

Honor and Eta

What's Eating the Eta?

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“Honor and Eta” is a D&D Oriental Adventures scenario set in the world of Rokugan that is designed to challenge four 1st-level player characters. The adventure can be adjusted for characters up to 8th level by increasing the strength and number of the villains as described in the “Scaling the Adventure” sidebar. Characters with a high regard for honor would be most suited for this adventure. A shaman or a shugenja would prove to be helpful. Characters who complete the adventure should gain enough experience to reach the midpoint to the next level.

Note: Honor is important in Rokugan—some might say more important than life itself. The honor “level” of every NPC is noted in their respective stat blocks after alignment. See page 68 of Oriental Adventures for more information on honor.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Cakon is a wealthy city founded on trade. Like all the cities of Rokugan, Cakon has a strict caste system. The “kuge,” or noble samurai families, form the uppermost caste. The kuge are often related directly to the Imperial Family, hold titles, or own large amounts of land. The next caste is the “buke,” or samurai. The buke are landowners and part of the military elite. The next caste is the “bonge,” or commoners. The bonges include both the “heimin,” who are often merchants, craftsmen, and farmers, as well as the “hinin,” who include criminals, entertainers, geisha, and “eta.” The eta dwell outside Cakon in a squalid hamlet. They do the jobs that are thought to interfere with inner harmony and cause spiritual pollution, including butchering, the removal of human and animal waste, and executions.

Tomie Cho dwells in a mud hut a few miles outside the city of Cakon. She is the last of her family, a people cursed generations ago for drinking from a sacred well. Tomie Cho, like all of her family, is a lycanthrope - a weretiger. She lives by hunting in her tiger form and tending a small wild garden of sweet potatoes and yellow beans. Time has not been kind to Tomie Cho; she has become old and weak. Hunting rabbits has become difficult, gardening tiresome. Tomie Cho has found easier prey: the eta.

The untouchables live in constant fear of the “spirit creature” who hunts them for food. They are convinced that the impurity of their souls has led the wicked creature to them. By refusing to perform the duties associated with spiritual pollution, the eta hope to attain salvation from the monster.

Mibu Kagemaro, a lesser Kuge of Cakon and member of the Crane clan, has recently been promoted to an office in the financial ministry. To celebrate the promotion, Kagemaro and his older brother Mibu Ieko spent an evening at the “House of Tranquility” geisha house. While enjoying the company of a lovely and talented poetess, the brothers were attacked by a drunken and jealous mercenary. Before the local police could intervene, the mercenary slew Ieko and wounded Kagemaro.

The mercenary was sentenced to death, but the judge, a rival of the Mibu family, placed a clause on the execution: If, for any reason, the sentence could not be carried out in three days, the mercenary was to be released.

When the local authorities went to the eta village to hire an executioner, they discovered that no one would accept the job. They tried both money and threats, but nothing could entice the eta to return to work.

When Mibu Kagemaro discovered the plight of the eta, he decided to take action. Kagemaro traveled to a “common” part of Cakon to hire a group of adventurers to save the eta and restore the typical social order to Cakon.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

This adventure revolves around two common themes in many Asian cultures, societies, and mythology: honor and caste. Honor involves following what society deems as proper, respectable behavior. Caste involves the social and economic class in which each person is born. Few can break out of these socially enforced prisons.

During the course of the adventure, the characters will delve into the lowest level of the caste system. The caste of the eta, or hinin, are those who are polluted with sin (by the standards of religious purity). These people do the jobs that are associated with filth, blood, and death.

To complete the adventure, the characters must discover what is plaguing the local eta village. They need to follow several clues that lead to an elderly woman cursed with lycanthropy who has been devouring the untouchables. Only once the lycanthrope is destroyed will the eta be safe and return to their unsavory work.

The adventure begins in a wealthy trade city. The city can easily be set in any *Oriental Adventures* campaign including a setting of your own devising. Once in the city, the PCs meet a troubled yet honorable aristocrat who needs to complete a job that his caste will not permit him to attempt.

SCALING THE ADVENTURE

Although this adventure is designed for beginning characters, the module can be run for characters up to 8th level by changing the strength and number of the opponents.

2nd- to 3rd-level PCs: Run the adventure as written but with the following changes:

- Add one more crow tengu to encounter 4.
- Give Tomie Cho a level of wu jen.

4th- to 5th-level PCs: Run the adventure with the changes above, as well as with the following modifications:

- Giving the tengu in encounter 4 maximum hit points.
- Increase the number of bakemono in encounter 6 to four per PC.
- Adjust Tomie Cho to reflect the basic weretiger template in the *Monster Manual* (no age penalties). Also, have Tomie Cho

soak the outside of her but with water to prevent it from easily burning.

6th- to 7th-level PCs: In addition to the changes above, add the following modifications:

- Increase the number of tengu in encounter 4 to one per PC, each with two levels as a samurai.
- Make the bakemono in encounter 6 hobgoblins and double the number.
- Give Tomie Cho three levels of wu jen.

