



Legend  
of the  
Five Rings  
ROLEPLAYING



**CRESTING WAVES**

SUPPLEMENTAL ENCOUNTERS FOR SINS OF REGRET

## VILLAGE STRANGERS

As different villages have had different experiences with rōnin and gaijin (or have never encountered them at all), the reception these characters receive varies from village to village. However, most villagers are wary of outsiders, especially those who are both armed and unpredictable, and watch them carefully. A rōnin visitor might be an asset, for example, willing to undertake labor or take up arms on behalf of the villagers. Such a visitor might alternatively be a murderer or a thief, expelled from service to a lord because of some vice.

## Cresting Waves

*Large and small waves break upon the same shore.*

—Shinsei

*Cresting Waves* contains three optional encounters designed to supplement the *Sins of Regret* adventure for the *Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game*. Alternatively, each of these can be adapted for use within other ongoing adventures. *Cresting Waves* is particularly suited for rōnin PCs, designed to offer opportunities and challenges for lordless samurai. Like *Sins of Regret*, this supplement can also apply to other player characters, such as gaijin, who wander remote areas away from the influence of their lord.

*Cresting Waves* also provides advice for GMs who wish to offer rōnin PCs the opportunity to earn positions as daimyō and control castles. While the Rokugani social structure is generally rigid, rōnin stand apart from the usual order, and so—in exceptional circumstances—PCs might earn or win the chance to raise themselves into positions as landholders, lords, or even the founders of a new family or clan.

As samurai who often have no permanent home or reliable duties, rōnin have a reputation as wanderers and outsiders. In fact, as far as many Rokugani are concerned, rōnin walk the boundary between civilization and the wild domain of animals and spirits. The following three encounters draw on the superstitions and stories of peasant villagers, allowing rōnin and even gaijin PCs the chance to face common fears in a tangible way. They offer PCs the opportunity to become the fearless wanderers who the villagers expect them to be. On the other hand, lorded samurai often consider rōnin to be unpredictable dangers to society. The final section offers GM advice for situations where rōnin PCs rise to levels of great social power in Rokugan, and must deal with new threats that simple swordplay cannot defeat.



## THE ENCOUNTERS

The three encounters in *Cresting Waves* are as follows:

- ⊗ **Encounter 1: At the Village** (see page 3) can be included when PCs visit Twin Blessings Village in *Sins of Regret* or adapted for use in any backwater village. The PCs encounter an *onryō* (vengeful spirit) in an abandoned house. They must deal with the ghost and its lingering curse to save the villagers and themselves.
- ⊗ **Encounter 2: In the Woods** (see page 10) may occur in any village with a forest nearby, as the villagers enlist the PCs to find and return a missing youth. This youth is rumored to have noble blood, and returning him to his estranged samurai family could earn the PCs some powerful friends. As an optional encounter within *Sins of Regret*, this might be included before the PCs are ready to leave the village and move on toward the castle.
- ⊗ **Encounter 3: On the Road** (see page 14) is intended for use when the PCs are on their way to Closed Shell Castle, but could potentially occur on any road near any remote castle. Surrounded and attacked by wolves, the PCs easily drive them off. However, a wolf is wounded in the encounter, and when they reach the castle (or other destination) they find a courtier bearing the same wounds. As rōnin, the PCs are in no position to challenge the daimyō's guest, but doing nothing might put the court, and the PCs, in danger.

## GM GUIDANCE

For some rōnin, swearing service to a lord is their highest ambition; attaining this goal would render them lorded samurai, and thus no longer rōnin. However, there are legends of rōnin who rise to greater heights than sworn vassals, who become lords themselves, control castles, and found families.

**GM Guidance: Powerful Waves** (see page 18) explains how the GM can offer opportunities for rōnin PCs to reach such heights and how to run a game with PCs in lofty positions. Sometimes maintaining status is harder than obtaining it in the first place, especially for those without the security and support of an established dynasty to support them.

## Encounter One: At the Village

This encounter is best included when PCs first reach a village, before they have time to fully explore. During *Sins of Regret*, this encounter could begin after the initial meeting with bushi in Twin Blessings Village on page 5, when Setsuo (the village leader) invites the PCs to stay overnight.

### ENCOUNTER OVERVIEW

The PCs enter Twin Blessings Village (or another that better fits the GM's campaign plans), and during the night discover an onryō haunting an abandoned house. They uncover clues concerning the spirit both at night and during the following day, especially ones relating to a brutal murder that led to the haunting and a growing curse over the village.

The hidden truth is that a local villager named Banji had grown to believe his wife Nayaka and his best friend Jimba were sneaking off to spend time together. Out of unfounded jealousy, weeks ago Banji tricked Nayaka's sister Miyoko, the village *dōshin* (local law enforcer) into apprehending Jimba. He did this by leaving a bucket of rice for Jimba to find, and then telling Miyoko that Jimba had been stealing. Banji persuaded her to wait until morning to take him to the village leader Setsuo to face judgment, and so she used rope to detain Jimba in the house. In the night, Banji used his *kama* (a sickle used to harvest rice) to kill Jimba.

Banji claimed he was merely trying to stop Jimba from escaping, and begged Miyoko not to tell Setsuo. Miyoko put family loyalty over the duty of her position, and agreed to keep the secret. Banji hacked the body to pieces, then he and Miyoko threw them into the river along with the "stolen" rice. Banji destroyed and then burned the bucket. They swore to keep the secret and told everyone that Jimba must have fled the village when he was caught stealing rice. Plagued by guilt, Miyoko became especially vulnerable to the curse. Her health began to fail soon after the murder, forcing her to retire from her position and move in with Banji and Nayaka. In the days that followed, the curse slowly spread across the rest of the village.

Defeating the ghost doesn't end the curse, however: the PCs must uncover the truth of the murder. Only by bringing Banji to justice can the curse on the village and everyone within (including the PCs) be lifted.

### VILLAGE SUPERSTITIONS

Though the villagers do not initially know about the onryō, they have heard stories of such creatures from other villages, pilgrims, and traveling traders. Some superstitions may have been passed down through so many generations that no one remembers the source, but in times of fear villagers believe them nonetheless. The following are superstitions that most villagers, such as the followers of Banji, might voice:

- ⊗ There is no such thing as a good ghost, the dead should stay dead—they only return to do harm.
- ⊗ An onryō cannot rest until it has destroyed all friends and relations of the one who wronged them, so cursed families should be ousted.
- ⊗ The only way to stop the destruction an onryō inflicts on a village is to make those it hates suffer just as much as it has.
- ⊗ No house should be left empty for too long; such places attract restless spirits.
- ⊗ Any family who does not care properly for their dead should be punished for bringing such creatures on us.
- ⊗ Evil spirits follow wanderers and criminals, so we should never let strangers into our village.
- ⊗ Samurai do not fear the dead; their shugenja invoke the ghosts of their ancestors to protect them.
- ⊗ If a ghost rises, it is a priest's fault for failing to perform the correct rites.

### VILLAGERS IN CRESTING WAVES

Most villagers can be represented by the **Humble Peasant** profile on page 313 of the core rulebook, with adjustments at the GM's discretion. A village leader might use the **Sage** template, while a priest may have the **Spiritualist** template.

Some of the villager characters in the following encounters bear names from *Sins of Regret*, but that adventure is not required to play any of the encounters in this product.

### NPCs IN THE ENCOUNTER

The following are the important NPCs for this encounter:

- ⊗ **Banji**: murderer of Jimba and the true villain of the encounter. Husband of Nayaka.
- ⊗ **Miyoko**: the owner of the house and previous *dōshin* of the village, now painfully cursed from failing her duty and living with the family of her sister Nayaka. She and Banji are the only two who know the truth of Jimba's disappearance.

**ALTERNATE MEETING APPROACH**

If desired, the GM can run this first encounter in a more supernatural manner without actual combat. Should the PCs desire to use Theology (Void) or Meditation (Void) checks when the ghost appears rather than attacking, the onryō menaces them but doesn't attack. Any who fail their checks, though, feel its icy touch and suffer the Cursed Touch of the onryō (as described on page 5 in the onryō's profile).

- ⊗ **Daizō:** the village priest, desperate for aid in resolving the haunting.
- ⊗ **The onryō:** the ghost of Jimba, currently haunting the house where Jimba was killed.
- ⊗ **Nayaka:** wife of Banji and Miyoko's sister. She looks after Miyoko as well as both her and her sister's children.
- ⊗ **Setsuo:** leader of Twin Blessings Village.

## THE VILLAGE AND THE ONRYŌ

It is worth noting that while stories of onryō are widespread in Rokugan, and villagers fear the ghosts of the dead. Most of the villagers in this encounter do not know the abandoned house is haunted. The only ones who know to fear the house are Banji and Miyoko, who keep the knowledge secret. Rōnin are unlikely to be afraid of a house that merely appears disturbing but spiritually sensitive PCs may be wary of the unpleasant atmosphere.

While the ideal scenario involves the PCs staying in the abandoned house overnight, if PCs are reluctant to stay in the house, the adventure might begin the next day when Daizō (the village priest) investigates and asks for their help. If the PCs or the priest suspect or discover the presence of the onryō, its vengefulness and indiscriminate maleficence could cause great harm to the village. The fear of the villagers heightens the urgency of dealing with the situation (see the **Village Superstitions sidebar** on page 3).

