kumo bodies as necessary for his whole band to gain entry into the Crab.

#### **Why do you want to join the Crab?**

He’s heard rumors that several Great Clans are starting to bulk up their forces by hiring ronin, and is more interested in the long-term security of belonging to a clan over the possibility of dying for clan koku.

“It’s been my experience that once the fightin’ is done, everything costs more and it’s a lot harder to find work for a long while.” He explains, “No sense in earning all that money if it’s harder to keep, ya know?”

#### **Why not join the Owl? They aren’t asking for Kumo parts or sending you to the Shadowlands.**

We talked about it, but they’re hurtin’ pretty bad right now, and sittin’ on the Phoenix border seems about as safe as bein’ on the Wall, these days, yeah?”

**We can't force anyone to turn over their own chance for the security you seek.**

“Sure, I get that, but I never liked any of the fines and tolls I've had to pay in the past, but I still had to pay'em. If you have a better idea for gettin' enough spiders for my whole band, then I'd like to hear it - and sayin' we should go out hunting like everyone else doesn't fall under 'better ideas'.”

Doji or Yasuki-trained characters can use their **Rank 3 Techniques against TN 20** to remind them that after the fight with the Kumoling swarms yesterday, Kouki didn't take all of the bodies, just those that she had a hand in killing herself. There should be plenty remaining, unless the PCs cleansed the area after the fight. Other players can attempt a **Commerce/ Perception roll TN 25** to recall this information..

If the PCs fail, or don't think of it, Kouki will mutter “The swarms,” under her breath to the nearest PC.

After the players have run out of questions or ideas, they can try to persuade Doma to let them pass without a fight. One PC may attempt to do this with **Courtier (Manipulation) / Awareness TN 40** with the following adjustments:

If the PCs:

Refused to introduce themselves: +5

Tried to Intimidate Doma at any point: +10

Brought up the Kumoling Swarms: -10

Other PCs who participated in the negotiation can attempt to aid the Primary PC by adding that character's total ranks in the Courtier Skill to the result of their roll.

On a success, Doma smiles and bows, agreeing to let the party pass.

“I appreciate you takin' the time to parlay with us, samas,” Doma responds..”Most would just assume that we'd just try to take what we want, and rush into a fight, rather than bein' diplomatic.”

Failing, or not attempting to persuade Doma leaves him in a surly mood.

“Well, I hate to fall back on expectations, but you've left us little choice. Seems we'll just have to take what we need, after all. Archers, take aim!” Doma commands, as he takes up a fighting stance with his spear.

### **NPC Initiatives:**

Doma - 32

Seppun Akasha - 24

ronin (equal to number of combat PCs + 1)- 23

Kouki - 12

During combat, Doma's ronin will avoid targeting any shugenja, mounts or unarmed courtier characters who are not participating in the fight. Once one of these characters takes an offensive action (ranged attack, casting a spell that deals damage, or entering melee), they will be considered valid targets.

PCs who participated in **Exchange of Hostages** and have either **Precise Memory** or an **Intelligence of 3+** will recognize one of the ronin as the former Ikoma negotiator, Robun. If they make any comments to Robun about his fall from a Great Clan, or his desire to join the Crab after trying to provoke them to war, he will simply sneer and target them with ranged attacks. He will run from any attempt to engage in Melee.

### Doma

A rough-and-tumble ronin who's not afraid to shake down clan samurai, but smart enough to do it politely.

Air 4    Earth 5    Fire 4    Water 4    Void 4

Agility 5

Honor 2.4

Status 0

Infamy 2.5

Initiative: 32

Attack: 10k6e (Katana, Simple)

Armor TN: 38

Damage: 8k2m (Katana)

Reduction: 3 (light armor)

Wounds: 25 (+0), 35 (+0), 45 (+0), 55 (+5), 65 (+10), 75 (+15), 85 (Down, +35), 95 (Out), 96 (Dead)

School/Rank: Ronin Bushi 5

Techniques: streamlined ronin school; factored in above

Skills: Athletics 4, Battle 4, Defense 3, Hunting 5, Iaijutsu 4, Intimidation 5, Kenjutsu (Katana) 7,

Knives 6, Kyujutsu 4

## Ronin

A motley crew.

Air 2    Earth 3    Fire 2    Water 3    Void 2

Reflexes 3                      Agility 4

Honor 2.1                      Status 0                      Infamy 1.0

Initiative: 23                      Attack: 9k4 (Katana, Complex)  
or 8k3 (Yumi, Complex)

Armor TN: 23                      Damage: 7k2 (Katana)  
or 5k2 (Yumi)

Reduction: 3 (light armor)

Wounds: 15 (+0), 21 (+0), 27 (+2), 33 (+7), 39 (+12), 45 (+17), 51 (Down, +37), 57 (Out), 58 (Dead)

School/Rank: Ronin Bushi 2

Techniques: streamlined ronin school; factored in above

Skills: Athletics 3, Battle 1, Defense 2, Hunting 3, Intimidation 4, Kenjutsu 5, Knives 4, Kyujutsu 5

### **Combat ends when:**

Doma reaches the Down condition AND 4 of the other ronin are Out or Dead. Doma commands his remaining ronin to lay down their weapons and surrender. One ronin (Robun) will attempt to flee.