8th-level PCs: In addition to the changes above, add the following modifications:

- Increase the number of tengu in encounter 4 to three per PC, each with three samurai levels.
- Change the bakemono in encounter 6 to ogres.
- Give Tomie Cho five levels of wu jen, and two ghastr allies.

CHARACTER HOOKS

The characters can be in the city of Cakon for many reasons. Some might be native to the region, while others might dwell in outlying areas. Since the city is founded on trade, the characters might have journeyed to the location for supplies. Nearby shrines might have attracted religious PCs. The characters could have just completed a mission for a patron, instructor, or daimyo and are now enjoying some free time.

The motive for the characters to help young Mibu Kagemaro can be driven by the quest to achieve wealth (the reward Mibu Kagemaro offers), the aspect of duty (social duty or “gimu”), mercy for the eta (compassion for others or “ninjo”), or just personal honor.

Western characters traveling through the exotic Orient might also be interested in this mission. Since they are outside the social structure, the lure of wealth and excitement might prove motive enough.

Encounter 1: A Polite Request.

Despite the fact that it is early morning, the temperature and humidity have already reached uncomfortable levels. The market district is full of activity. Swarms of gnats, common summer pests, hang like clouds over the damp earthen roads. A trio of bamboo flute playing musicians has captured your attention. Perhaps it is the common entertainment that attracts you, or maybe it's the silk tarp that promises shade and a slight breeze.

While watching the performance, the PCs notice a brightly painted palanquin carried by two sweat-soaked youths. The palanquin is brought to the edge of the performance and lowered. The screens are opened and a slight, young, thin-lipped, man is visible inside. The man wears a beautiful pastel orange silk kimono. His hair is cut and oiled in the latest court fashion. A noticeable bruise darkens the young man's left eye.

When the musicians have finished, the young man passionately applauds and tosses a handful of rectangular silver coins toward the players. He then raises his voice and states that he is looking for a few bold and honorable citizens.

As the musicians depart, a small group gathers about the palanquin, eager to see more examples of this noble's wealth.

Creature (EL 1): With the slightest bow of his head, the young noble introduces himself as Mibu Kagemaro, a member of the financial ministry and member of the Crane Clan. He politely waits for all of those gathered to introduce themselves before he begins:

“Two nights ago, my brother Mibu leko and myself enjoyed the company of the geisha O-Sode at the House of Tranquility. O-Sode is a most talented poet and the favorite of many customers. While enjoying the divine company of O-Sode, we were interrupted by the drunken mercenary Daigoro. Daigoro was angry that he was unable to enjoy the services of O-Sode after returning from a hard campaign in the north. My brother called out for assistance and Daigoro slew him with a hidden dagger. I, too, was attacked before the doshin (local police force) could contain Daigoro.

“Daigoro was taken before Judge Sono Kentanaga and sentenced to death. The Sono have long been rivals with the Mibu, and the Judge placed a clause on Daigoro's sentence. If Daigoro's sentence is not carried out in three days, the punishment is deemed unfortunate and unlucky, and Daigoro is to go free.

“The doshin went to the eta village to hire an executioner as soon as the sentence was posted. However, none of the untouchables would accept the task. Promises of gold coins and threats of death could not convince the eta to complete the task. The eta said that a man-eating spirit has been ritually devouring them as punishment for their unclean souls. They refuse to do any of the duties they normally perform until the creature is destroyed.

“If a suitable executioner is not available by sunset today Daigoro will go free. The death of my brother and the attack on my person crave justice. My loss of honor would be unbearable. I come to you at great risk of embarrassment to myself and my family name. I ask you to help me make certain that Daigoro receives the punishment he deserves.

“A cash string of 30 gold coins awaits any and all who accept this challenge. Upon successful completion of the task, I ask you to meet me here at dusk. I cannot advise you how to proceed in this endeavor. I only ask that you use good judgment and act independently so as not to further add to my embarrassment. You have my thanks and those of my ancestors”

With that, Mibu Kagemaro bows his head to the assembled group and closes the palanquin screens. His bearers take him away from the market district as the crowd slowly dissipates. Only a few stolid-looking individuals remain.

Mibu Kagemaro avoids contact with the PCs until their mission is complete. Should the PCs attempt to contact him, he sends a servant who bears a note that politely requests the PCs act on their own. He offers no further direction or advice.

PCs might want to use the Sense Motive skill to determine Mibu Kagemaro's intentions. A successful check (DC 20) reveals that Mibu Kagemaro has been honest, trustworthy, but embarrassed by the entire incident.

Mibu Kagemaro, Human Male Ari2: CR 1; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 6 in. tall); HD 2d8; hp 13 (currently 8); Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk +1 melee (1d4/crit 19-20, dagger); AL LN (Honorable Thought); SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +4; Str 10, Dex 10, Con 11, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 12.

Skills: Craft (calligraphy) +4, Diplomacy +5, Knowledge (geography) +6, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +6, Listen +5, Perform (ballad, drama, ode) +4, Profession (scribe) +5, Ride +4, Sense Motive +5; **Feats:** Endurance, Skill Focus (Profession-scribe).

Possessions: Silk kimono, dagger, calligraphy brush set with ink and parchment, coin purse with 100 gp and 30 sp.