## THE ABANDONED HOUSE

In *Sins of Regret*, Setsuo may invite the PCs to stay in his own house, but this depends on how the PCs act on their arrival. If they have not impressed him, he can direct them to the abandoned house instead. This may also be the case if he already has a guest, such as a pilgrim, and there simply is not room. If the PCs do stay with him, the elemental imbalance in the village could cause the fire in the *irori* (sunken hearth) to flare up and set his house alight, or an earthquake could damage the building, compelling the PCs to take refuge in the abandoned house.

In any adventure, villagers might offer visiting PCs shelter in the abandoned house. The PCs might alternatively come across it when in sore need of shelter, such as during a storm. If the PCs refuse to stay in the house, this alerts the villagers to a potential problem. Either the village leader or priest might then ask the PCs to help investigate it during the day (see **In the Daylight** on page 5).

As the PCs approach the abandoned house, read or paraphrase the following aloud to the players:

The house stands at the edge of the village, near the river. Opening the outer door you find no *shōji* (inner door), merely a single dark, empty space. It smells of dust and damp wood. Once you step inside all is silent—you can't even hear the flow of the water.

The PCs may explore the house in the gloom, discovering that it's empty and in need of a sweep. Though small, it has a raised wooden floor and must have been comfortable once, but it seems no one has lived in it for weeks. PCs with a vigilance of 2 or more find small fragments of rope buried in the dust. There are pieces of charred wood in the *irori*, but if the PCs attempt to light a fire it refuses to take because the wood is wet. A close examination reveals the wood is soaked through with blood. The blood only adheres to the wood and doesn't stain any other materials. It does cling to any PCs who touch it, but mysteriously vanishes when the sun comes up. Even then, they can still feel its liquid presence on their skin; lasting until the curse is lifted (see page 9).

If the PCs replace the wood with some other fuel, they can start a fire. It burns weakly, though, flickering in a draft for which no source can be found.

If the PCs settle down to sleep, see **Meeting the Onryō**. If they instead visit the house during the day, see **In the Daylight** on page 5 for further details of what they might find in the house.

## MEETING THE ONRYŌ

If the PCs fall asleep in the house, read or paraphrase the following aloud to the players:

You wake to an insistent tapping, but it's not coming from the door. Instead, the sound seems to come from beneath the floor. It could be beetles, but it's too deliberate, too much like bony fingers knocking against hard wood...

If the PCs try to locate the sound, it seems to come from under the floorboards near the back of the house, where the wood is scratched and scuffed under the dust. They might even pry up a board, in which case they find nothing but an empty space and the smell of rot.

While the PCs are still at the back of the little house, whatever light the PCs have, such as lamp or firelight, flickers. Read or paraphrase the following:

The outer door slides shut with a bang, though it wasn't seen to open. One moment there's no one there, the next there's a figure, glimpsed in the flickering light. The figure is standing still, their body shrouded, and their face hidden by long black hair.

Then, their light or fire goes out and the PCs are plunged into impenetrable darkness (Obscuring terrain, as described on page 267 of the core rulebook). They can speak to each other or remain quiet, but there is no sound from the onryō. The ghost targets the PCs one at a time, and each feels a sharp, cold touch against a hand or cheek. While the ghost can be harmed, it cannot be completely defeated at this point and vanishes should it suffer fatigue equal to half its endurance. After attacking each visitor inside, whatever the outcome, the onryō disappears. Its curse then grows in strength through the village, something not noticeable to them until the following day.








### Supernatural Wounds

Come morning, any PCs who felt the Cursed Touch of the onryō discover deep scratches where the ghost touched them. These marks inflict no pain but refuse to close or heal; any villagers who see them recoil in horror. Daizō, the village priest, can inform the PCs that visiting a shrine can heal the wounds, however.

## ONRYŌ, VENGEFUL GHOST

ADVERSARY      CONFLICT RANK:  10  2

The ghost of a person who died in extreme circumstances, an onryō is usually bound to a violent betrayal that was their last experience in life and consumed by the need for vengeance. The spirit that the PCs encounter appears as a pale, shrouded figure in a faded kimono, its face usually hidden by long, black hair. When revealed, its countenance is one of fear, the last expression it wore in life. The onryō is incapable of reason and inflicts its curse on everyone with whom it comes into contact. Such is the power of its curse that it lives on after the onryō is defeated.

 		ENDURANCE <b>14</b>	FOCUS <b>10</b>
  		COMPOSURE <b>8</b>	VIGILANCE <b>4</b>
 +2,  -2 DEMEANOR - VENGEFUL			
ARTISAN 0	MARTIAL 2	SCHOLAR 0	SOCIAL 0
ADVANTAGES		DISADVANTAGES	
<b>Insubstantial:</b>  Martial; <i>Physical</i>		<b>Doomed:</b>  Mental; <i>Physical</i>	
FAVORED WEAPONS			

**Shared Pain:** Range 0–2, Damage 5, Deadline 4, inflicts Supernatural damage

**Gear (equipped):** Ethereal robes (Physical 5, Supernatural 2)

### ABILITIES

#### VENGEFUL GHOST

An onryō is an Otherworldly being of silhouette 2. As a Movement action, it can freely disappear at will and reappear at any position within three range bands without needing a clear path to its new location.

#### CURSED TOUCH

As an Attack action, the onryō may attempt to touch a character. That character must then resist with a **TN 3 Fitness check (Air 2, Earth 5)**. If the character succeeds, they evade; if they fail, they suffer the Afflicted condition (see page 271 of the core rulebook) and receive strife and fatigue equal to their shortfall.

#### DISTURBING PRESENCE

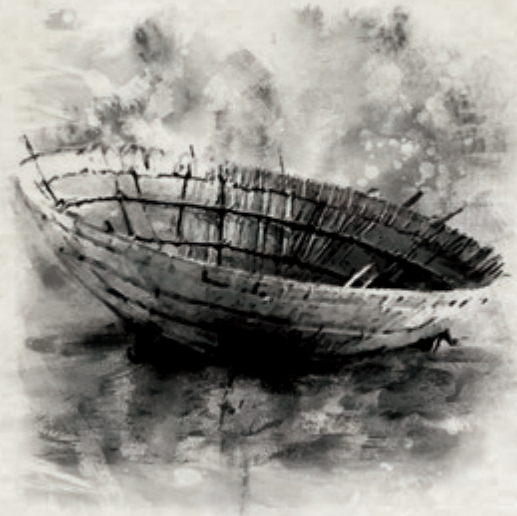
Any character at range 0–2 of the onryō receives 1 strife at the beginning of the onryō's turn.

### IN THE DAYLIGHT

If the PCs refuse to sleep in the abandoned house, their very refusal causes Setsuo and Daizō to worry.

They ask the PCs to investigate the house, as they fear the village would not survive an evil spirit on top of all their other problems. If the PCs refuse, the pair does so alone, which is enough to cause the curse to quickly manifest in the village.





If the PCs did spend the night in the house and encounter the onryō, the morning allows them to see clearly the environment in which they slept, as well as wounds any of them may have gained during the encounter.

During the day, the wood in the irori is somehow no longer wet, but instead appears to have been stained by a dark substance some time ago. A **TN 2 Labor check (Water 1, Earth 3)**, using Labor as a Scholar skill, reveals the wood to be parts of a bucket that appears to have been broken apart weeks ago based on the dust on the fragments. ✨ on the check allows a PC to notice indentations on the floor nearby and realize they were caused by the blade of a kama or similar item striking the floor.

PCs with a vigilance of 3 or higher, or those who make a successful **TN 2 Medicine check (Air 1, Fire 3)**, can determine that the dark stains on the wood and the fragments of rope found on the leaf-strewn floor are bloodstains. PCs who used the Air or Void ring on the check can spend ✨ ✨ to realize the blood is human and possibly weeks old.

If Daizō or Setsuo are present, they can answer some questions about the house. It previously belonged to Miyoko, the former village dōshin who now lives with her sister's family in a different house in the village. As far as they are aware, no violence ever took place to account for the bloodstains, as no one has lived there since Miyoko moved out several weeks ago.

#### REPRESENTING THE VILLAGE PRIEST

Daizō can be represented by the *Humble Peasant* profile on page 313 of the core rulebook with the addition of the *Spiritualist* template. He also has additional personality information in his sidebar on page 134 of *Path of Waves*.

#### TALKING TO THE PRIEST

Daizō, the village priest, knows much concerning lore and superstition in the village. He devotes his life to appeasing spirits and venerating both the kami and the villagers' ancestors. Daizō can help the PCs if they have received supernatural wounds during their encounters with the onryō, taking them to a shrine and praying to the kami on their behalf. He also warns the PCs of the dangers of onryō, believing that was what they encountered the night before. Leaving the village and its troubles behind

will not help; mere distance cannot break the hold the ghost already has on them, he explains. If the PCs abandon the village, they gain the Haunting disadvantage (as per page 122 of the core rulebook).

