

LAST STOP

A SCENARIO FOR KURO



Six strangers find themselves at a deserted crossroads in a forgotten part of Shin-Edo. What spirits have trapped them here, and are the strangers actually who they appear to be?

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CREDITS

Last Stop

Writing: Andrew Peregrine

Editing: Andrew Kenrick

Art: Scott Purdy

Layout: Gregor Hutton

Kuro for Cubicle 7

Line Developer: Andrew Peregrine

Creative Director: Dominic McDowall-Thomas

Art Director: Jon Hodgson

Graphics by: Paul Bourne

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The 7èmeCercle, 10 rue d'Alexandre, 64600 Anglet

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SCENARIO: LAST STOP

INTRODUCTION

This adventure is designed as a beginning adventure for between three and six characters. It was originally written for GenCon 2013, so it can be used as a one off introduction to Kuro or as part of a longer campaign. It should run in the space of a single session. However, the Gamemaster might encourage the group's fears and paranoia to create infighting and suspicion that will make it last longer.

This adventure includes six pre-generated characters so you can get playing right away. However, you might create characters of your own, or use characters from previous adventures. If you are using your own characters there are a couple of restrictions: they should all live in Shin-Edo and have a reason to take the same bus this evening. They should not know each other too well, making this a good adventure to bring a group together. Ideally they should not be paying much attention to the journey, but by the time they realise something is wrong, the adventure has already begun...

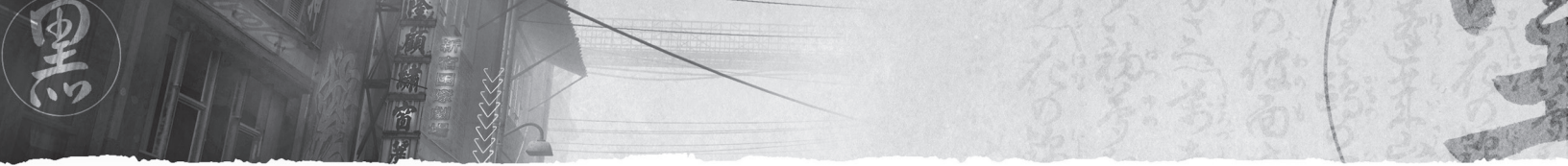
ARRIVAL

All the characters are on an old bus travelling the roads of Shin-Edo. Night has fallen and it is difficult to see much through the windows. The characters may all make Awareness rolls to realise they are not in an area they recognise.

As they begin to wonder where they are going, the bus stops, shuddering to a halt as if the engine has finally given up. The

driver sits motionless for a while and then dissolves, like liquid, into his seat. His clothes and body crumble, leaving no trace he was ever there. After this the player characters are alone in the broken down bus, in the darkness and quiet of this crossroads.





THE CROSSROADS

The bus has stopped in a wide crossroads in what appears to be a deserted area of the city. The area is lit dully with old street lights and while the place is eerily quiet the sounds of traffic and the rest of the city can be heard in the distance. However, there is no wireless signal so no one will be able to use their pod to phone out or access the Internet. However, most pods will allow walkie-talkie type conversations to people nearby (as long as you have their number of course) without a full signal.

The bus engine has died and it will refuse to start. A mechanic might investigate the engine (using Mechanics (Car Mechanics)) and discover the engine might be fixed, but needs parts.

If anyone decides to walk away they can take any of the four roads leading away from the crossroads. However, if they do so they find themselves arriving back at the crossroads from the opposite road. Any other attempt to find an exit eventually runs