**-or-**

Doma dies, and 3 or more ronin are Out or Dead. Any surviving ronin will attempt to flee.

## **The Bad Death of Ikoma Robun**

This encounter is much different if there are any PCs at the table who were given Ikoma Robun as a Sworn Enemy in CIT28: *Exchange of Hostages*.

**Note to GMs:** Despite his aggressive nature, Robun is a coward at heart. Once Doma refuses to be his second in the duel, Robun becomes desperate and pitiful.

As soon as the character with Sworn Enemy (Ikoma Robun) speaks, or is introduced, Robun bursts from his hiding place behind the log, and rushes towards the PC. In the event that more than one PC has Sworn Enemy, he focuses his ire on the one with the highest total Glory and Infamy.

“[Character Name]!” a man in tattered brown and gold shrieks, as he stomps towards you. Turning towards Doma, he continues, “I knew the Fortunes would smile upon me eventually! My prayers have been answered and my nemesis now stands before me!”

“Really?” Doma asks, in a tone somewhere between confusion and amusement. “Maybe we can add a formal apology to the negotiations.”

“Apology? I do not require an apology. I demand Justice! I demand an opportunity to reclaim my honor! [Character Name], your arrogance and distasteful slandering of my name has gone on long enough! Your refusal to respond to my repeated demands of satisfaction have cost me my position, my family, and even my clan!”

**“You have left me with little choice but to seek resolution with steel. [Character Name], I challenge you to a duel to the death!”**

Some PCs may attempt to interrupt Robun’s declaration, but this will just cause him to start over. At the third such interruption, Robun somehow turns even redder, and skips to the challenge part of his screed, spitting with rage.

If the PC refuses, or says they’ll need to speak with their Lord, Robun literally screeches, “NOOO! You coward! I will have my justice NOW!”

If any PC attempts to interrupt Robun’s diatribe with violence (punching Robun, attempting to restrain him, or other methods) the roll is up to the GM, but the TN should be relatively low. Robun is in such poor physical condition that he simply drops to OUT if he takes any damage of 10 or more.

Should the PC accept the duel, Robun smiles wickedly before turning towards Doma, who once again appears confused.

“You need to borrow my sword, Robun?”

“No, you fool! I need a champion!”

“Oh. uhm, No.”

“What do you mean, no? The whole reason I joined your filthy band of miscreants is because you claimed to be a master swordsman!”

Taking the twig from between his teeth, Doma stretches to his full height and steps to Robun. "You. Dare. Question. ME?!" Doma thunders. "I fed you. I gave you shelter. I did NOT volunteer to die because you got your pretty little fan in a twist. You got a problem with this samurai? You deal with it yourself."

Robun shrinks back from the enraged ronin, and turns back to his opponent.

"I.. i.. am sorry. You should probably get your lord's p.. permission before we continue this duel."

The PC can accept this, and the confrontation ends. Doma waves the group past the log, saying, "Seems I owe you an apology for more than simply forgetting the proper introductions. Please enjoy safe travels, Samurai-samas"

If the PC demands the duel proceed now, Doma will not allow Robun to back out, saying, "You've dug your own well." One of the other ronin loans Robun their katana.

A shugenja or monk PC can choose to sanctify the ground where the duel is to take place before the two samurai take up their positions opposite each other.

Robun's stance is shaky and loose, and it isn't more than an eyeblink before the pitiful man slumps to his knees, sobbing. Several of the ronin turn their backs on the shameful spectacle, though one of them can be heard trying to stifle laughter. Any PC who doesn't similarly avert their gaze loses D8 Honor.

**Lore: Law / Intelligence TN 15** confirms that Robun has lost the duel through concession, and must now pay for his dishonor through seppuku.

"Y'all don't have to stick around for this part, if you don't want to, samas. We've taken up enough of your time. I'll make sure this one does as honor requires." Doma apologizes.

**There are a few options here.**

- 1. Walk away** - The PCs can simply move on, leaving Doma to follow-up on his word.
- 2. Knock him unconscious**, then Walk away. The rest of the ronin will follow the Clan Samurai's lead, and move on, leaving Robun laying in the dirt, victim of an unknown fate.
- 3. Act as 2nd** - If the PCs stay until Robun has completed his duty, one of them may act as Robun's second, otherwise Doma will take up this role. Monk

or shugenja PCs may also help the ronin through the rituals required for a clean seppuku.

After taking several minutes to compose himself, Robun slips his kimono off of his shoulders, exposing his abdomen. With a deep breath, Robun draws his wakizashi, and readies to make the first cut.

If a PC is acting as second, have them roll **Initiative**. Read the following events, allowing the PC to act (or not) at any point lower than their Initiative result.

TN 35: Robun pauses before his blade reaches his skin.

TN 30: Robun begins to shake.

TN 27: Robun's head tilts back, mouth open.

TN 25: A wrenching sob begins to erupt from Robun's mouth. He lets go of the wakizashi.