Daizō is brave and compassionate, but defers to the PCs in all things. If there is a shugenja among them, he hangs on their every word and humbly begs for their help. Daizō is willing to perform a ritual to cleanse the house and put the onryō to rest by himself if necessary, but he would rather have the PCs' help, shugenja or no. If the PCs help Daizō, they help save the village, but some villagers accuse them of meddling with things best left alone.

#### Villagers and the PCs

Unless the PCs have spent some time in the village gaining trust, most villagers likely view them with suspicion. Tensions now escalate, though, once the curse begins to manifest more strongly (see **The Curse** on page 7). Whether the PCs stay in the abandoned house or not, and help Daizō with the ritual or not, the simple fact that villagers fell sick soon after the PCs' arrival is enough to arouse suspicion. None of them have ever seen a ghost or other supernatural menace in the house, so any mention of such things likely makes the PCs look even more guilty in their eyes. Daizō knows better and supports the PCs, but there are many voices against them.

Conversely, if the PCs are reluctant to help and investigate the abandoned house, villagers criticize them, even accusing them of cowardice. Setsuo also indicates his disappointment, but shows too much restraint to directly insult his visitors.

#### DEFEATING THE GHOST

Without the gifts of a shugenja, Daizō cannot speak to the kami. He seeks spiritual aid through ritual and prayer; his plan is to lay the onryō to rest by conducting a ritual in the abandoned house and cleansing the building. However, he is keen to help if any of the PCs have a better idea, and defers to them.

If Daizō proceeds with his plan, he physically sweeps out the house, burns incense in the corners, and fashions a makeshift altar to the dead. He sets a gift of precious rice for the spirits at the altar and then kneels to pray.

If the PCs have agreed to assist with Daizō's plan, he asks them to pray with him. As soon as he begins, the sky outside grows dark, the door slams closed, and the onryō appears. For a moment the ghost merely stands, its form partially within the door itself, and the PCs have the opportunity to attack the ghost or invoke the kami to aid them. Any such action incites the onryō to disappear and reappear past the PCs to inflict its Cursed Touch on Daizō. If the PCs attempt to intercede, the ghost flings

its head back and reveals its face. Daizō reacts as if the ghastly visage is somehow familiar, but cannot determine who it belongs to.

This time, the PCs can fight and defeat the onryō. Once the ghost has attacked Daizō, it turns its attention on the PCs and fights until it is defeated. When this happens, the spirit melts into the floor, pooling like dark blood before disappearing into the ground. Setsuo appears shortly to thank them. However, Daizō bears a cursed wound and so Setsuo takes him and any wounded PCs to the shrine to pray. This time the wounds do not heal, and any previously healed wounds visibly reopen, but do not bleed. These strange wounds mark the wounded as cursed. Throughout the village, the ghost's curse lingers and grows stronger.

### Strange Atmosphere

The GM may wish to build a suspenseful atmosphere in the village, especially near the abandoned house. No one has stayed there since the murder, and the PCs' (or anyone else's) overnight inhabitation makes the curse extend from just Miyoko across the entire village.

As the curse quickly spreads, people start to cough, and some become weak and are carried home to rest. There is a strange silence in the village; birds don't sing, children don't play, and the village seems to hold its breath in anticipation of some disaster.

While the GM can build tension by drawing attention to these details, the important thing is that the PCs get the sense that something unsettling is happening to the village.

### THE CURSE

The ghost's curse becomes evident in the village, as villagers and animals fall sick. If the PCs walk through the village, read or paraphrase the following:

Villagers gather at the henhouse, from which the sounds of scrabbling and shrieking pour out. A woman mutters a prayer, as a man keeps repeating, "but there are no hens left! What's inside?" Then a pair of large rodents tumble out, clawing at each other, leaving scarlet streaks on grey fur. A third leaps out with others rats in pursuit, hunks of bloody fur and flesh in their mouths. Villagers scatter and one, with a hand to her mouth, coughs blood into her palm.

If the PCs try to help, the coughing woman shies away from them, running off to hide in her house as many of the villagers already have. The rats run shrieking around henhouse, fighting each other before quickly escaping into the woods outside the village.

Villagers fall victim to accidents, succumb to ailments, or just act strangely. Some people become distracted and forgetful, trailing off mid-sentence. Others grow physically weak and develop a barking cough. If desired, the curse could also inflict physically debilitating ailments upon the villagers to add to the growing horror of the situation. Daizō and the PCs gain the Afflicted condition (characters who already have this condition gain Dazed or Exhausted), as the curse affects them.

Setsuo brings the weak and wounded Daizō to the PCs to explain that the ghost's need for vengeance was so great, defeating it was not enough. Daizō believes that they must discover the onryō's story, in order to put things right. Setsuo begs the PCs to help uncover the truth while he tends to those in need. If the PCs haven't already, Setsuo suggests they begin by talking to Miyoko (who used to live in the house) and directs them to her sister Nayaka's home where Miyoko now resides.

As the PCs approach the house, they find Miyoko sitting outside. Small faces inside the house watch their arrival; these are the children of both Miyoko and Nayaka.

### Miyoko

Miyoko's affliction is so bad she can barely move. She can be represented by the **Humble Peasant** profile on page 313 of the core rulebook, but with the Afflicted condition assigned to all her rings until the curse is lifted. She sits hunched outside the house, her swollen hands in her lap. Though a young woman, Miyoko has wrinkled, aged features as she is under the strain of constant pain that does not allow her to sleep.

Miyoko reluctantly admits that the abandoned house was hers. She is hesitant to talk about it as she doesn't wish to lie, but has sworn not to reveal the truth either. She does say that she was the village's dōshin before she fell ill. If asked about her illness, she says only that some families are plagued by such misfortune. If asked about the onryō, she tells the PCs to leave such things alone and refuses to say more to them. A **TN 2 Sentiment check (Fire 1, Water 3)**, though, reveals she is hiding a terrible secret, not concerning what she did but instead what she failed to do, and feels her condition is her punishment.

### Nayaka

When the PCs have spoken to Miyoko, read or paraphrase the following to the players:

A woman whose face is very like Miyoko's comes running to the house, calling for Miyoko and asking about a wooden bucket that she hasn't been able to find for several weeks now. Miyoko looks up guiltily, and says she doesn't know. The woman looks alarmed to have visitors, but bows and begs forgiveness for her hasty arrival.

### REWARDS AND INCENTIVES

The villagers have little to offer by way of reward, only food or sake. They must appeal to the PCs' compassion and sense of duty as samurai. However, the PCs also feel the effects of the curse as the village becomes afflicted and may realize that the only way to save themselves is to help the village.

Nayaka is Miyoko's sister, and now looks after her as well as Miyoko's children. Nayaka's husband Banji is not present currently, and her face grimaces with even more pain should the PCs ask about him. Nayaka has to return to the fields and has little time to talk, but tries to be polite and answer the PCs' questions. If asked, she says Miyoko's illness does not run in the family. She puts it down to the fact that Miyoko used to work too hard and stay out on cold nights, dedicated to her role as dōshin.

If asked about the onryō, Nayaka looks afraid, but says she knows nothing of ghosts. Unless there is a shugenja in the party, she tells the PCs to let the priest deal with such things, as that's his job. She returns to the fields, leaving her children with Miyoko to watch them.

The children are quiet and nervous around the PCs, hiding in the house until the PCs have gone. If asked questions, they just stare silently. They don't as of yet seem to be affected by the curse, but they are aware something bad is happening in the village.

#### REPRESENTING BANJI'S SUPPORTERS

The villagers accompanying Banji can be represented by the *Humble Peasant* profile on page 313 of the core rulebook. Each carries a kama (Range 0–1, Damage 4, Deadliness 3, Concealable).

#### INVESTIGATING

The PCs may wish to investigate further, though not all of the clues help them discover the truth about the onryō.

- ⊗ PCs may wish to learn who was dōshin after Miyoko. Anyone can tell them his name is Reo, but he has left the village, as have many other young villagers. Though he was not well-liked, there was nothing suspicious about his appointment. If players are using *Sins of Regret* they might find Reo with the bandits in the forest, but he knows nothing of the onryō. He may mention that he liked Miyoko, but that she became quite secretive and uncommunicative once she fell ill.
- ⊗ If the PCs ask anyone (including Nayaka) about Banji, a successful **TN 2 Culture check (Water 1, Earth 3)** using Culture with the Social Approach reveals that he has been difficult to deal with since the disappearance of his closest friend, Jimba, a few weeks ago. Jimba was like a brother to him, but Jimba abruptly left the village in secret and Banji took this hard. This occurred shortly before Miyoko's illness began.

- ⊗ If the PCs try to discover more about Jimba, they find his family still lives in the village but have disowned him. With a successful **TN 2 Courtesy check (Earth 1, Fire 3)**, they can learn that his elderly and dutiful parents (Sonoda and Hino) are still upset that their son left instead of staying to properly care for them and support his village. Instead, Banji told them only that Jimba stole rice from the village and fled, though they have no idea why Jimba would do such a thing. They tried asking Banji if he knew more about the matter, but he angrily refuses to speak to them about anything else concerning Jimba.