Tactics: Mibu Kagemaro will avoid a fight if possible. Although he has had the basic training in the arts of bushido, he relies upon his sharp mind and status as weapons.

Development: The players might be tempted to have their characters perform the execution. If this course of action is suggested, the DM should explain that by undertaking the job of executioner, the character would attain the same social stigma associated with the eta. Such a character would risk loss of all honor and spiritual pollution - indeed, such a character would not even be allowed to approach members of the kuge, such as Mibu Kagemaro. Any other member of the kuge or buke castes (possibly including adventuring companions) would shun the character from the execution onward, and even non-eta bonge would go out of their way to avoid the character once news spread of the PC's deed.

If the characters suggest this to Kagemaro, he looks at them in disgust, then pretends he didn't hear them correctly. If the PCs press the issue, he either leaves the area, or, if in his own "territory," call for guards to escort the "would-be eta" from his presence.

Creatures (EL 2 or 4): The characters might also seek to hire an NPC executioner. All NPCs they approach turn away with disgust. A samurai member of the Lion clan traveling discretely to a rendezvous is in town, and there is a chance the PCs might try to hire him, as he carries a concealed katana (Spot, DC 15 to notice it). They also attract the attention of a member of Diagoro's mercenary band, the ronin Tetsuo, with any inquiries. He then approaches the

PCs, feigning interest in their offer to find out exactly what they're attempting.

Ogura Tokinari, Human Male Sam2: CR 2; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 10 in. tall); HD 2d10; hp 16; Init +5 (+4 Improved Init, +1 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 11; Atk +4 melee (1d10+1/crit 19-20, katana); AL N (Honorable Action); SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +0; Str 12, Dex 12, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 13.

Skills: Craft (calligraphy) +1, Disguise +1, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +1, Listen +2, Perform +1, Ride +2, Spot +1.

Feats: Improved Initiative, Mounted Combat, Weapon Focus (katana).

Possessions: Poor quality kimono, rain cape, masterwork katana (concealed), masterwork wakizashi (concealed), straw hat, coin purse with 20 gold pieces.

Tactics: Ogura Tokanari will be insulted to the point of violence if asked to perform an execution. He will also be embarrassed that his disguise has been exposed. He will challenge the offending character to a duel unless the party successfully makes a Diplomacy check (DC 15). Should combat break out, Tokanari will fight to first blood before he feels his honor is satisfied.

Tetsuo, Human Male Ftr2/Rog2: CR 4; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 8 in. tall); HD 2d10 plus 2d6; hp 25; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (leather armor, +2 Dex); Atk +8 melee (1d6+3/crit 19-20, wakizashi); SA sneak attack +1d6; SQ evasion; AL NE (Honorless); SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +0; Str 17, Dex 14, Con 11, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 7.

Skills: Appraise +4, Balance +4, Bluff +4, Climb +6, Disable Device +4, Disguise +4, Escape Artist +4, Forgery +2, Listen +2, Ride +2, Swim +4. **Feats:** Endurance, Weapon Focus (wakizashi), Power Attack, Cleave.

Possessions: Cotton kimono, dirty leather armor, thieves' tools, masterwork wakizashi, coin purse with 12 sp.



Buke

Bonge.
(Heimin)

Tactics: If Tetsuo is asked about rendering services as an executioner, he will question the party to discover the victim. He then laughs at the PCs and plots an ambush. First Tetsuo will use his Hide skill in a narrow residential alleyway and await the PCs' approach. Tetsuo then attempts to sneak attack the strongest looking PC in the tight alley before wading into combat with the rest of the group. Tetsuo will fight until he has taken half damage and then try to flee.

Encounter 2: The City Gate

The eta dwell outside the walls of the city. Eventually the PCs have to leave the city to speak with them. When they leave Cakon, read or paraphrase the following:

The gates of the city are open, inviting in a modest breeze and a constant flow of oxen and farmers. Two guards clad in heavy o-yori armor, jingasa helmets, and clutching spears check the farmer's packs for contraband. The warriors look quite bored and seem to care little about the job they perform. An old beggar sits in the shade of the gate and extends a cracked clay bowl toward all who pass. His skin is tanned dark by the sun and his head is plucked bald. He wears a simple rag loincloth.

Creature (EL 1/3): As the PCs approach the gate, a small brown and white dog slinks out of an alley and begins to sniff the old beggar. As the dog becomes more inquisitive, the beggar becomes visibly distressed and begins to cry out. The dog, sensing the old man's fear, begins to growl and snap. The guards and a few farmers stop to watch the alarmed old man. Laughter breaks out when the beggar starts to whimper as the dog tugs on his tattered clothing.

Stray Dog (Inu): CR 1/3; Small Animal; HD 1d8+2; hp 6; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 40 ft.; AC 15 (+1 size, +3 Dex, +1 natural); Atk +2 melee (1d4+1/ crit 20 bite); SQ scent; AL N; SV Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +1; Str 13, Dex 17, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6.
Skills: Listen +5, Spot +5, Swim +5, Wilderness Lore +1/+8.

Tactics: The dog is just curious and only attacks if cornered.