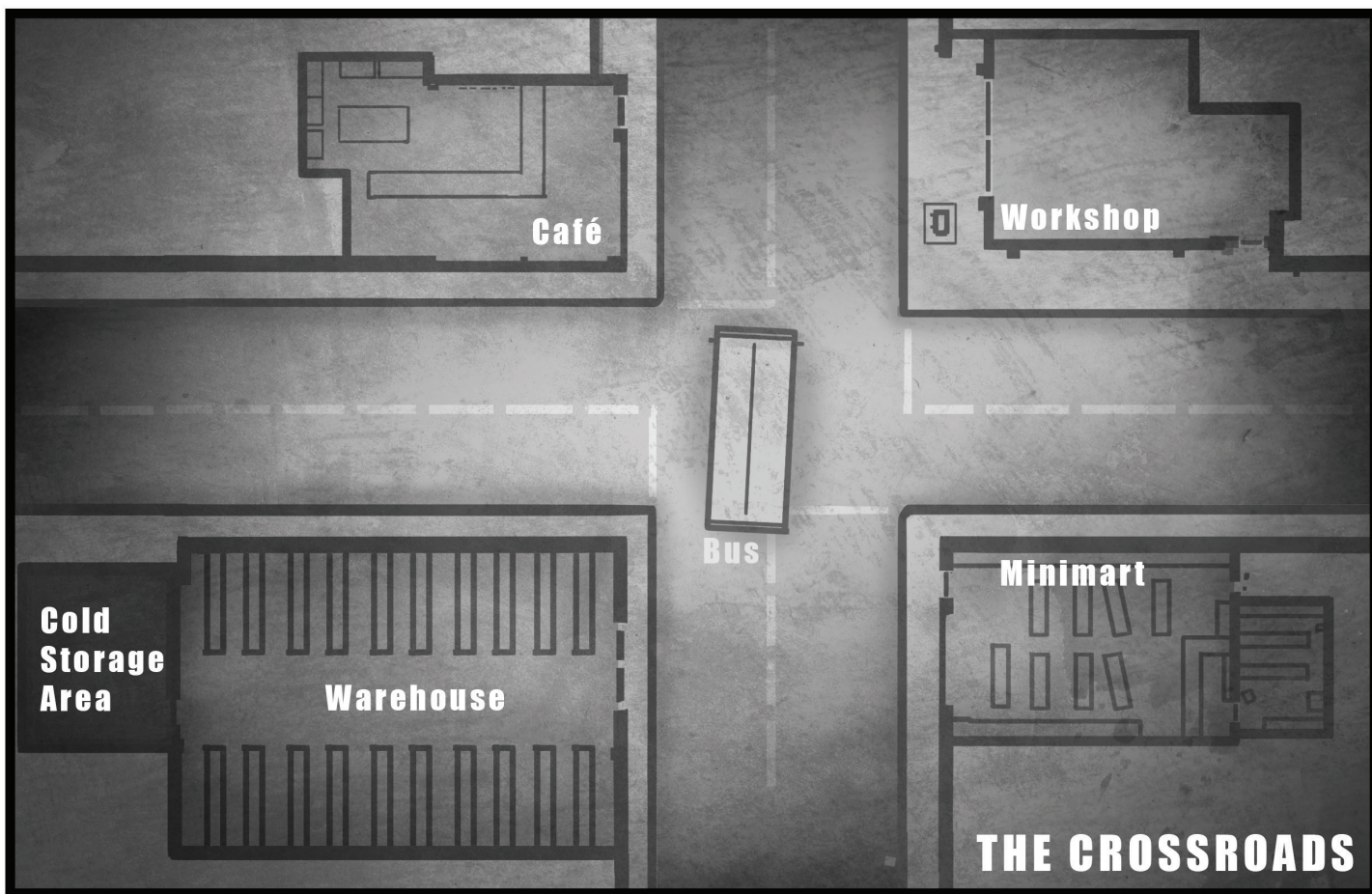
into a high wall or side of a building, which will prove impossible to scale.

On each corner of the crossroads is a large building: a café, a workshop, a warehouse and a mini-mart.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The player characters have been brought here as sacrifices for a terrible Oni spirit.

The area was once vibrant, being a popular rest stop on a bus route. Several people lived here and ran various businesses. However, it was also a place where the veil between the spirit world and our own was weak. This weakness allowed the daughter of a local bus driver, Meiko Sasaki, to summon an Oni, although





not on purpose. She suffered from terrible bouts of depression which drew the Oni to her. It fed on her pain and grew strong enough to manifest in the local area.

With Meiko's pain to anchor the spirit, it reached out to influence those around her. It fed on their pain, jealousy, fears and other negative emotions. So in dreams and whispers it fanned the flames of any petty jealousies and rivalries. The area became 'cursed' as people continually fought and argued. People started going elsewhere to shop and the area became run down, which only made things worse. Meiko's father Hayato tried everything he could to help his daughter, but nothing worked and no doctor or pills had an answer.