#### Confrontation

Nayaka's husband, Banji, is not at the house the first time the PCs visit. After the PCs have conducted any investigations, though, he and a crowd confront the PCs and warn them not to harass his wife and her sister. He knows he cannot intimidate the PCs alone, and so has brought a group of discontented villagers to support him. He wants to stop the PCs from uncovering the truth, and tells the group that the PCs caused the curse. Soon, a large crowd including Sonoda and Hino forms to view the confrontation.



Banji carries a kama tucked into his belt, as do many of the other villagers. He is very nervous and angry even when the PCs ask any questions. He keeps appealing to those around him that the PCs are to blame—and the only way to end the curse is to eliminate these strangers.

A physical attack by Banji and his supporters both alerts the PCs of Banji's guilt and provides a solid ending to the encounter. There are two of his supporters for each PC; the GM can adjust this as desired to create a challenging battle or a lesser force that only delays the PCs in their quest to capture Banji.

Once the PCs have defeated at least half of his supporters, Banji flees and disappears into the crowd. This sets up a chase to search the village for him before the curse can grow even more hazardous to everyone here. He and his remaining supporters could make a last stand at the abandoned house to add additional closure to the encounter. Banji won't surrender, but his supporters will cease fighting should they learn the truth of Jimba's disappearance (see **Lifting the Curse** on page 9).

#### BANJI, MURDEROUS VILLAGER

ADVERSARY

CONFLICT RANK:  2  2

Formerly jovial and outgoing, Banji is a now gruff, unpleasant man who does not want to answer questions and resents the PCs' interference. He carries a cursed kama, the one he used to murder and dismember his friend, Jimba. This weapon is keen for him to use it again so, despite the odds, Banji spoils for a fight with the PCs.





SOCIETAL		PERSONAL	
15 HONOR		ENDURANCE 8	
20 GLORY		COMPOSURE 6	
18 STATUS		FOCUS 4	
+2,  -2 DEMEANOR · DEFENSIVE		VIGILANCE 2	
ARTISAN 0 MARTIAL 1 SCHOLAR 0 SOCIAL 1 TRADE 2			
ADVANTAGES		DISADVANTAGES	
<b>Vicious:</b> Martial;  Mental		<b>Guilty:</b> Social;  Mental	
FAVORED WEAPONS			
<b>Cursed Kama:</b> Range 0–1, Damage 4, Deadline 4, Concealable, Cursed, Razor-Edged			
<b>Gear (equipped):</b> Ragged clothes (Physical 1)			
ABILITIES			

### OVERLOOKED

When a peasant makes a check targeting a character with a higher status rank, they treat that character's vigilance as 1 lower.

### The Cursed Kama

A weapon used for a foul deed such as murder becomes cursed, and Banji's kama is one such item. This weapon delights in slaughter, and encourages any who carry it to do the same. Anyone who carries this item has their composure reduced by 2 while it is on their person; this is already factored into Banji's profile.

### LIFTING THE CURSE

At this point, the PCs could blame Banji for Jimba's disappearance, which shocks Miyoko into realizing the PCs are doing what she herself should have done as dōshin. Alternatively, Banji's attacks against the PCs and stirring the crowd against them could finally be too much for Miyoko, who cannot endure any more violence from her actions. In either case, she cries for forgiveness while relating how Jimba was killed. She does the same if Banji is killed before he can confess (or if the GM needs to reveal any missing plot points).

Jimba's body was disposed of in secret and so his family never had the opportunity to mourn him or perform the rites of the dead. Telling the truth to Jimba's family restores his reputation and allows them to mourn him. This alone cannot lift the curse, though—Banji, the killer, must face justice.

Presented with the truth, Banji's companions and his wife condemn and abandon him. The murderer refuses to go down without a fight, though. Banji's death finally

lifts the curse and removes the Afflicted condition from those affected. Capturing him so that he can face Setsuo's justice does the same, but also grants each PC 3 honor for demonstrating the Bushidō tenet of Compassion. Setsuo banishes Banji from the village, allowing him to take nothing with him but the clothes on his back.

Bringing Banji to justice satisfies the ghost's lingering hatred and lifts the curse. With it gone, Miyoko heals. Setsuo is lenient and lets her stay in the village, but she must perform penance and extra work. After all, they are already short of workers. Nayaka, though, may not be so forgiving and it's clear she has much to discuss with her sister in private.

As the curse lifts, read or paraphrase the following (adjusting as needed depending on other plot elements from *Sins of Regret* that might still be ongoing):

With Banji gone, the clouds part and the sun brightens the village. Others come out of their houses, blinking in the light, their ailments miraculously cured. Birds begin to sing, insects buzz, and life resumes. Only the abandoned house stays dark and silent.

### CONCLUSION

Many villagers are grateful for any help the PCs have offered. Setsuo, Daizō, and Miyoko may all offer a gift depending on how the PCs interacted with them in the course of the encounter:

- ✦ A bag of fresh medicinal herbs from Setsuo, which count as a Medicine Kit (see page 243 of the core rulebook).
- ✦ An *omamori* (protective charm) from Daizō. He has kept it for years as a lucky charm but, unknown to him, it contains the Boon of Fukurokujin (see page 243 of the core rulebook).
- ✦ Miyoko has nothing to give but some traveling rations (see page 245 of the core rulebook), but she also asks the PCs a favor. She believes Banji's kama is cursed because it was put to such evil use, and begs them to take it away from the village. She would take it herself, but is afraid it would corrupt her. Accepting this cursed item grants an extra 3 honor and 3 glory for the PC willing to carry it and could form the basis for another adventure as the PCs seek to dispose of it safely.

In addition, the GM should award each player 1 XP for each hour of game play and 4 glory, as well as an honor award depending on the choices made during the encounter. Saving a village from an onryō is a story that is sure to spread across this region to the castle the PCs journey to later in *Sins of Regret*.

## ROMANCE

In Rokugan, gender is (usually) not a factor in romance. While this encounter describes a male-female couple, the GM can feel free to change this. The important thing here is that the players empathize with the couple in love.

## YAMAUBA

*Yamauba are supernatural monsters that appear as normal Rokugani. They have a second mouth at the top of their heads, though, one that is always hungry for human flesh. Yamauba are highly resistant to physical damage and often display great cunning in capturing their prey.*

## Encounter Two: In the Woods

Many Rokugani villages are built near a source of lumber, and this encounter could begin in any village near a forest. Alternatively, it could be used in a mountainous region, a traditional home for a *yamauba*, the supernatural monster the PCs face in this encounter. Wild places such as forests and uninhabited mountains are often considered the domain of spirits, inspiring awe and fear in villagers.

### ENCOUNTER OVERVIEW

The PCs are convinced (or hired) to find a villager named Kyou, a youth who disappeared a few days ago. He was last seen going out to gather wood in the common-land forest between Twin Blessings Village and Nestled Village. These two villages are rivals, but Kyou has found true love with Sora, an inhabitant of Nestled Village. Tracking down Kyou, the PCs find that both Kyou and Sora have been captured by Aguri, a hungry *yamauba* who lives in the dense woods. The *yamauba* isn't the PCs' only problem, however, as members of the rival village soon arrive to retrieve their own. The young lovers would rather not return, though. The PCs can decide to aid them, or see that they follow the wishes of their village's leaders.

### NPCs IN THE ENCOUNTER

The following are the important NPCs for this encounter:

- ⊗ **Kyou:** a young villager who has gone missing. Secretly, he has run off to join his beloved Sora.
- ⊗ **Setsuo:** leader of Twin Blessings Village.
- ⊗ **Sora:** a member of a rival village who has fallen in love with Kyou.
- ⊗ **Aguri:** a *yamauba* living in the woods who has captured both Kyou and Sora.

### MISSING YOUTH

A young villager called Kyou is missing and Setsuo, the village leader, appeals to the PCs for help. Kyou went into the forest to gather wood and did not return. The villagers do not believe he would have abandoned them of his own volition, and Setsuo is convinced that Kyou needs help. The youth is a beloved member of the village, and everyone is very worried—especially those who know Kyou's true parentage.

If the PCs need further incentive, Setsuo tells them that although Kyou doesn't know it yet, he is the son of a samurai. His mother kept the knowledge secret because she didn't wish to lose her son, but Setsuo tells the PCs now because he thinks that as samurai they might be inclined to help their own. He also hints that Kyou's samurai family may reward the PCs for discovering him. Though it would mean taking the youth from his mother, Setsuo would rather see Kyou safe with samurai than fall victim to some unknown threat in the forest.

If this encounter is played during *Sins of Regret*, though, an Otomo or Reju character as Kyou's father might be appropriate, as the PCs could then take the youth or reveal his secret to an Otomo or Reju NPC in Closed Shell Castle. Even if they don't bring him there, knowing this fact could lead to intrigue encounters at the castle concerning the youth's father.

If the encounter is not linked to *Sins of Regret*, an Akodo bushi of the Lion Clan could instead be used as the father. How this mighty general found himself in Twin Blessings could itself be the basis for another adventure.

The PCs may decide to stake 2 glory on finding Kyou, especially once they know he is the son of a samurai.

## RIVALRIES

Setsuo tells the PCs that people from this village have already searched the *iriyama* (common-land forest) outside Twin Blessings and found Kyou's trail, but it leads out of their part of the woodland. They are afraid of venturing further, not only because there may be an unknown danger waiting for them, but because they do not wish to worsen their already-strained relations with the next village by wandering into their own *iriyama* region.