TN 20: Robun tips to the side, falling to the ground

TN 15: Robun clutches his knees to his chest, and once again sobs uncontrollably.

If the PC takes Robun's head before he can start sobbing, they gain H9 Honor.

If the PC waits until Robun begins to sob, but hasn't yet fallen to the ground before taking his head, they take a D6 Honor loss.

If they choose not to behead him, they take a D2 Honor Loss, and Doma steps up to do it, saying "He was pathetic, but he deserved better, sama."

Regardless of the outcome of this encounter, move on to **Part 3: One Eye**

## **The Eastern Path**

As the PCs head down the path to the East, the path soon becomes waterlogged and swampy. PCs with Absolute Direction or Sailing (Navigation) can quickly determine that this path will ultimately take them away from their desired destination.

Seppun Akasha will confirm that they are not headed the right way, and should return the way they came. Once back in the clearing, the PCs may select one of the other paths without having lost much time.

## **The Hidden Path**

The path continues winding to the northwest for several hours, with little sign of Hiruma scouts or Naga temples. Occasionally, you can make out the

faint sound of battle, as ronin encounter the Kumo spawn in other parts of the Shinomen.

Suddenly, a tremendous, bestial **RAAOOWRRRR** echoes through the forest, accompanied by the snapping of timber and something large crashing through the nearby undergrowth.

PCS may roll **Survival (Hunting) / Intelligence TN 20** – That sounds like a very large, very angry bear!

As you approach, the growls and roars are joined by a furious series of hisses and clicks. The dim light of the deep forest suddenly fills with brilliant sunlight as an ancient tree topples away from you, revealing the source of the fighting: An enormous bear is locked in vicious combat with an equally huge kumo spawn!

The ancient beast's greying fur takes on a mossy green tinge in the sunlight, which also reveals several patches of fur have been burned or torn away in recent days, and perhaps a dozen open wounds.

Its opponent is just as gigantic, but rather than taking the shape of a typical hunting spider, as most kumo do, this eight-legged fiend more closely resembles a garden-variety orb weaver, though this one stands taller than an Utaku steed. It also takes on a green hue in the sunlight, though this is more like the oily film on a stagnant pond, swirling with sickening purples and browns.

A **Dragon PC** or anyone with **Lore: Dragon**, or **Lore: Tattoos** or who rolls **Lore: Theology / Intelligence TN 15** recognizes patterns in the beast's fur that resemble the mystic tattoos that adorn Togashi Monks.

If the PCs avoid investigating this commotion, or decide it's not their fight, they will have to deal with **3-5 more Kumoling swarms** before proceeding to the **Part 3: One Eye**. These swarms have the same stats as the earlier swarms, but more spiders rain down continuously from the trees overhead, **healing 2k2** wounds at the beginning of rounds 3 and 5.

After combat, the Players should also add **"Helped Togashi Samasu along his path to Enlightenment"** to their Character Sheets

## **Kuma vs Kumo**

### **NPC Initiatives:**

Samasu, Monk-Bear - 30

Orb-Weaver Kumo - 27

Akasha - 26

Kouki - 14

Kumoling Swarms (2) - 8

### **Orb Weaver Kumo**

**Armor TN 36 Reduction: 10 Invulnerable**

**HP: 200**

**Attacks:** 4 Simple Attacks per round, with one Simple attack always targeting the bear. If the PCs haven't engaged before the Orb-weaver's Initiative, it will focus two of its attacks on the bear, and target one of the PCs with its Web attack.

**Stabbing (Legs):** Simple. 8k5 Damage: 3k3

**Spit (Acid):** Simple: Range 30ft Targets: 1

Each character within 15 ft of the target must roll **Reflexes / Defense TN 30**, taking damage equal to the amount by which they missed the roll. (Example: Ikoma Sobadsu gets a result of 23, meaning he takes 7 damage.) Characters that succeed are unaffected.

The acid sticks to the target's armor, doing 2k1 damage until the acid is washed off, and reducing their **Armor's Reduction** by 1 (max 5). The **Reduction** remains lowered until magically repaired, or the end of the module.

**Web:** Rather using 2 Simple Attacks, the Orb Weaver Kumo rears up to its full height and curls the massive thorax under itself, aiming ghastly spinnerets towards a target within 100ft and releasing a torrent of sickly green fluid. A character struck by the webbing becomes Entangled, and cannot move until they successfully escape.

In addition to being incredibly sticky, the webbing is combined with the same acid as the creature's spit, which continues doing 2k1 damage every turn until the webbing has completely hardened (3 Rounds).

**Escape:** Simple Action, raw **Strength** or **Agility TN: 20**, but \*all\* TNs increase by 5 every Round the target remains Entangled. After 3 Rounds, the target cannot take any actions other than attempting to escape, as the webbing has nearly solidified. Another PC may attempt to help the trapped PC escape by making the same roll. Success adds 5 to the trapped PCs result.

### **NPC Combat Actions:**

#### **The Bear:**

The bear attacks the Kumo twice each round, hitting for a total of 19 damage each round, after reduction.