Eventually, Meiko was so tormented by the Oni, she committed suicide, in an attempt to send it away. But it was too late, the Oni was too strong. The Oni used its control to plant a seed in the minds of the locals that her father had somehow killed or abused her. Driven by the dark desires of the Oni, the local people formed a lynch mob and killed her father.

The Oni

The Oni is an extremely powerful adversary, and if you intend to slaughter most of the player characters in a one shot game it is easily up to the task. However, if you plan on playing further games of Kuro with these characters, we have given a second set of statistics (after the / slash) that make it a less-deadly opponent. If using the less-deadly version, the Gamemaster might also forego using any of its powers as well.

Characteristics

DEX 5/3	STR 8/5	STA 7/4	REF 4/3
INT 3/3	PER 3/3	CHA 2/2	WIL 5/3

Secondary Characteristics

HIT 95/55	SW 32/18	DT -32/-18	DEF 24/18
ACT 2/1	MOV 1 / 5 in water	REA 6/4	

Skills

Combat Skills

Hand-to-Hand 8/3	Katana 10/5
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General Skills

Athletics 6/3	Dodge 8/4
Communication 3/3	Intimidation 8/5
Shadowing 6/4	Spiritual 4/4
Legends 10/8	Shinto 10/8

Powers

Horror 3, Mimic, Natural Armour, Phoenix

The Oni cannot cross a barrier of salt, but it can throw things (boxes, crowbars) at people protected by one.

After this tragedy the police arrested most of the locals. The businesses fall apart and the area was deserted. However, the Oni refused to let Meiko's spirit move on. Her father's spirit is free to leave, but refuses to do so until his daughter is freed. Having failed to help her in life, he refuses to leave her in death. The Oni told him it will release Meiko if Hayato brings it enough souls to consume. Of course, this is a lie; the Oni has no intention of ever freeing either of them.

For the past few months the father has brought people here to feed the Oni. Tonight it is the turn of the player characters. The Oni won't just kill them though; it wants to take its time and feed on the pain, anger and conflict that will naturally come to the fore when they realise they are trapped.

RUNNING THE ADVENTURE

This adventure is very free-form, and designed to allow a lot of roleplaying. It is a slow-burning ghost story so the Gamemaster should keep things as spooky as possible and not rush encounters (unless time is getting short!). The player characters are free to wander where they like in the area and explore as they will. However, any attempts to escape will be met with failure. The roads lead back to each other and walls surround them. They can hear the sounds of the city in the distance but no one hears them shout and no technology will connect to the outside world. There are initially several things they might do:

Get the Bus Working

The bus is dead, but might work if the right parts can be found. These can be found in the Workshop. However, even if the engine is fixed the bus won't actually go. It will start only to die again moments later.

Release the Spirits

The player characters can free Meiko and her father. The Oni has hidden Meiko's remains in the warehouse. If they can find her body and bring it to the bus where her father's spirit is bound

they can finally be free. The ghosts will appear at random times to try and help the player characters, when the Oni's attention is elsewhere. They cannot speak or touch anything, and have a limited amount of time before vanishing, but will help where they can by pointing out clues the player characters may have missed. Meiko can appear anywhere except the bus; Hayato can only appear in the bus.

Investigate the Buildings

The four buildings can be checked for clues and supplies. The player characters might split up to look around or stick together. The Gamemaster might litter some objects around in the buildings to get them paranoid and suspicious of each other (see Twisting the Knife below).

Destroy the Oni

A direct confrontation with the Oni will not destroy it. In fact, it is impossible to destroy. If reduced to 0 hit points it will vanish and reform later on. Ideally the player characters should end the adventure by trying to get Meiko's body to her father. If this happens the Oni will manifest to try and stop them, which is where things get very messy. If things are slow the Gamemaster might let the Oni make a brief appearance to scare and confuse the characters. It will rise out of any nearby water (there is always some somewhere) and dissolve if it takes any damage. It will also appear as a shadow to warn Meiko or Hayato of its disapproval, at which point they will fearfully vanish.