Creature (EL 5): The old beggar is able to defend himself but is currently on a spiritual journey that mandates he cannot raise a hand to do so if attacked.

Old Beggar, Human Male Mnk5: CR 5; Medium size Humanoid (5 ft. 2 in. tall); HD 5d8; hp 38; Init 0; Spd 40 ft.;



AC 15; Atk +3 melee (1d8, unarmed attack); SA stunning attack; SQ evasion, still mind, slow fall (20 ft.), purity of body; AL LG (outside the realm of honor); SV Fort +4, Ref +8, Will +9; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 17, Cha 8.

Skills: Concentration +6, Escape Artist +8, Hide +12, Listen +6, Move Silently +10, Tumble +7. *Feats:* Deflect Arrows, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Skill Focus (Hide).

Possessions: Rag loincloth, begging bowl.

Tactics: The old beggar is an enigma. He uses his Hide skill if followed by the PCs and avoids combat at all cost.

Development: If the PCs even movetoward the dog, it flees. The guards go back to their duties, and the flow of traffic in and out of the city continues. The old beggar, safe and happy, then approaches the PCs and bows.

"Generous citizens, you have my humble thanks for saving my unworthy self. I would like to return the favor by telling you a riddle: 'Under

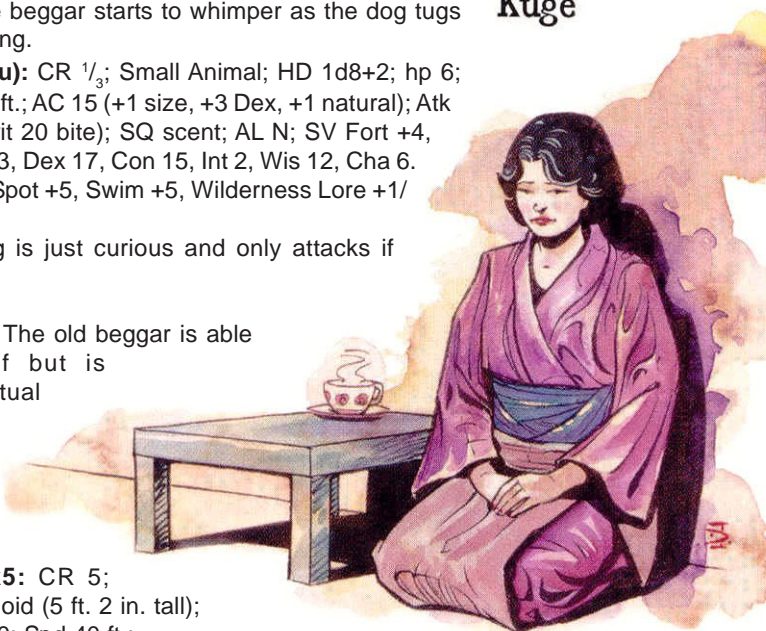
the right arm of the strong is the gift. The strong bends to the sky with two benches of stone at his feet. The gift will guide your fortune.'" After reciting his riddle, the beggar sits down and returns to his bowl. He will answer no questions nor speak again to the PCs. The gate guards explain that he offers this riddle to everyone and is most likely crazy.

If the PC do nothing about the stray dog, it runs off after a few nasty tugs on the old mans rags. The old beggar scrambles to his feet and wanders away muttering to himself.

Kuge

Creatures (EL 1): The gate Kuge guards are lazy, but they do understand that guarding the gate is their duty. If asked for directions to the eta village, they will look slightly incredulous as to why the PCs would want to go there, but they provide the instructions. The guards then make quiet, but audible, jokes about the characters "visiting that sty of humanity" and "wanting to be more like the pigs" as the PCs walk away.

Gate Guards, Human Male War1 (2): CR 1/2; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 9 in. tall); HD 1d8; hp 11 each (includes +3 hp for Toughness); Init +0; Spd 20 ft.; AC 14 (+4 brigandine); Atk +1 melee (1d8/crit x3, shortspear);



AL LN (Honorable Action); SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will -1; Str 11, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 10.

Skills: Climb -3, Intimidate +2, Listen +3, Spot +3. **Feats:** Alertness, Toughness.

Possessions: Brigandine armor, cotton kimono, shortspear, bamboo pipe and tobacco, coin purse with 9 gold pieces.

Tactics: If trouble erupts, the guards cry out and try to hold the post. Although lazy, they understand that deserting the gate will cost them their lives.

Encounter 3: The Village of the Untouchables

The eta village lies only a quarter mile outside the city and is visible from the city gate. Read or paraphrase the following as the characters enter the village:

The village of the eta is little more than a collection of wicker and thatch huts on a barren plain. Garbage and filth cover the muddy ground. The smell is pungent in the warm air and catches in your throat. The people who dwell in this squalor do the jobs associated with spiritual pollution: the removal of garbage, sweeping of streets, butchering, fish cleaning, leather work, burying the dead, and performing executions. The eta are despised by nearly all the people of Rokugan, even their fellow non-eta bonge. A samurai can practice "kirisute-gomen" and cut down an eta on the spot for any imagined insult without fear of the law.