**-or-**

The bear breaks away from the fight, stomping over to a PC who has been trapped in webbing for 2 or more Rounds, ripping away the webs and releasing the PC.

**-or-**

When the Orb Weaver has been defeated, the bear unleashes a gout of jade fire towards any remaining Kumoling Swarms, obliterating them all.

**If the bear takes 5 hits from the spider,** he collapses to the forest floor, unconscious, and his wounds will cause him to perish if he is not treated within 3 Rounds.

### **Seppun Akasha:**

On her first Initiative, Akasha once again whispers to her armor and is surrounded by raging fire.. She attacks the Kumo twice each Round, doing a total of 20 damage each round.

**GM NOTE:** If none of the PCs have nemuranai weapons, or there are no Shugenja in the party, Seppun Akasha will use her turn to pull a walnut-sized pearl from her sleeve. After crushing it in her fist, Akasha sprinkles the shimmering powder over a PC's blade, allowing it to deal damage as though it were Jade for 3 Rounds. Akasha has three of these mystic pearls.

### **Kouki:**

Kouki takes up a defensive stance in front of a shugenja or courtier character, jumping in front of the first such character to be targeted by the Kumo's web attack. She fails to break free unless somehow aided by a PC.

### **Kumoling Swarms:**

On the second round of combat, any PCs who are not engaged in melee combat should attempt **Investigation (Notice) / Perception TN 20** to notice the chittering sound of Kumoling swarms approaching. TN 30 or better brings the PCs attention to the trees overhead.

On Round three, two swarms drop down on the ranged PCs, joining the combat. If all of the PCs are involved in melee combat, Kouki will call out in surprise as a multitude of fist-sized spiders rain down on her from the trees.

### **Following Combat**

Once the Orb Weaver Kumo has been destroyed, the PCs have an opportunity to patch themselves up, and to try and revive the bear, if he hasn't perished.

If the bear lives, he will approach any of the PCs who are still suffering penalties from Kumoling venom, pressing a heavy paw against their forehead, and emitting a low, melodic growl. A pattern on the bear's head begins to glow, taking on the appearance of an arrow-root leaf, removing the venom entirely.

The bear then begins to move towards the northern edge of the clearing. Before disappearing into the undergrowth, however, he turns back to the PCs, and indicates they should follow him with a nod of his head.

He leads them towards a cave at the base of a vine-covered cliff. Inside, they find several piles of leaves and grass arranged along the cave walls. Resting on each pile is a branch loaded with berries and a small mound of various tree nuts. The bear grunts, nodding towards the crude bedding, then positions himself just inside the cave entrance, facing out into the forest.

**“It seems we won't need to set a watch tonight,” Kouki says through a mouthful of berries.**

Should the PCs choose not to follow the bear, or if he perishes in the fight, they will eventually find a safe clearing to set up camp for the night.

**“I'll take the first watch,” Seppun Akasha declares. “I feel sleep is a long way off, tonight.”**

If the bear dies, the Players should add **“Helped Togashi Samasu along his path to Enlightenment”** to their character sheets.

## **Part Three: One Eye**

That night, your dreams are strange and detached, as though you were merely watching someone else's dream.

They float, drifting in a space devoid of light and sound. **“There should be voices,”** you think, in a voice not your own. **“Why am I alone?”**

Time passes, and still there are no voices, until.. a light appears. And another. two pin pricks of.. something.. at the edge of your vision. **“Come! Find Me!”** the voice shouts. And the tiny dots begin to move. **“I am not alone! But why can't I hear them?”**

The tiny motes of light start drifting closer and closer, responding to the voice's repeated calls for help.

***“Who are you? Can you hear me? Where are you?”***

You begin to remember. You have had many names. You are the Light in the Darkness. You are the master of Those Who Hunt. You were once the Pale Eye, a Reflection of Lord Moon. You were cast out by a Child of Humanity, and she has taken your place in the Heavens.

Days pass, and the twin lights finally begin to respond to your pleas. “Yes, I am coming.” says one, while the other says, “I am coming, but I am afraid.” You are not sure which makes you happier.

You remember another. A Bright companion, a partner. Racing through the heavens, chasing and being chased. She gave her place to another Child of Humanity. A Child that could speak to the Missing Voices; to the Sleeping Ones.

Suddenly, there is Light. You scream as it tears at your eyes, as the wind scours your flesh for the first time, as you are born out of the Darkness and into the World.

You open your eyes, and see a Man. He is dressed in Mist and Blood, and has brought you an offering of flesh. You decide not to bite him.

Many days pass, and then years, and the Man begins to turn grey, like his clothes, but he still brings you offerings of flesh. You are glad you did not bite him.

The Sleeping Ones are still silent, and you don’t understand why. You have seen their words carved in the walls around you. You have seen your name in those writings. But you cannot hear them. It is strange.

The Gray Man did not wake up today. His flesh is stringy and tough..

Another Gray Man approaches, but his offering causes pain. You are glad you bit him. And two more Gray Men come to offer you pain, but you bite them, too.

The Children of Mother Spider find you, and tell you they’ve seen the Bright One in the forest. That she has killed their siblings. You laugh at their folly.