Hayato Sasaki

Hayato appears as a worn but decent public servant. He wears a pale blue bus driver uniform with a peaked cap. He is neat and tidy and tries to smile for his customers. However, he carries an air of exhaustion that is hard to hide.

Meiko Sasaki

Meiko is an eighteen year old girl who dresses in a dark 'Gothic Lolita' style. She suffered from deep depressions that often wouldn't allow her out of bed on many days. Her depression came on during her teenage years, and a marked difference in her expression can be seen in photos of her between her childhood and teenage years.

THE WORKSHOP

The workshop functioned as both a garage and repair bay for the bus, and a few others besides. It has two doors, but both are locked. The larger main door is big enough to admit a single-decker bus, but is so warped it won't open even if unlocked. The smaller door can be forced open.

Outside is a rusty petrol pump. A Mechanics or Electrical roll might get it working again. There is enough petrol left to fill a jerry can (which can be found inside). What your players do with a can of petrol will probably do them more harm than good.

Inside, the workshop is divided into two areas, but there is no partition between them. A set of stairs leads up to the second floor. The large area functioned as a garage but is mostly empty. Some parts for the bus can be found here although it will take a search to find useful ones. While there are plenty of parts, most are old and rusted.

The section behind the smaller door is a tool store and workbench area. An old wooden bench with a vice and a few manual tools can be found here. Around the bench are pictures of Meiko, many of them quite young, almost a chronicle of her life. An Empathy roll will notice she smiles less and less as she gets older.

Upstairs there is a small living quarters, where Meiko and her father lived. There is a small kitchen, and two rooms. Meiko had the small room, which became her bedroom. Hayato slept in the main room, which also functioned as a living room (a futon mattress is folded up in a cupboard here). Most of the place shows signs of a struggle, doors are broken open and most of the furniture is broken. A few bloodstains can be found on the tatami mats. This is where Hayato was killed when the remaining residents broke in. Meiko committed suicide in her room.

The place is sparse and plain; Meiko and Hayato had little money. Meiko's room is decorated with a few Gothic posters and some of her effects and clothes are there. Most noticeable though is a message (meant for the Oni) scrawled in black lipstick on her mirror "I DIDN'T ASK FOR YOU. GO AWAY!" The bed is surrounded by scattered salt; it once formed a ring of salt, but no longer.

In a bedside cabinet is a selection of several bottles of pills, all with different dates. Anyone with medical knowledge can tell they are all used to treat depression. They show Meiko has a long history of depression and has tried several very powerful drugs to fight it but to no avail. The player character Shiori might also recognise some of the drugs, as she has plenty of friends using similar ones.

THE CAFE

Like all the buildings here, the cafe is dark and dilapidated. The interior can be seen through the large and grimy front windows. The door opens easily into a large area full of moulded plastic tables and chairs. The area is served by a long counter with a till and stands for cakes and desserts.

Behind the counter is a large kitchen area, dominated by a large steel table surrounded by several cupboards. Old kitchen pans hang from hooks above the table. There are several drawers but most of the cutlery has been removed. However, a reasonably sharp kitchen knife might be found and a few of the pans might make good clubs.

There is a fridge, which is locked, and a series of cookers and sinks. While the sinks can provide rather dark and grimy water, the cookers have no gas supply. The cupboards around the kitchen and counter contain a few out-of-date ingredients. Little of it will be useful though. However there is a bottle of salt, which may be useful protection from the Oni. Meiko may appear here to point out the salt.

The wall behind the counter has several photos of customers and parties that have taken place here. One of them shows Hayato and Meiko at Meiko's 18th birthday celebration. The player characters will recognise Hayato as the bus driver and Meiko if they have seen her as a ghost, so the photo confirms their connection. An Empathy or Perception roll might show that she looks like she is putting on a brave face but not really enjoying herself. Hayato is overly smiling to try and encourage her. An indistinct dark shadow can just be seen behind her – that of a large, powerful man, possibly with horns on his head.

THE MINI-MART

While the inside can be seen through the grimy windows, the mini-mart is not only locked but chained shut. If the chain can't be broken, or the lock picked, there is a small hole in the wooden panelling around the side that either of the two female characters might fit through.

The mini-mart has two sections. At the front are several shelves for the customers to browse. Behind a till and counter is the second area, a very small stockroom. There is no power here and the area is quite dark.