Currently about 120 eta sit idle. They have built a tiny shrine in the center of the village and adorned it with carved cork sculptures, bone jewelry, and a handful of copper coins with square holes in the center (zeni). From time to time, a member

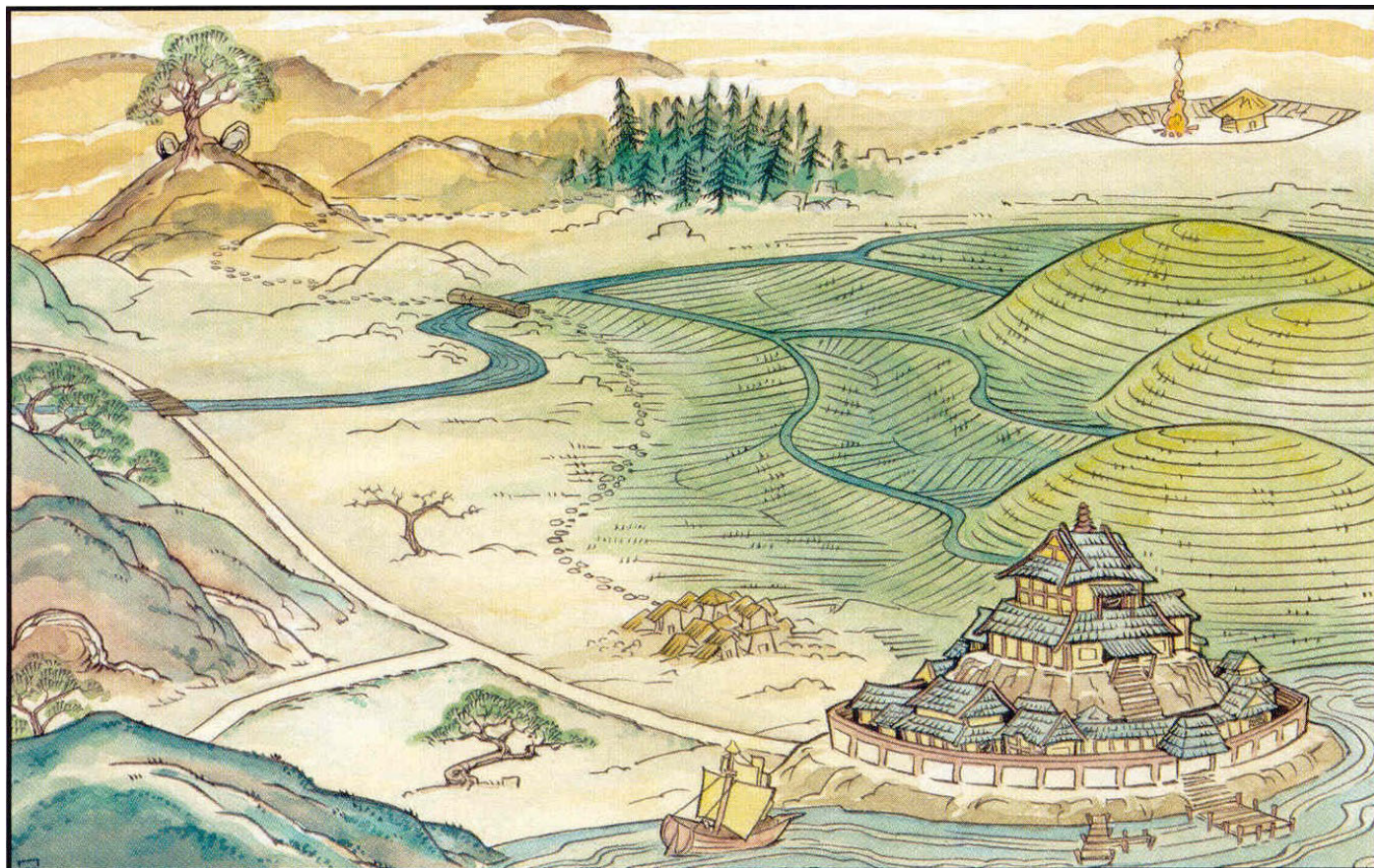
of the village kneels before the shrine in silent supplication. The soft sounds of weeping seem to echo throughout the compound.

PCs are welcome to make a Knowledge (religion) check (DC 15) to discover the tradition associated with the shrine. The shrine appears to be dedicated to all of the local religions. The eta hope to blanket the divine forces to find salvation.

The eta are shy and frightened of visitors. They avoid eye contact and keep physically distant from the PCs. They answer any questions the PCs ask as best they can.

The eta believe that some spirit creature has developed a taste for human flesh. The attacks started over a month ago. The creature attacks at night, once or twice a week. The last attack was two days ago. The spirit creature prefers children or the elderly as prey, but all who see the beast die by its claws. The trail the beast leaves as it drags off its victims is a bloody mess and easy to follow, although no one has been brave enough to attempt it. Only one man in the village has seen the creature and lived. Hiro the undertaker encountered the creature four nights ago while returning from fishing.