The Hunters of Tooth and Claw find you, and tell you that the Bright One has returned, and is hunting you.

***“At last.”*** you think, in a voice not your own. ***“At last.”***

When the PCs wake from their strange dream, they are well-rested, if perhaps confused. Seppun Akasha is already awake, tending to a small fire. (If they are at the bear’s cave, he is nowhere to be seen.)

“You were plagued by my brother’s dream as well, it seems.” She observes, briefly pausing in thought. “Though we’ll likely have to explain what you saw.”

“It will be easier, we think, to answer your questions, rather than trying to explain it all.”

**You said this was your brother’s dream? You have a brother?**

It appears so, yes, though we won’t know for sure until we find him. We suspect he may have “hatched” from the Ebon Pearl, similar to my own birth from the Golden Pearl, and likely at the same time.

**I remember you from the dream. The Bright One?**

Yes, in a way. The ritual used to create the Pearls used the Naga ... memories ... of our Creation by your Lady Amaterasu and her consort, Lord Onnotangu. Our memories of Compassion, Justice, and Community reside within me, and allow me to speak with my people.

**Why can’t this ‘brother’ hear the voices of your people / the Akasha?**

Our memories of Isolation, Vengeance and Remorse were excised from the Akasha, and placed in the Ebon Pearl. We suspect that is why we cannot reach my brother.

**Who are the Hunters of Tooth and Claw?**

The Pale Eye watched over the predators, the scavengers, the fear-bringers. He ensured that they kept the herds and the hutches in check. In gratitude, they share with him all the secrets they find while they hunt..

**Did he eat ... people?**

We are saddened to admit that we believe so, yes. At least three Crab scouts, and probably the missing Hiruma mad man, if the dream can be taken as a reflection of truth.

When the PCs have exhausted their questions, they should gather their belongings and set out once more.

**GM NOTE:** During this encounter, some players may attempt to deal with the apparent threat by initiating combat. Obsidian is prepared for this however, and will instantly create an inky black dome



separating the two Naga from the rest of the party, and summon the Skeletal Naga from their sepulchre.

At about mid-day, your path begins to widen, and the stone roadbed begins to improve. Soon enough, the forest canopy opens to the sky, and you find yourselves standing at the base of an ancient stone building. Like most Naga constructs, it looks like something between a tower and a temple, with a winding ramp leading from the ground up about twenty feet to an arched opening. The building is covered in strange carvings, but your attention is drawn to the image of a giant slitted eye that sits at the top of the entry arch.

“The Temple of the Pale Eye. This is where our priests and scholars gather to observe the movement of the Heavens,” Seppun Akasha explains, “and also where we would come to honor your Lord Onnotangu, the Moon. It was a sacred place, but now it smells of blood, and decay.”

Moving up the ramp, it isn’t long before Akasha’s words are proven true. Just outside the archway is a maggot-infested heap of bones and viscera, both human and animal.

“Sorry for the mess.. Sister,” a voice hisses from the darkness of the temple’s interior. “I did not expect you so soon. Please, come in. We have much to discuss.”

Entering the building, your eyes are drawn first to the pillar of light shining through the large circular hole in the center of the temple’s domed ceiling. Glancing around, it quickly becomes apparent that the building’s interior mirrors its exterior, with a gently sloping ramp creating a series of stone terraces overlooking a central altar. Spaced evenly at five points along the interior walls are large stone blocks adorned with ornate carvings of what you assume to be important Naga ancestors.

The column of light is focused on a stone altar, and its grizzly decoration. Another corpse lies spread across the marble surface, ribs shattered and chest ripped open. Shreds of gray and dark blue fabric are scattered around the base of the altar, along with a discarded silk headband bearing the Toritaka family mon.

Akasha steps through the archway, “I am here, Brother. Show yourself.”

A dark, sinuous shape begins separating itself from the shadows. The creature’s head rises nearly a dozen

feet into the air, spreading his cobra-like hood to reveal a fleshless, humanoid skull, with a single opalescent stone set into the center of his forehead.

“You brought friends,” the creature states, in a raspy, breezy voice. “I am honored to meet you, humans. I am Dragash, Scion of the Moon. Welcome to my home.”

“We are not your only guests, are we, Dragash?” Kouki declares, in a voice that grows stronger and more commanding as she speaks, taking on a tone far different from her normally breathless and uncertain speech. “Brother, I believe we need to talk, as well.”

Choose one of the PCs who passes through the archway behind Seppun Akasha, and have them roll **Athletics / Perception TN15** to avoid tripping over another pile of bones.

The remains of a faded and rotting kimono hang loosely on the skeletal frame of yet another corpse, though there are still patches of bright orange silk visible.

Also visible is the tanto lodged hilt-deep in the fallen samurai’s left eye socket.

“**It was bound to happen, I guess,**” another new voice acknowledges, as a man in uncomfortably black robes slowly descends from the shadows of the dome. “**Your friends seem confused, Jade. Have you been dishonest?**”

“I apologize for the subterfuge, my friends,” Kouki says, blushing slightly as she lifts her eyepatch to reveal a void that glows with intensely green light. I am Jade, and this is my brother, Obsidian. We’re not supposed to interfere in the affairs of mortals.”