There is very little in the mini-mart, as it has been cleared out. However a few things remain. Some spoiled, or at least out of date, foodstuffs and a few cheap plastic toys can be found on the shelves. There are also several newspapers dated several months ago that have been left here unsold. Anyone looking at one will discover the stories 'Local Man Brutally Murdered' and 'Man attacks Possessed Girl' detailing Hayato's death and Meiko's connection to the Oni (see the handouts below, which are also available at the end of the scenario).

The player characters aren't the only ones to have found the hole in the wall though. There are three to five hungry feral dogs here prowling the shelves. To them, the out of date food is a major find and they will defend the territory from any intruders. If they find a player character on their own they might consider them dinner too.

Man attacks 'Possessed' Girl

(dated nine months ago)

In Tagashi district today a man was arrested for harassing a young girl. He insisted she was the origin of a demonic creature he claims has been haunting him for the last few months. The man was obviously suffering from a severe mental breakdown, and police believe he fixated on the girl (who cannot be named) due to her 'gothic' clothing and dark make up. However, witnesses claim she replied to her attacker saying 'I didn't ask for him. I don't want him.'

Feral Dogs (3-5)

Characteristics

DEX 4	STR 2	STA 3	REF 4
INT 1	PER 3	CHA 1	WIL 2

Secondary Characteristics

HIT 40	SW 13	DT -13	DEF 11
ACT 2	MOV 4		REA 3

Skills

Combat Skills

Hand-to-Hand 4

General Skills

Athletics 4, Dodge 4

Powers

Natural Weapons (Teeth)

Local Man Brutally Murdered

(dated eight months ago - 2 months before the Kuro incident)

Several arrests were made today at the crossroad bus stop in Tagashi district when locals decided to take the law into their own hands. Acting on allegations of child abuse, several local people raided the house of Sasaki Hayato and murdered him before police could intervene.

Sasaki san was a respected local bus driver, still grieving over the recent suicide of his daughter Meiko. Her recent death had been due to a long battle with depression and was not regarded by the police as suspicious.

The local people arrested insisted Sasuki had been abusing his daughter, and that this was the cause of her depression. However, an investigation into her medical records revealed there was no suspicion or evidence of abuse. None of those arrested were able to say what evidence they had uncovered that led them to this tragic act of what is now believed to be mass hysteria.

This is not the first ill luck the area has suffered recently. Over the last year its crime rate has increased and many of the local businesses have closed as customers rarely come to this once-thriving area. It is suspected that today's horrific act was driven by a sense of anger and despair felt keenly by the area's inhabitants. There is little doubt that today's arrests will spell the end of this small district.

THE WAREHOUSE

The warehouse is one of the more dilapidated buildings. It was used as a general storehouse for several businesses, all of which are now gone. There is a large gate door big enough for a lorry, with a small person-sized door set into it. Both are locked and chained shut. However, they are made of wood and may give in to force and violence.

Inside, the warehouse is a vast open space with several large storage shelves filling half of it. One set of shelves is covered with all manner of old clothes and personal possessions, shoes, handbags, purses, shirts, dresses, wallets and so on. All have been thrown together as if ready for a jumble sale. These are the possessions of previous victims of the Oni.

If anyone lingers too long near the piles of clothes, they will feel an urge to undress, place their clothes on the racks and make their way towards the cold storage room, as the previous victims have done. To resist this urge the character needs to make a Willpower characteristic check against a difficulty of 12. If they fail the Gamemaster might allow them another check to clear their head. How much of their clothing they have removed depends on the failure margin of the tests. However, the Gamemaster should use this effect to scare the player characters rather than condemn them to the storage locker.

The only light comes from holes in the roof and given it is dark outside the interior is almost pitch black. Towards the back is a cold storage area with metal walls and a locked freezer style door.

With no power, the cold storage room is no longer working, but it has become a store of a different type. It contains the bodies of the souls brought here and killed by the Oni. The Oni makes them place their possessions on the shelves before consuming their souls and locking their remains in the cold storage area. This is also where it keeps Meiko's body, right at the back, using the remains of its victims as guards.