If Hiro is requested to come forward, he does so. The man is a huge, filthy, hairy brute with wild, haunted eyes, a flat face, and a toothless mouth. Wounds, only a few days old, decorate this man's torso and neck. Across his back is a rusted and chipped no-dachi (greatsword). Hiro is timid despite his intimidating appearance. He bows to the ground before the PCs and begins his tale. Hiro states that four nights ago he was returning home from fishing in one of the channels that water the local rice paddies about two miles from the eta village. His 8-year-old



nephew “Oke” was with him. It was dusk and they were rushing home with a small string of fish. Suddenly, out of the underbrush leapt a huge jungle cat. The creature grabbed Oke and shook him like a rag doll. Hiro plunged his spear into the creature but the weapon had no effect. The creature then turned on Hiro and slashed him about the chest and neck with its talons. Before Hiro could attack again, the creature fled, dragging Oke with it. Hiro returned to the village, ashamed and terribly frightened.

Hiro, Human Male Ftr2: CR 2; Medium-size Humanoid (6 ft. 2 in. tall); HD 2d10+4; hp 21 (currently 17); Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 11; Atk +7 melee (2d6+4/crit 19-20, greatsword); AL N (Untrustworthy); SV Fort +5, Ref +1, Will +0; Str 18, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 7.

Skills: Climb +6, Jump, +6, Profession (undertaker) +2, Swim +6, Wilderness Lore +2. **Feats:** Power Attack, Run, Track, Weapon Focus (greatsword).

Possessions: Rag clothing, straw hat, no-dachi, shortspear.

Tactics: Hiro avoids any conflict with the PCs. He knows his place in society and is careful not to offend those of higher castes. Hiro also knows he shouldn't carry a weapon, but he uses the no-dachi to butcher animals and the spear to hunt.

Development: The eta promise to return to work if the attacks stop. Hiro even volunteers to perform the execution if the party mentions their overall purpose. The eta will show the PCs a game trail the spirit creature has used to drag off its latest victims. The trail leads toward the rice paddies, and dried blood can be seen on the grass. PCs with the Track feat can make a Wilderness Lore check (DC 10) to identify the signs that a large predatory feline has passed through the area recently.

THE TRAIL OF THE MAN EATER

The trail the monster leaves is easy to follow. Characters with the Track feat notice that no attempt was made to conceal the creature's passage and that it uses the same trail frequently. Like most game trails, the path makes irregular twists and turns but often crosses and combines with the footpaths of local farmers. Droplets of dried blood and torn bits of clothing can be found the entire length of the trail. A successful Wilderness Lore check (DC 10) allows someone with the Track feat to follow these signs without trouble for a while. Without the Track feat, a Search check (DC 10) reveals the signs as well. The surface of the trail between the scene of Oke's abduction and the beast's lair doesn't change much, so no further Wilderness Lore or Search checks need be made after this.

Encounter 4: The Bridge

At one point the monster's trail joins with a farmer's footpath and crosses a rather wide irrigation canal. A large tree trunk has fallen across the canal and acts as a bridge. Read or paraphrase the following as the characters near the bridge:

The trail of the man-eating monster has taken you across the rice paddies that surround the city. Biting black flies and mosquitoes hover over the paddies and remain a constant irritant. The heat has driven the farmers to seek shelter until evening. The trail of the creature overlaps the farmer's foot-paths and turns toward a large irrigation canal. The canal is 15 feet deep with steep muddy sides. The water is brown with silt and moves slowly toward the paddies. An ancient



maple has been placed across the canal to act as a bridge. The trunk has been worn smooth and flat from many years of use. A few spots of dried blood on the tree trunk bridge indicate that the monster has used this route to drag off its prey.

Swimming the canal is easy (DC 5); the water is 10 feet deep and moves slowly. Climbing the canal embankments is the difficult task, as the sides are steep and muddy. A Climb check (DC 20) is required to scale the banks.

Creatures (EL 2): As soon as the characters ready themselves to cross the bridge, a pair of crow-headed tengu land in the middle of the bridge and draw weapons, seeking to challenge the PCs. The tengu are small, feathered humanoids with crow-like features and black wings clad in rich red, silk kimonos. Each carries a katana. The tengu are only interested in a diversion. They don't mind injuring or even killing a few humans but are more interested in making the PCs look foolish. The tengu squawk loudly, mimic the PCs, and wave their weapons at the characters, daring them to cross.

Fighting on the bridge is difficult. A PC struck by a tengu must make Dexterity or Balance check (DC 10). Failure indicates that the character has lost her footing and plunged into the water. The tengu do not suffer such restrictions because they can fly.

👉 Crow-headed Tengu (2): CR 1; Medium-size Monstrous Humanoid (4 ft. 6 in. tall); HD 2d8; hp 14, 10; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft., fly 60 ft.; AC 13 (+2 Dex, +1 Natural); Atk +5 melee (1d10+1/crit 19-20, katana), -2 melee (1d4+1, beak); SA wing baffle, spell-like abilities, weapon finesse; SQ sound imitation; AL CN (Untrustworthy); SV Fort +0, Ref +5, Will +5; Str 12, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 13.

Skills: Diplomacy +6, Iaijutsu Focus +6, Intimidate +6, Perform +4, Sense Motive +7, Spot +7. **Feats:** Dodge, Mobility. **Possessions:** Katana, wakizashi, silk kimonos, coin purse with 2d12 gold pieces each.