If this encounter is used as part of *Sins of Regret*, the rival village is Nestled Village (the other village under the dominion of Closed Shell Castle), and relations have worsened as food has become scarce. Some villagers have been accused of poaching from the other village's territory within the forest. Setsuo deliberately neglects to mention the possibility that the other village might object to the PCs venturing into their *iriyama*, as they might suspect the PCs to be poachers.

## PARENTAGE

While convincing the PCs, Setsuo implies that Kyou's samurai family would be delighted to learn of his existence, and keen to welcome him into their family. However, the truth is very different. The father is appalled at rōnin talking about samurai having affairs with peasants, let alone having a peasant presented to them as family. Setsuo may be ignorant of this or, more likely, he is merely eager to convince the PCs to help.

If the GM instead decides instead that Kyou is the offspring of a family desperate for an heir, such as a Dragon family, the father might treat the news more favorably. This is an option if the GM wants to take the encounter further after its conclusion.

## THE FOREST

Setsuo takes the PCs into the forest and shows them Kyou's trail, so all the PCs have to do is follow it. However, it fades away the farther they go from Twin Blessings and a **TN 2 Survival check (Earth 1, Fire 3)** is needed to keep on Kyou's path. Failure means the PCs become lost for several hours and receive 2 strife as they become frustratingly entangled in vines and low branches. After this, the PC with the highest vigilance spots the trail and so the group eventually finds the hut.

## THE HUT

The trail takes the PCs far into the forest, and up a steep slope to a hut. When the PCs reach the end of the trail, read or paraphrase the following:

The trail leads you deep into the forest, and up a low hill where the trees finally thin a little. Here, the trail seems to disappear, but through the woods ahead you spy a small, sad-looking hut with balding thatch. It appears unoccupied.

## THE YAMAUBA

The yamauba lives by herself here in the hut, though she currently has two humans within—Kyou and Sora. As the PCs approach the hut, she steps out of the darkness within. Read or paraphrase the following:

A graceful old woman wrapped in rags emerges from the hut and stands before the doorway, nervously bowing at each of you. She wears a thin towel, or *tenuki*, bound tightly around her head, a length of grey hair escaping from beneath it.

"Oh!" she says. "I am Aguri, and welcome to my home, such as it is. I was not expecting company, but allow me to offer refreshment. You must be tired and hungry from traveling through these woods."

The yamauba ducks back inside, returning with a tray of rice balls and a jug of sake. She relates that she has lived here for decades, after having been driven from her distant village of Polished Stone after visitors wrongfully accused her of theft.

She tries to prevent the PCs from exploring the area, but if they do search around the hut they find a ditch behind the hut containing a jumble of human bones, hidden by weeds. Aguri explains there are wolves in the woods, but a **TN 3 Sentiment check (Fire 1, Earth 4)** reveals she is not being honest; this can also be done for other lies she might tell. As they spend time with her, any PCs who grow suspicious can make a **TN 3 Culture** or **TN 2 Theology check (Void 1)** to learn her Otherworldly nature.

Aguri is determined to stop the PCs entering her hut and fights them if necessary. Kyou is inside along with Sora; both are bound and in a deep sleep.

AGURI, YAMAUBA	
ADVERSARY	CONFLICT RANK:  4  6

The yamauba appears human and dresses like a common peasant, but conceals her second mouth on the top of her head with a tenguui. She spins lies with little effort, but her time alone has lessened her personal skills.

SOCIETAL	3  4	PERSONAL			
10 HONOR		ENDURANCE 12			
05 GLORY		COMPOSURE 12			
00 STATUS		FOCUS 6			
+2,  -2 DEMEANOR - HUNGRY		VIGILANCE 3			
ARTISAN 0		MARTIAL 1	SCHOLAR 1	SOCIAL 4	TRADE 1

ADVANTAGES      DISADVANTAGES

**Devious Liar:** Social; *Interpersonal*  
**Isolated:** Social; *Mental*

FAVORED WEAPONS

**Knife:** Range 0, Damage 2, Deadliness 4/6, Concealable, Mundane, Razor-Edged

**Gear (equipped):** Layered rags (Physical 2, Supernatural 1), intoxicating poison (one dose), tenguui (towel)

ABILITIES

**MONSTROUS INVULNERABILITY**

A yamauba is an Otherworldly being of silhouette 2. Her physical resistance is increased by 3 unless the attack was made using a weapon with the Sacred or Unholy item quality.

**Hostile Hospitality**

The yamauba offers the PCs rice balls, which contain a soporific purple herb at the center. She also tries to ply the PCs with a sweet and unusually strong sake. The combination of these puts a victim into a deep sleep, though PCs can make a **TN 3 Fitness check (Earth 2, Air 4)** or **TN 2 Meditation check (Earth 1, Air 3)** to resist the effects.

The yamauba might share either food or drink with the PCs to encourage them, but is careful not to partake of both. On their own, eating one or more rice balls inflicts the Exhausted condition, while drinking the sake inflicts the Intoxicated condition (see pages 272 & 273 of the core rulebook, respectively).

The PCs may try tricking the yamauba into imbibing both of these by making a **TN 3 Performance check (Air 2, Earth 4)** or a **TN 3 Command check (Fire 2, Water 4)**. If either are successful, she lets her guard down and tells the PCs the truth about Kyou's location.

The yamauba would rather capture the PCs without a fight or simply see them leave her home. While a natural liar, having lived isolated for a long time she is not good at reading people. The PCs might deceive her into thinking they are indeed leaving to continue their journey by making a **TN 2 Courtesy check (Air 1, Earth 3)**, or keep their mission to find Kyou secret.

If the yamauba is convinced they do not seek her prisoners, she feels less threatened. She has two victims already and is content to let the PCs leave. She fights as a last resort if necessary, however, if the PCs expose her secrets, threaten her, or attempt to rescue her prisoners. She has lived here for untold decades and refuses to believe any threat is enough to make her flee.

The yamauba knows her hut and surrounding terrain quite well and uses this to her advantage in a fight. She may spend from checks she makes during combat to lure or force an opponent into the Dangerous and Entangling terrain both inside and outside her home. This could include piles of sharp stones, unstable flooring, dangling tree limbs, and other hazardous or even supernatural terrain features that fill an area at range 0 of the unfortunate PC.

**Prisoners**

However the PCs deal with the yamauba, simply looking inside the hut reveals the prisoners, as well as jars of strong sake, broken tools, and bundles of herbs. There are several gnawed-upon bones in one corner; a **TN 2 Medicine check (Water 1, Fire 3)** reveals these to be human. The discovery of the prisoners cues the arrival of a party of peasants from Sora's village.

When the PCs look inside the hut, read or paraphrase the following:

The hut is cluttered with pots, tools, and jars, all strewn about the bare earth floor. At the back, half-hidden in the gloom and propped up against the wall, are two bound figures. They do not move, even when the sounds of hurried feet and angry shouts come from outside.

The new arrivals are from the rival village, and seek their own missing youth, Sora, who is trapped in the hut with Kyou. They are led by Sayaka, a female village elder.

## VILLAGE CONFLICT

Using the **Humble Peasant** profile from page 313 of the core rulebook, the GM should include a number of villagers to form an encounter rank slightly greater than PCs' group rank (see **Constructing Conflicts** on page 310 of the core rulebook). The goal is to put the PCs in a somewhat awkward, but not dangerous, situation.

Depending on the situation they find when they arrive, the villagers might accuse the PCs of kidnapping Sora, killing a what looks to be a defenseless old woman, or fraternizing with a yamauba. Their own village has had its share of problems lately, and the villagers are quick to blame the PCs for them.

The villagers are argumentative, but are reluctant to fight armed and dangerous rōnin unless the PCs refuse to let them rescue Sora. The PCs can persuade them that they are only trying to help by making a **TN 2 Performance check (Earth 1, Fire 3)**; if successful, the villagers will aid the PCs in releasing Sora.

If Kyou and Sora are rescued from the hut and untied, they wake up, weeping and clutching each other. Read the following aloud to the players:

Sora whispers "It was horrible! She welcomed us with food and shelter, but then I saw Kyou..." She looks fondly at him, and grips his hand tightly. "When he collapsed, I thought he was dead!"

Kyou gazes with equal love at her. "I was certain I was dying, happy only that the last thing I saw was your face." He turns to the group, eyes strong with passion. "After such an ordeal, we cannot imagine a life apart. Please, we only wish to be together!"

## LOVE IN CAPTIVITY

Villagers often do marry for love, but usually within their own village. These villagers object to this match primarily because of the current rivalry with the other village, and angrily react to any proposal that doesn't involve Sora returning home by herself.

The love between the youths is an opportunity to begin healing the relationship between the villages, but if mishandled it might also put further strain on that relationship. If the PCs persuade these villagers to take the couple in, they then have to tell Setsuo that Kyou isn't coming home and miss out on the potential reward of taking him to his samurai family.