The dead here are more animated than they should be, meaning the cold storage room is full of zombie-like creatures. What remains of them is animated by with pain and suffering and will attack anything that they come across. There are up to twenty, enough to put the player characters off from attempting a turkey shoot. To investigate the cold storage room the player characters will have to find a way to lure them out or trap them elsewhere (usually one player character acts as bait to draw them out while the others investigate). The lost souls are slow and not very clever, but relentless. The player characters might be able to open the door a couple of times reasonable safely, but the lost souls will eventually be close enough to hold open the door and pour out. They may look frail but they are very strong.

If the player characters can get into the cold storage room, in the dark is the long dead body of Meiko. It can be recognised as it is still wearing the black 'Lolita' style dress and bonnet she wears when she has appeared as a ghost. If the body is removed the Oni will appear to stop the player characters releasing her by returning her remains to Hayato in the bus.

Lost Souls (up to 20)

Characteristics

DEX 3	STR 4	STA 4	REF 2
INT 1	PER 2	CHA 1	WIL 1

Secondary Characteristics

HIT 45	SW 15	DT -15	DEF 14
ACT 1	MOV 3		REA 2

Skills

Combat Skills

Hand-to-Hand 4

Powers

Natural Weapons (Clawed hands)

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TWISTING THE KNIFE

After the player characters have been in the area for a while the Oni knows some of their secrets and desires. It will leave a few clues and items around to unnerve, embarrass and upset the player characters so it can feed on the resulting torment. These items are real, but created by the Oni. They should provoke more interaction between the player characters so should never be found by just one of them. Here are some suggestions of what might be found:

A school notebook with 'Shiori 4 Sho' and numerous hearts covering almost every page. There are a few clippings of articles with Sho, some have kiss marks on them.

A few posters on a wall of Sho modelling embarrassingly brief underwear, or strange and appalling clothes. The pouty pictures are laughable, and some may have had doodles drawn on them (such as a moustache).

A police file on Kazuki or Rin describing work they have done as a police informant.

A detailed police file on a case that went wrong with Hiroshi as the investigating officer. The file reports that a young girl (who looks like Meiko) was accidentally shot during the investigation.

A newspaper that details a story naming Kohei as one of the men arrested in a raid on an under-age brothel.

If you're using your own characters, you might like to replace these effects with items tailored to their own background, dark secrets and all.

ENDING THE ADVENTURE

After much wandering around the player characters should piece together the story of Meiko and find her body. Once they leave the warehouse with her remains, they will find the Oni standing between them and the bus, ghostly katana raised. It will do its best to guard the bus and stop them getting Meiko's remains to Hayato, so it will not be tricked into leaving the area easily.

The Oni is a very dangerous opponent, and may be too much for the player characters. This isn't a problem if you intend to slaughter them all indiscriminately. However, if you want some of them to survive for another adventure you might allow the lost souls to take their revenge and attack the Oni as well. If the Oni is forced to attack the lost souls the player characters will be spared from its attacks to a certain degree, but remember its primary goal is to stop them freeing Meiko and Hayato.

There are two ways to end this adventure, depending on whether it is a one off or the start of a campaign. In a one off adventure the player characters are all doomed, from the moment the adventure began. As with most Japanese horror, there is no escape. They are forever trapped here and their deaths at the hands of the Oni just turn them into ghosts themselves. However, they can still win by getting Meiko's remains to the bus and freeing the father and daughter.

If the player characters manage to bring the remains to the bus they will see the father's spirit appear at the wheel. The bus shifts and an incorporeal version drives away from the wreck of the original bus. Any player characters will not be taken with them, and will remain on the corporeal bus as the spirit bus, father and daughter pass through them. At the back of the bus sits Meiko, who will wave in mournful gratitude as the bus vanishes out of sight.

If the Oni hasn't been destroyed, at this point it will scream in rage and fade away. The remaining player characters are free to go at least. If this is to be the start of a campaign or further adventures are planned, the sun rises as they set off down one of the roads. Eventually they find themselves back in a part of the city they recognise.

However, if this is a one off adventure, when they set off down one of the roads, eventually they find themselves back at the crossroads. Waiting for them are any of the dead player characters, as are their own dead bodies! The Oni appears again and laughs. As the sun begins to come up, the remaining player characters fade away; they are trapped here as spirits forever.