“**And yet here we are,**” Obsidian responds.

“And yet here we are,” Jade agrees as she incinerates each of the corpses with a glance.. “We should go.”

“**We should.**”

And with that, the youngest of the Celestial Dragons leave the Temple of the Pale Eye.

Seppun Akasha shakes her head, and returns her attention to the massive form of her own brother.

## Words, Not War

**GM NOTE:** The following interaction is meant to provoke conversation among the PCs, and are suggested points and counterpoints that can be used in the conversation between the two Naga. They can also be applied if the PCs take part in the discussion. If / When combat breaks out, the two should continue their verbal sparring as well.

If a courtier wishes to use one of their techniques to gauge what exactly Dragash is after, their TNs are 20.

Dragash wants to rejoin the Akasha, to be a part of his people. He wants his people to be vibrant, and alive once more, rather than sleeping ghosts of the forest and tales that humans use to frighten their children. If humans are to be frightened by Naga, Dragash wants to ensure they once again have reason to fear.

Similarly, Akasha has her own wishes for the Naga. She wants to coexist with humanity, the way the Five Races did before the humans came.. She wants to make sure that her people are never again dragged into wars that don't concern them, but also to be allowed to fight alongside mankind when the Foul threatens them all once again. She isn't completely opposed to the idea of the Naga having a presence in the Heavens once more, but isn't sure that replacing Hitomi and Yakamo is the best way to go about it.

**“I am here, Dragash. I have heard you calling these last few nights, and last night my friends heard you, as well. What is it you want from us?”**

**Dragash: “The balance must be restored. We must take our proper places within the Heavens.”**

**Akasha: “You are not the Pale Eye, Dragash. I am not the Bright Eye. We are creatures of this world.”**

**Dragash: “You don't understand. The Akasha is broken. Without the Pale Eye, the Naga cannot be whole. The rituals of the Jakla will be incomplete. Our warriors will remain blinded to the Darkness. The scholars will forget.”**

**Akasha: Tilts her head to the side, as if listening to a whispering mentor. “We can see these possibilities, as well, but you can't seriously be suggesting you and I should try to convince Lord Sun and Lady Moon to give up their positions?”**

**Dragash: “Convince them? No. I am saying that we DEMAND, on behalf of all of the Sleeping**

**Ones, that the humans step aside, and allow us to take our rightful places.”**

**Akasha: “We are in no position to make demands like that, Dragash. We have worked hard to show the humans that we are not their enemies, but what you are saying is tantamount to Blasphemy in their eyes.”**

**Dragath: The Akasha retains its tie to the Bright Eye through Lord Yakamo, who was reborn through a Naga ritual similar to that which gave us life. Lady Hitomi does not have this connection to the Naga, and the Akasha cannot speak to her as they do her counterpart.**

**Akasha: So if there was a way to allow Lady Moon to join with us, you would accept that?**

**Dragash: Perhaps, so long as we do not become mere servants to the humans, or their pets.**

During this discussion, have the PCs roll Lore: **Theology / Intelligence TN 25 or Void TN 20**. On a success, remind the PC that this entire conversation is taking place in what is essentially a Shrine to the Moon, and should therefore be of special interest to Lady Hitomi.

A character who prays to Lady Moon for advice in this conversation may roll **Meditation / Void TN 50**. If more than one PC participates in this prayer, they should choose who will be the Primary PC, and the others may make the same roll against **TN 20**, with a success allowing them to add +5 to the Primary PC's result. In addition, if the Primary PC made the **Theology / Void** roll when talking to Kouki **earlier in the Mod**, they may add +10 to their total here.

If the PC succeeds, they notice that the early evening moon can be seen through the opening in the temple's dome. At the same time, Jade and Obsidian return, now wearing their Dragon forms, and floating in lazy circles just below the ceiling.

“You have her attention, samurai,” says Jade, “**Be careful what you do with it.**” responds Obsidian.

“She has heard the words that have been spoken.”

“**And those that have not.**”

“She will hear your thoughts on the matter.”

“**But she may not act on them.**”

Allow the PCs to share their thoughts on the matter. If any of them are unsure of what exactly is being discussed, the simple answer is that the Naga have

been weakened by the loss of their connection to Lord/Lady Moon. Dragash wants to restore it, and is willing to use force, if necessary. Seppun Akasha seems to understand and appreciate Dragash's plan, if not his methods, and would also like to see balance restored to her namesake, the Akasha, and to have her people work alongside humanity to forge a stronger empire and restore glory to the Naga.

Once each PC has had a chance to say their piece, the twin Dragons respond, in unison, their combined voice taking on a faraway aspect.

***“WE WILL CONSIDER YOUR WORDS. YOU WILL CONSIDER THE MATTER SETTLED.”***

The moon has now moved out of sight, and the Dragons dive towards the two Pearl-born Naga, moving around and between the two in interlocking loops, before disappearing completely, and apparently taking Dragash and Seppun Akasha with them.

Proceed to the Conclusion.