SA-Wing Baffle (Ex): A tengu uses its wings in melee, not (usually) to fly, but to buffet and disorient its opponents. Each round, in addition to its normal attacks, a tengu can make a Bluff check (opposed by its opponent's Sense Motive check). If this check is successful, the tengu's attack that round gains a +2 circumstance bonus.

SA-Spell-like Abilities: At will: *change self*, *ghost sound*, *minor image*, *shout*. These abilities are as the spells cast by a sorcerer with as many levels as the tengu has Hit Dice (save DC 11 + spell level).

SA-Weapon Finesse (Ex): Tengu have the benefit of the Weapon Finesse feat with the katana, even though this feat can normally not be applied to the katana.

SQ-Sound Imitation (Ex): Tengu can mimic any voice or sound they have heard. Listeners must succeed at a Will save (DC 12) to detect the ruse.

Tactics: The tengu begin by using their *shout* spell-like ability and then wading into battle with weapon, beak, and wing baffles. They fight until each takes half damage; they then retreat, deeming the PCs worthy opponents.

Encounter 5: The Lonely Hill

The bridge leads across the canal to a small, lush meadow. The monster's trail continues straight through the meadow near a single, tall tree and two red stones that stand near its center, as evidenced by the occasional bit of torn clothing, flesh, or droplet

of blood. Read or paraphrase the following as the characters cross the bridge and enter the meadow:

After crossing the ancient maple tree bridge, you notice that the creature's trail crosses a grassy meadow. In the center of the meadow is a single, majestic cedar tree, with two large red granite stones under its spreading limbs. The scene is one of great beauty, impossible for even the most talented landscape artist to capture, and obviously all natural in origin. The monster's trail, enhanced with a few threads of cloth, passes near, then turns away from this peaceful scene toward a small copse of dwarf pines.

This is the answer to the Old Beggar's riddle. Buried in the earth at the base of the tree is a small cache of treasure. Characters can make a Search check (DC 8) to notice that the ground has been disrupted. Random digging turns up the treasure in a few minutes.

Treasure: The items are wrapped in an oil-soaked cotton sheet. The treasure includes two masterwork silver shortspears (yari) with darkwood shafts, a masterwork silver siangham, a ceramic flask containing a potion of cure moderate wounds, and a rice paper scroll with the following divine spells inscribed upon it: *cure light wounds*, *doom*, *magic weapon*.

Encounter 6: Bandits

As you near some dwarf pines on the trail, you hear voices coming from the small clump of trees, where small misshapen figures can be seen crouching in the shade. Each of these small humanoids looks slightly different from his neighbor. Some are bright blue in coloration, others have tiny horns, and a few have large tusks. The language they mutter is crude and guttural, and each of them carries a shortspear. The creatures appear to be plotting some sort of mischief. Against a nearby tree are four Medium-size wicker baskets. The trail you're currently following does not enter the dwarf pines but skirts its edge and continues along.

The creature's trail moves near a small clump of dwarf pines. Lounging about and waiting to get enough initiative to proceed with their next attack against pilgrims who travel to a local shrine is a small troop of bakemono (oriental goblins).

Creatures (EL 3): The characters might be able to surprise the raiders if they act quickly and with stealth. The PCs can each have a free partial action if they successfully surprise the bakemono. If the characters remain quiet, they could even avoid the bakemono altogether and sneak past the pines. Read or paraphrase the following as the party nears the dwarf pines:

👉 Bakemono (6): CR ½; Small Humanoid (4 ft. tall); HD 1d8+1 hp 5 each; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (+1 size, +6 natural); Atk +3 melee (1d8+2, bite), -2 melee (1d6+1, 2 claws); or +0 ranged (1d6+2, shortspear); AL CE (Honorless); SV Fort +5, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 14, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 3, Wis 11, Cha 7, Taint 3.

Skills: Listen +4, Spot +2. **Feats:** Alertness.

Possessions: Bamboo shortspear, coin purse with 2d4 copper pieces each.

Tactics: Since the bakemono outnumber the PCs, they sense an easy victory. They fight to the death. These bakemono are more clever than most and attack first by hurling the spears before closing to melee to claw and bite their foes.

CHARM OF PERFECTION

This ornate strip of paper gives its holder a +2 competence bonus to a skill described on the charm. The paper is inked carefully with the Craft (calligraphy) skill, usually with a short poem or fable that deals with the skill in question. The charm must be carried to provide any benefit.

Caster Level: 5th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, Craft (calligraphy) 5 ranks, skill to be scribed 5 ranks; *Market Price:* 160 gp; *Weight:* -.

Treasure: The wicker baskets contain the loot the bakemono have stolen over the past month.

Basket #1: A block and tackle, a tiny silver gong (worth 10 gp), four paper lanterns, a piece of uncut jade (worth 100 gp).

Basket #2: A tiny wooden box holding eight fish hooks, a block of incense, three sunrods, a wool blanket.