The PCs might try to persuade Kyou to put duty before love, telling him of his samurai heritage. However, Kyou would rather spend his life with Sora as a peasant than leave the life he knows to join a family who know nothing of him. He asks the PCs to let him be and keep his identity a secret. They could force him

to return with them as that was what they agreed to do. Setsuo may agree that Kyou be allowed to be with Soru, though, when he learns of Kyou's reason for leaving.

Alternatively, the PCs could suggest that Kyou and Sora return with them to Twin Blessings Village, and hope the couple is well-received. This gives them time to persuade Kyou to come with them, perhaps taking Sora along. However, if they cannot negotiate with Setsuo, he might try to send Sora home to the rival village as a gesture of goodwill (or ask the PCs to do so).

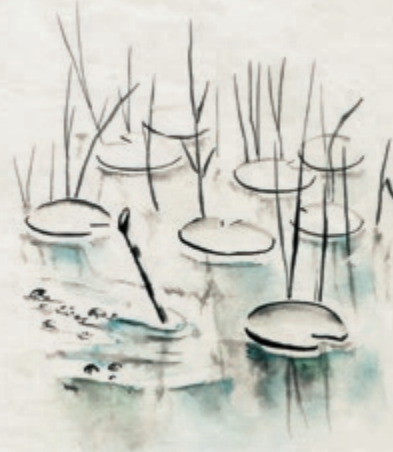
There are many possible outcomes to this situation and, instead of interfering, the PCs might simply wait to see what happens. If they let the scene play out, the villagers try to separate the couple, telling Sora to return to their village and Kyou to go to his. Instead, the couple flee together into the forest.

## Resolving the Dispute

This dispute between the parties can be handled as an intrigue that runs for three rounds (or four if there are three or fewer PCs present). The PCs are most likely to try **Appealing to a Person or Group** as the social objective, as described on page 255 of the core rulebook, to persuade either the villagers or the couple to do as the PCs desire. This objective's difficulty value is 6.

## CONCLUSION

There is no one correct way to conclude this encounter, and the GM might consider the PCs' motivations when rewarding honor and glory. Award each PC 2 glory for killing the yamauba, though, and 1 XP per hour of play. Setsuo asked them to help Kyou, but bringing him back to the village may not be the best way to help him. The PCs might feel honor-bound to inform Kyou's family of his existence, even if they do not take him with them to the castle. Should the PCs choose to involve themselves in Kyou's parentage, however, they gain a reputation as uncouth troublemakers which could hinder any social efforts with samurai at nearby castles.

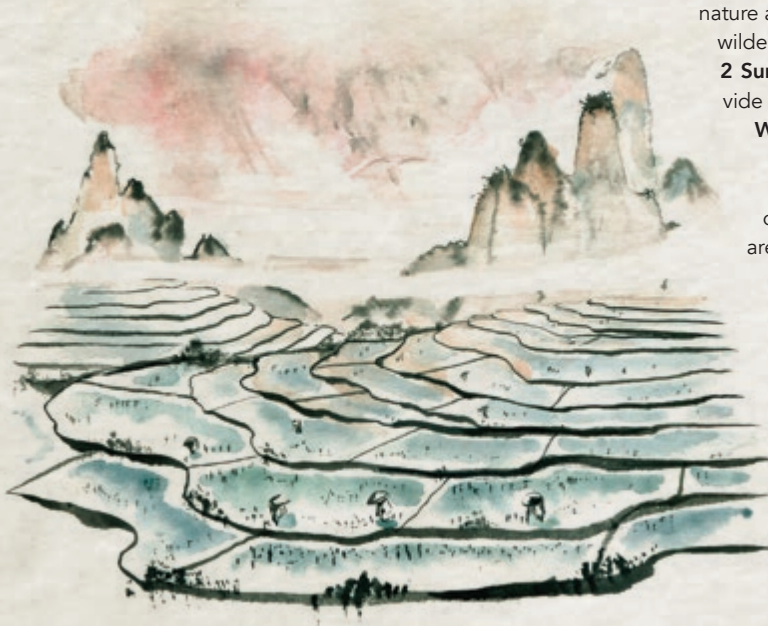


## Encounter Three: On the Road

For players of *Sins of Regret*, this encounter is intended to occur on the road between Twin Blessings Village and Closed Shell Castle. However, it could potentially occur on any road with any court as the destination. Rōnin traditionally travel widely, and wolves might be found in the forests, hills, or mountains of Rokugan.

### ENCOUNTER OVERVIEW

As the PCs travel along a road through wilderness areas they are surrounded and attacked by wolves. This initial short, violent conflict has ramifications in the castle, where the PCs come across a shugenja with the same injury they inflicted on the leader of the wolves. Inspired by the legend of the *senbiki ōkami* (thousand wolves), this character is a wolf taking human form. The wolf has hostile intentions, as the castle's daimyō has over-hunted the woods and the wolves are slowly starving. The PCs must decide how to deal with the situation without jeopardizing any other objectives they might have at the court. As the courtier is samurai, the lowly rōnin PCs cannot simply accuse him of the attack. Negotiating with him and the daimyō, though, may allow for a peaceable resolution between the wolves and the castle's occupants.



### NPCs IN THE ENCOUNTER

The following are the important NPCs for this encounter:

- ⊗ **Mamoru Nakama:** a large wolf guardian who can also take on human form. As a human, he has assumed the guise of a samurai courtier in a nearby castle.
- ⊗ **Castle daimyō:** the ruler of the castle. This can be Reju Jikai if the encounter is being run as part of *Sins of Regret*; if not, the daimyō name could be named Reju Kiyoshi. They are unknowingly in the middle of a conflict between the wolves and the castle's samurai, as the latter are hunting in what the wolves feel is their forest.

### TRAVELING

As the road takes the PCs through a forested area, they become aware of a single wolf shadowing them. Then, read or paraphrase the following:

On the road ahead, a large wolf steps out of the trees and stands, very still, its eyes glinting. Its fur is an unusual silvery grey, its defiant stare challenging, as though daring you to go any further along this road.

The PCs might decide to ignore, approach, or attack the wolf guardian (see page 16 for profile). A PC may try to determine whether it's benevolent or not, and with a **TN 2 Theology check (Void 1)** realize its nature and that it considers them a threat (PCs with wilderness experience can do the same with a **TN 2 Survival check**). ✨ from either check can provide some of the local village beliefs from the **Be Wary of Wolves** sidebar on page 15, or a hint at the source of the wolves' displeasure.

This is because the local daimyō has been over-hunting their territory, and the wolves are starving. This makes the wolves less tolerant of travelers, and more likely to see them as a potential food source. The local daimyō has upset a natural balance, and the PCs may be about to pay the price.

If desired, the GM can also have the terrain here (and other areas where the wolves appear) have the Imbalanced (Earth) quality. This can tie into the Imbalanced Terrain of the road itself (see page 267 of the core rulebook and page 11 of *Sins of Regret*), even if this encounter is not being used as part of *Sins of Regret*.

## BE WARY OF WOLVES

Wolves are common throughout Rokugan, and though every village holds its own beliefs, the following superstitions are widespread. Villagers, or servants in a castle, might tell the PCs any of the following as fact:

- ❁ Wolves are sacred messengers of forest spirits and should be revered.
- ❁ If you're ever followed by a wolf, don't stop and look back, and be careful where you step. If you trip and fall, you'll be devoured at once.
- ❁ Wolves are intelligent and dangerous hunters, and if a villager disappears in the forest they're likely to have been eaten by them.
- ❁ Wolves protect the rice fields from other hungry animals, but only if we remember to thank them.
- ❁ Be careful what you say in the forest, as wolves might be listening.

If the PCs approach or attack the wolf, it disappears into the forest. Attempts to follow the wolf only gain laughing barks as it keeps just ahead of them. If they do nothing, it studies them for a moment before a distant howl calls it away.

### AMBUSH

As the PCs pass along a narrow stretch of road, where the trees seem to close in on either side, a pack of wolves emerges from the trees and surrounds them.

As the trees seem to close in on either side of the road, you feel something watching you from the shadows. Eyes glint on one side, then the other, and then more appear until you are surrounded. Then, with a chorus of snarls, a pack of lean brown wolves bursts from the trees and attack.

The wolves can be represented by the **Wolf** profile from page 327 of the core rulebook. However, their leader, the wolf guardian, stands out as having supernatural intelligence. This is the wolf that the PCs must injure to drive the pack away.



If a PC showed a particular understanding or affinity for the lone wolf (speaking on its behalf when others proposed attacking it, or offering it food), the wolf pack may conspicuously not attack that particular PC, though the wolves still come for the group.

The wolves start at range 2 in the Obscuring terrain of the treeline near the road. For a typical group of four rank 2 PCs, there are ten wolves plus their leader—enough to form a serious challenge for the PCs. The PCs may attempt to fight the wolves or drive them off. If they fight, the wolves keep coming until the wolf guardian is wounded. Alternatively, the PCs may attempt to run but, as they're surrounded, the only escape is up one of the thick-trunked oaks. The wolves close in around the tree and try to reach the PCs by jumping and snapping at their feet. A competitive **TN 1 Fitness check (Earth 2)** determines which PC struggles up the tree last, and is most likely to receive a wound from the wolves below.