### **War, Not Words**

It's entirely likely that some PCs may consider this entire line of conversation borderline blasphemy, and they aren't entirely wrong. Once again, if combat breaks out, the PCs will have to contend with the reanimated Skeletal Naga, but at this point, there is no shadowy dome protecting Dragash from the PCs..

### **During Combat:**

NPC Initiatives:

Akasha - 25

Dragash - 25

Skeletal Naga (=# of PCs) - 15

As soon as it becomes clear that the Conversation has become Conflict, read the following:

“Are you MAD? Did you think I wouldn't be prepared for this treachery?!” Dragash bellows as he crushes an apple-sized pearl in his massive hand. Inky black tendrils race from his fist towards the five massive stone monuments.

### **Seppun Akasha**

Akasha once again activates her nemuranai, but will only make one successful attack every other round, doing 18 damage, and using her remaining actions to

try and convince Dragash that warring against humanity is pure foolishness.

If she is hit by Dragash's Cast Out ability three times during the fight, she has been completely severed from the Akasha, and should be considered Down for the remainder of the fight, as she tries to deal with this tremendous loss.

### **Skeletal Naga**

On the first round, Skeletal Naga burst from within their ancient stone coffins, and charge towards the PCs. There should be at least one of the creatures for each player at the table. The PCs must roll to resist **Fear 2**.

### **Dragash**

During combat, Dragash will focus his attacks on the PCs, as he feels that killing Seppun Akasha would be a waste, and that he'll have an easier time convincing her to see things his way once the humans are dead.

Cutting the Seppun's tie to the Akasha is perhaps worse than death, but Dragash sees no other choice if he finds himself surrounded.

Once combat starts, Dragash will fight to the death.

### **Dragash**

A massive Naga nearly thirty feet long with a black cobra hood, his head is a fleshless skull with a pearl in the middle of the forehead.

Air 4    Earth 6    Fire 4    Water 4    Akasha 0

Reflexes  
5

Strength 7

Initiative: 25

Attack: 10k6 (Claw,  
Simple) or 10k3 (Tail,  
Simple)

Armor TN: 35

Damage: 8k3 (Claw) or  
10k6 (Tail)

Reduction: 15

Wounds: 75 (+10), 150 (+20), 200 (Dead)

Skills: Athletics 5, Defense 5, Jujutsu 6, Lore:  
Theology 4

Special Abilities:

- Price of Imbalance: As a Free Action, once per Round, Dragash may target a PC and roll his Lore: Theology (10k4) at a TN equal to their Void times 5 to forcibly remind them of

the elemental imbalance within themselves. They take damage equal to their highest Trait times their Void, ignoring Reduction from any source. Spending Void to reduce this damage reduces it by 15 instead of 10.

- Cast Out: As a Simple Action, a tremendous burst of mystic energy erupts from the pearl in Dragash's forehead, focusing on Seppun Akasha, but dealing 3k3 damage to anyone within melee range and forcing them 10 feet away, and into easy reach of the Skeletal Naga. Dragash uses this ability if the majority of PCs are focusing their attacks on him. After the third use of this ability, Seppun Akasha collapses to one knee, visibly shaken. If Akasha is still alive at the end of combat, she sorrowfully reveals that Dragash has somehow severed her tie to the Akasha and the rest of her people.
- Pearl Focus: If a PC specifically targets the pearl in Dragash's forehead and deals at least 25 with an attack, he screams in rage and pain, then loses consciousness.

### Skeletal Naga

Ten-foot long bundles of bone and hate, held together by magic rather than sinew. They attack primarily with grasping claws, but can attempt to Grapple by winding their long tails around a target.

Air 0	Earth 4	Fire 0	Water 1
Reflexes 3		Agility 3	Strength 5
Initiative: 15		Attack: 8k3 (Claws, Complex)	
Armor TN: 25		Damage: 6k2 (Claws)	

Reduction: 10 or 3 against blunt weapons or 20 against magic effects and nemuranai

Wounds: 50 (Dead)

Skills: Athletics 5, Jiu-jitsu 5

Special Abilities:

- Beheading: unlike normal undead, the magic animating these creatures does not require a head for the body to function.
- Magic Resistance: the magic animating the bones provides protection from damage from magical attacks or even awakened spiritual objects.
- Fear 2
- Undead

**After Combat:**

Once combat concludes, Jade and Obsidian appear once again, this time in their Dragon forms.

"It is a shame it had to end this way," Jade sighs.

"**We always knew it was a possibility,**" Obsidian replies.

"We should tend to their injuries, we are at fault, after all.:"

"**Agreed.**"

After they agree, the two dragons begin weaving around and between the two Naga, before all four of them disappear.

## Conclusion

Three days later, you arrive back at the Crab encampment outside of Maemekake. Many of the ronin have already returned, and some appear to have been more successful than others.

You are led in to see Kaiu Hiroyo and Seppun Ashitako, whose first concern is for the whereabouts of her charge.

"Well, out with it," Hiroyo demands. "What did you find out?"

By the time PCs finish recounting the events of their time spent in Shinomen Mori, Hiroyo has moved through suspicion, to confusion, on to wonder, and then back to suspicion, before seemingly coming to rest on confusion.