Basket #3: A bronze bell, a folding paper fan, 23 sp, a full helmet with a grotesque ogre mask attachment (kawari kabuto worth 200 gp), a wooden spoon, a ceramic urn.

Basket #4: A biwa (oriental lute), a set of wooden prayer beads, a bamboo umbrella, two large radishes

Encounter 7: Crouching Tiger

Eventually the party will find the source of the blood trail: A small mud hut in a tiny hallow. Tomie Cho, the weretiger who dwells within, is ready for the PCs. She knew her hunting could not go unnoticed forever and has planned her attack carefully. Read or paraphrase the following as the characters enter the weretiger's domain:

The trail of the man-eater abruptly ends in a small gravel filled hallow. In the center of the hallow is a small dome shaped but made of clay smeared on a frame of bamboo. The outside of the hut has warnings and symbols of doom painted upon it with natural dyes. Before the hut lies a smoldering fire pit. Bones and other charred human remains can be seen amid the ash in the fire pit.

An old woman emerges from the doorway of the mud hut. Her long white hair hangs down below her stooped knees. The old woman's skin is tanned and wrinkled, her eyes cloudy and white. She wears a faded cotton kimono. When she opens her mouth to speak, you can see that she has few teeth remaining. "Away with you!" The old woman cries. "Be gone, you fat, rice-eating fools!" With that, she turns, pushes open the hide door flap, and enters the hut.

Note to the DM: Tomie Cho is a vicious opponent for low-level characters, even though she is a weaker lycanthrope. Adjust her strength accordingly if the PCs seem overmatched.

👉 **Tomie Cho, Female Weretiger Com1:** CR 5; Medium-size/Large Shapechanger (5 ft. tall human/4 ft. tall, 7 ft. long tiger); HD 6d8+6; hp 40; AL NE (Untrustworthy); three alternate forms.

Human Form: Init -2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk -2 melee (1d3-2 subdual, unarmed); SQ alternate form, tiger empathy; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +4; Str 7, Dex 7, Con 7, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills: Craft (basketweaving) +4, Handle Animal +4, Listen +4, Profession (farmer) +6 Search +4, Spot +4. *Feats:* Endurance, Improved Control Shape, Skill Focus (Profession - farmer).

Hybrid Form: Init +0; Spd 40 ft.; AC 15; Atk +8 melee (1d8+4, 2 claws), +6 melee (2d6+2, bite); SA pounce, improved grab, rake 1d8+2, curse of lycanthropy; SQ tiger empathy, scent, damage reduction 15/silver; Fort +8, Ref +5, Will +4; Str 19, Dex 11, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills: Balance +6, Hide +9, Listen +10, Move Silently +9, Search +8, Spot +10, Swim +11. *Feats:* Blind-Fight, Improved Control Shape, Multiattack, Power Attack.

Tiger Form: As hybrid form except: Large; AC 14 (-1 size, +5 natural armor); Atk +7 melee 6d8+4, 2 claws), +5 melee (2d6+2, bite); Hide +5.

Tactics: Tomie Cho re-enters her hut and changes into her tiger form. She then waits inside, ready to pounce on the first character to enter. Because the hut is small (20-foot radius), only three creatures other than the weretiger can inhabit it at any time. The weretiger will not leave the hut unless it is on fire (it takes 2d6 rounds to fire the hut to the point that Tomie will flee). Tomie Cho knows that by limiting herself to the mud hut she can avoid ranged attacks and many spells.

Treasure: Inside the mud hut are the few possessions Tomie Cho owns. The hut is filthy, and a Search check (DC 15) is required to find them. The treasure includes an ivory belt toggle (netsuke) in the shape of goldfish (worth 3 gp), 8 pieces of copper, a silver pearl (worth 100 gp), and a very ornate strip of paper scribed with a short fable on the handling of wild and domestic animals. (See the sidebar for details on the *charm of perfection*, this particular charm applies its bonus to the Handle Animal skill).

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

Once the weretiger has been slain, it is easy to convince the eta that they are now safe from further attacks. Among the untouchables, the PCs become instant heroes and celebrities. The eta quickly return to work in and around the city. Hiro rushes off to perform the execution, and Diagoro meets his just reward.

As promised, at dusk the PCs can meet with Mibu Kagemaro in the market district. The young noble is quite pleased with the characters' performance and eagerly pays them. Mibu Kagemaro also comments upon the characters honor and compassion. He mentions that he feels indebted ("giri" a debt of honor) to the characters and hopes to be able to work with them again in the future.

CONTINUING THE ADVENTURE

The PCs might have made new friends and enemies over the course of the adventure that could reappear later. Mibu Kagemaro might seek to have the PCs join his household and embark on other adventures. The eta might view the characters as saviors and request additional favors from them. Diagoro's mercenaries might seek revenge against the characters for his death. Hiro, who was attacked and wounded by the weretiger, could develop lycanthropy and start another series of murders, perhaps this time against the upper castes.

Dave Zenz is a freelance artist who lives in Minneapolis, Minnesota with his lovely wife and feisty dog. Martial arts training gave Dave his first exposure to Asian culture. He would like to dedicate this adventure to his dear friend and favorite playtester, Mike Edwards.