PCs with a vigilance of 2 or more notice that the wolves have a gaunt, hungry appearance. A **TN 2 Survival check (Fire 1, Earth 3)** reveals that these creatures are not eating well and may soon grow both weak and desperate for food.

Then the wolf guardian appears.

The snarling of the wolves stops suddenly, with the return of the large, silver wolf. The pack clearly defers to this creature, and wait as it approaches you slowly, baring its teeth.

If the PCs are up the tree, the other wolves wait and watch as the guardian slowly climbs up the tree with its long claws and attacks the nearest PC. If the PCs didn't climb the tree, the wolf guardian joins its pack in battle, eager for a meal. After the wolf guardian suffers a critical strike, it flees along with the rest of the pack. Their PC foes have proven too dangerous—for now.

### WOLVES UNMASKED

A wolf can unmask, but does so in ways befitting their lupine nature. When a wolf unmasks, it typically performs actions such as spending a turn howling loudly, growling at other wolves, beginning to flee then suddenly turn back as if ashamed, or making a jaw-snapping attack at an opponent beyond its range.

## MAMORU NAKAMA, WOLF GUARDIAN

ADVERSARY CONFLICT RANK: 9 6

Larger than the other wolves, this wolf is clearly leader of the pack, and acts as a guardian of the pack's territory. It has all the wily intelligence of a predator, along with an unusual understanding of human speech. While this wolf can appear human, it is unused to doing so. The longer it must maintain the illusion, the more likely its behavior seems strange and suspicious.

While human, Nakama exudes the confidence of a courtier and wears fine, silver-grey robes with a wakizashi (which he rarely draws, usually preferring to fight as a wolf). Moreover, having been attacked on the daimyō's own land, he is an honored guest. However, the other courtiers soon find his behavior odd and his presence unnerving, something the PCs could use to their advantage.

SOCIETAL		PERSONAL	
12 HONOR	3	5	ENDURANCE 14
40 GLORY	4	4	COMPOSURE 14
26 STATUS	2	4	FOCUS 9
+2,  -2 DEMEANOR - SHREWD	2		VIGILANCE 4
ARTISAN 0		MARTIAL 4	SCHOLAR 1
SOCIAL 3		TRADE 0	

ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
<b>Supernatural Speed:</b> Martial; Physical	<b>Territorial:</b> Social; Mental

### FAVORED WEAPONS

**Claws and fangs:** Range 0, Damage 5, Deadline 8, Razor-Edged

**Gear (equipped):** Thick hide (Physical 4), wakizashi (in human form)

### ABILITIES

#### SHIFT FORM

Nakama is an Otherworldly being of silhouette 2. As a Support action on his turn, he can change from wolf to human form or from human to wolf. While in wolf form, or in the presence of a character who knows his true nature, Nakama treats his status and glory as –.

#### LONE WOLF

Mamoru reduces the TN of all Social checks by 1 and increases the TN of Social checks targeting him by 1 while in a scene with no allies.

#### CIRCLE THE KILL

When performing a Martial Arts [Unarmed] check in wolf form, the wolf guardian may spend as follows:

**Fire** : The target suffers the Bleeding condition.

**Water** : The target treats all terrain as Dangerous (see page 267 of the core rulebook) until the end of their next turn.

## AT THE CASTLE

After encountering the wolves, the PCs may continue on. If played during *Sins of Regret*, they might consider the encounter over until they meet the Mamoru Nakama, the wolf guardian in human form, in the court chambers of Closed Shell Castle. However, if the PCs had no prior destination, any wounds received from the wolves might drive them to seek aid in the castle. Alternatively, Nakama could appear in some other court, or a different location entirely, as suits their current adventure.

## THE WOUNDED COURTIER

In whichever room the GM decides to include Nakama, when the PCs first meet him, read or paraphrase the following:

A man watches you with bright eyes. Though his face is youthful, his hair is silver-grey, matched by the color of his fine robes. His stare borders on rude, but something about the set of his mouth makes him seem dangerous.

Wherever he appears, Nakama bears the same wound the PCs inflicted on the leader of the wolves. He has approached the castle as a visiting courtier and been given aid, so his wounds are bandaged but apparent. His story is that he was attacked by bandits in the forest; he might accuse the PCs of being those bandits if they threaten to expose him.

The lord of the castle has already offered the courtier he knows as Mamoru Nakama his hospitality and invited him to stay while he heals. His family name of Mamoru is probably unknown to the PCs (especially if they are gaijin or are not well traveled). Other castle residents confirm that other members of the family have visited before. It is certainly possible all of these earlier visitors over the years were Nakama himself, though, or other supernatural beings from his pack.

The PCs may come to suspect that Nakama and the wolf are the same, and a **TN 2 Theology check (Earth 1, Water 3)** can confirm of the existence of such supernatural beings. What they do with this knowledge, though, is another matter.

#### WHAT IF THE PCS LOSE TO THE WOLVES?

While the PCs could end up in a wolf's belly as a result of this encounter, that isn't necessarily the most interesting end to their story. After the last PC falls, but before they are killed, the GM could have a patrol of bushi or another NPC from the castle arrive carrying torches and spears to drive off the wolves. These new arrivals would then take the PCs to the castle to convalesce. Of course, this would put the PCs in debt to their saviors, obligating them to assist in whatever problems they face now.



As mere rōnin, the PCs must be careful how they deal with the presence of the wounded Nakama. If they openly accuse him of attacking them as a wolf or otherwise, the inhabitants of the castle might take offense on his behalf. The PCs must provide proof, not only of his nature, but of his wrong-doing. While attacking travelers and impersonating a samurai are both serious crimes, simply being a wolf in human form is not—and few would believe such a wild accusation without proof anyway! Getting the backing of socially important castle officials could provide important help in backing up the PCs' accusations. The daimyō cares little of the matter, though, not realizing how his hunts are emptying the forests of food for the wolves.

The PCs might talk to Nakama himself to reach a conclusion, but earning his trust is more likely if the PCs did not threaten him as a lone wolf earlier. If this is the case, reduce the TN of any social checks made targeting Nakama by 1 (to a minimum of 1). Learning the cause of the wolves' upset, the PCs might find a way to negotiate with the daimyō, persuading him by reason or trickery to avoid the particular area of the wolves' territory.

To reflect Nakama's supernatural nature, the GM is encouraged to use unusual ways he could unmask while in human form. Stifled howls, pawing the ground, and licking his lips when he thinks no one is watching could also be clues to the PCs if needed.

The PCs could leave the courtier be, but he has come to the castle for a reason. The wolves are angry with the daimyō for hunting (or allowing hunting) in their territory. Should the daimyō propose a hunt, Nakama likely decides to join and then call for his pack once they reach the forest in order to end the hunts once and for all. If desired, the daimyō could be especially uncaring and Nakama himself pushes for a hunt. In either case, the PCs may feel obligated to dissuade the daimyō of a hunt, suspecting what might occur, or go with him to act as protection.

If the PCs leave the castle to move on, without having dealt with Nakama, they find the wolves waiting for them when they leave the castle and must fight their way out.

### The Alternative

As an alternative, the GM could make Mamoru Nakama a powerful shugenja who can trick the PCs with illusion and communicate with the forest spirits and wolves. This NPC has become more sympathetic to the wolves than the humans of the area, and has sworn to do whatever is necessary to reclaim their territory. This shugenja can be represented by the **Scholarly Shugenja** on page 314 of the core rulebook. Lacking a wolf guardian's supernatural abilities, the shugenja uses the invocation *Ever-Changing Waves* (see page 208 of the core rulebook) to take on wolf form.



### THE DAIMYŌ

The lord of the castle can be represented by the **Venerable Provincial Daimyō** profile from page 315 of the core rulebook, or the **Lord Jikai** profile on page 16 of *Sins of Regret*. This daimyō loves to hunt, but if the PCs tell him the truth of Nakama, he is appalled to have offended the wolves and promises to hunt elsewhere. If the PCs introduce Nakama to the daimyō carefully, with both sides prepared to cooperate, they might come to an understanding. In this case, the wolf pack might even fight on Jikai's behalf in the final battle of *Sins of Regret*.

This can be conducted as an intrigue. All three of the **Sample Social Objectives** in the core rulebook on page 255 can work here (*Appeal to a Person or Group*, *Discern Someone's Qualities*, and *Discredit Someone*), with difficulty level of 5 for each.

### CONCLUSION

The PCs should gain 1 XP for the encounter in the woods, and 1 XP per hour of play when resolving the situation later at the castle. The way the PCs handle the wolf attack and later appearance of the wounded Nakama might impress or anger the wolves in the forest and courtiers in the castle. Satisfying both parties requires negotiation and sympathy toward both sides, and should be awarded 2 honor and 2 glory. Depending on the PCs' strategies, they might alter their standing at court, and possibly gain wolf allies for future encounters in the wild.

## GM Guidance: Powerful Waves

Most rōnin are not lordless through choice, but through birth or circumstance. Gaining a position as a lorded samurai is therefore a common goal, but it is not a universal one. Some rōnin prefer the freedom of their position, while others have grander ambitions and wish to become lords themselves.

The following section offers the GM advice for situations where rōnin PCs become daimyō, lead armies, and even rule over lesser lords. This section also covers ways of continuing a campaign once a rōnin has reached such a position, and must work to keep it. Finally, it also provides ideas for further adventures suitable for elevated rōnin characters.