Be sure to make note if one of the PCs mentions Doma's checkpoint.

### Words, Not War

Hiryoo shakes his head, not quite in disbelief but in something close to it. "Yeah, I'm an engineer. I don't understand half of that, but if you say Lady Hitomi told you to let it go, and that the creature who killed my scouts was taken away by a pair of dragons, then I believe you."

Seppun Ashitako seems far more accepting. "I did understand most of that, Hiroyo-san, and I can assure you that I am just as confused and awed by what they describe. Very few people can claim to have seen even one of the Celestial Dragons, and even fewer have encountered the Twins. I am sure that wherever they have taken Seppun Akasha, she will be safe."

### **War, not Words**

“It’s dead, then? And that Hiruma psychopath as well? Sounds like the problem’s solved, to me,” the Kaiu daimyo concludes cheerily.

“Indeed,” agrees Seppun Ashitako. “I am troubled by the Celestial Dragon’s apparent interest in Seppun Akasha, but I can only trust in the benevolence of the Heavens to protect her.

Later, you receive word that the Kumo purge netted nearly one thousand kumo spawn of various sizes, and adding several dozen ronin to the ranks of the Crab.

If the PCs told Hiroyo about Doma’s checkpoint, and Doma survived the encounter, they find Doma and his men have been executed for banditry.

**The End**

## Rewards for Completing the Adventure

Surviving the Module:	1 EXP
Good Roleplaying:	+1 EXP
Defeating the Orb-Weaver or Doma's ronin:	+1 EXP
Successfully Negotiating with or Defeating Dragash:	+1 EXP
Total Possible Experience:	4 EXP

### Favors

If the PCs earn all 4 experience, they earn 1 Favor.

A ronin whose Armor is damaged by Acid may expend a Favor to have it repaired before leaving the Crab camp at Maemikaki.

### Honor

The GM may grant up to 2 extra points of Honor to a PC for actions not detailed in the module, though no PC should gain more than 2 points in this fashion.

### Glory

PCs gain G8 as word spreads that they have personally encountered the Dragons of Jade and Obsidian.

### Allies and Enemies

If the PCs convince Hitomi to consider the question of whether or not to allow the Naga to restore the Naga's connection to the Pale Eye through the Akasha, they gain Seppun Akasha as an Ally, Influence 1 / Devotion 1.

### GM Reporting

1. Did Dragash survive?
2. Did Doma survive? (if the PCs don't play through this encounter, the answer is Yes)
3. Did Robun somehow survive? (if the PCs don't play through this encounter, or if they left him alive to meet his Fate in the Mysterious Shinomen Mori that is full of strange portals and creatures full of Primal power, the answer is Yes)
4. Did the PCs convince Lady Moon to consider the Naga proposal?

## **Player Handout #1: News of the Empire**

Honored Samurai,

It is unfortunate, but necessary that I bring you word of the recent goings-on of this spring and early summer. Allow me to start with our Southern borders.

It seems that there was some sort of assault by the forces of our Greatest Enemy against Shiro Hiruma. A brave march by the acting Clan Champion of the Crab, Hiruma Miraiko and samurai, both of the Crab Clan, and from a nearby Imperial Legion, was able to break the siege. Details are... understandably sparse, but fortunately it seems that the army was broken and the city spared the worst of the damage.

To the north we have unfortunate, but perhaps more mundane news. Unfortunately, it seems that some form of misunderstanding led to a brief assault by the Unicorn on Kyuden Tonbo as they were passing in support of their allies in the Owl. At the time of this writing, the city has largely burned to the ground, and the Tonbo family have condemned this action of the Unicorn. No word has come from Moto Sartaq or Shinjo Ritsuke yet, but I would guess this action was in retaliation for the Unicorn's attack of Hazumi so many years ago.

In all of this, the Phoenix continue to deny entrance to their lands. Since Seppun Kazetora-sama left to speak with the masters, still none have been allowed to enter these lands... including even Phoenix who have been outside the provinces in the last few months.

Not all news is poor, however! The Crane have been blessed, it seems, by a bountiful harvest. Combined with their recent receipt of the Miya's Blessing, their recovery from the attack by the Great Sea Spider has been a great blessing in these otherwise trying times.

I hope and pray that we can report more good news soon. the Empire surely needs some respite after these last few years of pain.

With Honor, Friends.

Otomo Yusuke

## **Player Handout #2: The Invitation**

*“Honorable Samurai,*

*The Kaiu family once again extends its gratitude for your help with the recent troubles in Kuda Province. With this in mind, Kaiu Hiroyo-sama requests your further assistance in bringing this matter to a more permanent resolution.*

*He will be presiding over a gathering of samurai near the village of Maemikake, near the Lake of Cherry Blossom Snow. I believe you have been there before.. This gathering will take place at the beginning of the month of Akodo, and you will be given further instructions at that time.*

*A version of this invitation has been sent to your daimyo, and to others who have experience with this situation.*

*I look forward to informing Kaiu Hiroyo-sama of your plans to attend.*

*Kaiu Chino, on behalf of Kaiu Hiroyo*