### HOW A RŌNIN MIGHT BECOME A LORD

Stories of rōnin rising to great heights become the stuff of legend. It is no easy thing for anyone to change their place in the Celestial Order, but since rōnin stand outside of that order, anything is possible. Taking even a humble place within that order infers a destiny, and becoming a daimyō implies that destiny is a great one.

Some rōnin wander Rokugan seeking not only paid work, but the chance to prove themselves to a lord who might eventually swear them into service. There are many lords in Rokugan, from the minor shugo to the family daimyō of the Great Clans. The more important the lord, and the greater the deeds the rōnin performs for them, the higher the position the rōnin might gain in their service. If a great lord lacks a suitable heir, the rōnin might even be adopted into the lord's family and become part of their dynasty. This is a rare occurrence of which some clans may openly disapprove. For others, such as families within the Dragon clan, adopting a rōnin who has proved their worth makes perfect sense.

A single rōnin might even be made head of a vassal family if they become indispensable to a family daimyō powerful enough to grant them such a position, or perform an exemplary act such as saving the daimyō's life. Truly legendary acts might even draw the attention of the Emperor himself, the only person who can create a new clan and put a rōnin at its head. For this to happen, the rōnin's actions would have to have huge ramifications, such as rescuing a member of the Imperial family.

A band of rōnin who work together might earn a reputation for serving as honorable mercenaries. To become more than that, they must impress a Great Clan or the Emperor himself, fighting for a desperate cause or preventing a catastrophe. Alternatively, a group of rōnin who become large and powerful enough might be able to act as a minor clan. They might administer holdings, as the rōnin Kaeru family does in the City of the Rich Frog for the Unicorn Clan. Such a group has to be careful not to offend an established clan however, and their influence is best grown in areas distant from the capital.



A dishonorable rōnin or rōnin band might consider other, less wholesome methods. A mahō user or even a skilled actor might be able to take the place of a lord, while a ruthless assassin or great warrior might take a position by force. Such actions are safest in backwater places, where rōnin might consolidate their position before being challenged by any authorities. Skirmishes between minor lords are common, so even a small battle might be overlooked in lands far from the capital. Rōnin who take the position of lord in a castle or town, far from any clan or family strong enough to challenge them, may prove their ability as daimyō before anyone has a chance to object.

### OPPORTUNITY IN CLOSED SHELL CASTLE

For those with *Sins of Regret*, Closed Shell Castle is remote enough for rōnin to take the dishonorable route to greatness. The daimyō's position is so weak, and he has so many enemies, that PCs might maneuver themselves into powerful roles, gain supporters or allies, and even manipulate the young heir. Alternatively, if the daimyō dies in the final battle, they may step into the void to keep the daimyō's enemies from taking control. Whether there are other contenders for the position depends on the outcome of the final battle, and the GM may arrange for the PCs to encounter the various contenders for the daimyō's position during that battle, so they can decide whether to help or hurt them. Here, honor might be sacrificed for glory, or the other way around.

Even if a PC takes on the position of castle administrator as a temporary measure by suitably impressing the daimyō's superiors they might find themselves offered a permanent position as minor lord. This is what Otomo Nobu, the castle steward, had planned to do himself, after all.

### RŌNIN RUNNING A CASTLE

Any new lord of a castle ideally consolidates their position, establishes the rules they want followed, learns who is useful and trustworthy among their staff and samurai, and also builds relationships with superiors and discourages rivals. A rōnin lord has extra work to do, ensuring their actions convince any doubters in their own or other courts that they can run their castle and lands for the betterment of everyone, and possibly also to the satisfaction of the superiors to whom they pay rice tax. Any mistake, oversight, or rumor of improper conduct incites rivals to remind everyone of their rōnin past, and even hint that they have no right to be lord at all. Rōnin daimyō have to earn the respect of their samurai, and even their servants, if their position on the Celestial Wheel is in any doubt.

A rōnin's past might return to haunt them in their new position. There may be things they did or neglected while they had the freedom of rōnin that would cause a scandal if they became common knowledge now. They may also struggle to gain allies, as some traditional families may not wish to trade with ex-rōnin or make alliances or marriages with newly made samurai families. Without allies, the new daimyō must ensure they have the strength of an army to defend their position and deter neighboring lords from seeing them as easy prey.

The rōnin daimyō PC likely has the advantage of other PCs willing to support their position (they could even be secretly ruling as a group, with one PC publicly acting as daimyō). Placing these PCs in positions of power in the castle lets other players become involved with the running of the castle and offers the daimyō PC much-needed assistance. Suitable positions include that of steward, advisor for gaijin affairs (perfect for a gaijin PC), castle administrator, a *taisa* (captain) for training and organizing the soldiers, or a *shugenja* or monk to act as spiritual advisor. Of course, displacing the former possessors of such roles to put PCs in these positions can cause other problems.

#### LIFE ON THE WAVES

Players desiring more information on those who walk on different paths than samurai should avail themselves of *Path of Waves*. Here they can find rules for playing as rōnin, peasant, and gaijin characters; new fully-realized settings complete with adventure seeds; and even information on the distant gaijin lands of the Ivory Kingdoms!

### RŌNIN IN CLOSED SHELL CASTLE

For PCs who take on the role of daimyō in Closed Shell Castle, there are a number of issues the previous daimyō was already dealing with. The GM might choose to make these escalating problems, so the new daimyō finds themselves making some difficult decisions early on.

- ⊗ The shortage of rice may make paying rice tax to Lord Itsuki difficult and feeding the hired mercenary soldiers impossible. The current state of Twin Blessings Village means even the next harvest may not be adequate.
- ⊗ There are increased tensions between Twin Blessings Village and Nestled Village (possibly concerning the events in Encounter Two). Setsuo may journey to the castle to plead his village's case, especially if the PCs befriended him during their stay at his village.
- ⊗ Lord Osamu may come himself to take the castle by force. This might lead to a large battle or castle siege.
- ⊗ If they survive, either Ume, the daimyō's heir, or Nobu, the daimyō's steward, might return to claim the position of daimyō. There may be many in the castle who feel more loyalty to them than to the new lord.

### CHALLENGES FOR CASTLE LORDS

These events are designed for ex-rōnin daimyō in any castle, Closed Shell or otherwise. They can be adapted for different situations and terrain.

- ⊗ The Otomo family daimyō sends word that the Otomo have the right to administer the castle, and the rōnin posing as daimyō must leave. That the Otomo daimyō is suddenly interested in this minor holding suggests a rival may have spread rumors or appealed to the daimyō directly.
- ⊗ A conspiracy of samurai who are still devoutly loyal to the previous daimyō has formed. Its members launch a campaign of sabotage and subversion to display the new daimyō's ineffectiveness and cause them to be removed or discredited.
- ⊗ A number of courtiers have come to visit the rōnin PCs' provincial court, most likely to gain gossip. An anonymous note says that a spy from a rival daimyō is among them. If the note is true, who is the spy, and what is the rival planning? Or is a courtier hoping to encourage paranoia as part of their own schemes?

- ⊗ There are rumors of gaijin bandits lurking in the woods, and tensions between castle inhabitants and any gaijin in the castle (including gaijin PCs) are increasing.
- ⊗ The daimyō's lord sends a representative to the castle to ensure it is run correctly. She wants the PCs to fail because they were once rōnin, and finds fault with everything in their castle. Her report is sure to find the PCs unworthy and thus lose their position. Can she be bribed or convinced to write a favorable report, or must she be stopped from returning with a poor report?
- ⊗ An ally is under siege from a neighboring lord, and requires aid. If the PCs take their army to fight alongside their ally, they leave their own castle open to attack. Failing to help might mean not only losing this ally, but deterring others in the future, if the news gets out.

### FURTHER ADVENTURES

For many NPCs, heritage is more important than personal history, and no matter what the PCs do, their rōnin status is never entirely forgotten. This complication can lead to interesting confrontations, inspiring further adventures. Suitable adventures can be politically based with high stakes, as the PCs face-off against daimyō antagonists, or the PCs can face practical problems, making the usual duties of a lord extra difficult. Other daimyō may look down on the ex-rōnin PCs no matter what the PCs achieve, as even in their own castle the PCs must earn the respect that established daimyō automatically expect. Any adventure designed for a daimyō PC can incorporate these obstacles, to a greater or lesser degree.

A daimyō faces challenges lesser samurai might never know, but has more opportunities to make world-changing decisions too. In some ways, playing a lord with a rōnin past is especially exciting. Though the lack of family heritage and support can be a problem, this past also means the new lord is starting afresh and can decide what attitude their new dynasty takes, who to add as future allies, and what reputation their family earns. Ultimately, the PCs can work toward building their own legacy.

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A supplemental set of encounters for the *Sins of Regret*, *Cresting Waves* expands upon that adventure with three tales that can be used to add depth and new intrigues as the PCs adventure as lordless samurai. These new encounters can also be used for other adventures for the *Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game* in which the PCs are gaijin or even peasants striving to forge their own path. Lastly, *Cresting Waves* includes GM guidance for rōnin PCs who rise to power and become rulers of their own castles!



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