



The Sakura was the foremost clan of those that opposed the Shōgun's rebellion. It was the richest and most powerful, and the emperor himself belonged to it. It is still the most important, but after losing many of its most prestigious courtiers and fierce warriors in the war, it has lost some of its influence.

According to certain ancient, preserved manuscripts, the founder of the Sakura Clan was nothing less than a kami, a celestial entity of great power, one of the many that are worshiped throughout Japan, who are expressions of nature and the forces that control it. That kami was in fact Amaterasu, the goddess of the sun, and she laid the foundations upon which this clan settled. Her intervention went even further. She granted the emperor's ancestors the power to rule, creating a dynastic line that, after centuries of history, has only now been interrupted by the betrayal of the Shōgun. Feeling great love for the clan she created, Amaterasu blessed it with protective spirits that inhabited the trees, especially the cherry trees that grew throughout Japan. That is precisely where the clan's name comes from: Sakura is the beautiful and delicate flower of

this tree, which every year marks the beginning of spring.

Since its origins, this clan has been led by two great families who are very close to each other. The first and most important, to which the emperor belonged, is the Teshigawara. It is largely composed of courtiers and high-ranking officials, as well as important merchants, artists, and prominent scholars.

Many members of this family are the most refined, diplomatic, and patient people in Japan. And yet others are extraordinary warriors who display great fighting skills from a very young age. A few of these expert fighters are the most outstanding archers in all of Japan, since they are specially trained from childhood in that lethal art. A secret training, which, according to legend, was revealed to them by a yōkai —a powerful supernatural creature, whose identity is lost in the dawn of time— makes them particularly effective, both on foot and on horseback.

The second leading family of this clan is the Kadenokoji. Much of their offspring become skilled samurai whose goal is to protect the life of the emperor, and by extension all of his subjects, especially those most vulnerable and disadvantaged.

Those born into the Sakura Clan remain the most faithful and loyal in Japan, even though their loyalty has made them targets of the followers of the Shōgun, who prey upon them with betrayal and deceit.

Kadenokoji feel a special obligation toward the Dragon Clan, the weakest and most defenseless of all who opposed the Shōgun and showed their loyalty to the emperor. Now, even in defeat, the members of the Sakura Clan feel responsible for the safety of the thousands of peasants who make up the bulk of the Dragon Clan.

Historically, the Sakura Clan has always been one of the most open houses towards others, especially because Kyoto, which is in their domain, has until now been the capital of Japan. They have welcomed everyone who

traveled its many trade routes and who passed through its streets that connected the Empire from one end to the other. The Sakura Clan prospered over the centuries, dealing in silver and spices, rice, sake, paper, silk, the ever-present tea, and many more commodities.

Today, the clan is in absolute decline. They have been the greatest victims of the war against the Shōgun. They have lost their emperor and his ten-year-old son and heir, of whom all trace vanished during the conflict. They have also suffered countless casualties among their warriors, they no longer hold political control, and Kyoto is no longer the capital of their Empire. The Sakura Clan are now strictly under guard by the forces of the Shōgun, in a precarious *détente* that could break at any moment.

TOMOE

If a single word defined Tomoe's life, it was undoubtedly: happy. Or so it had been until two years ago, when the Shōgun rebelled against the emperor. Born in the ancient court of Kyoto, Tomoe's childhood was indeed a joyful one. She was raised amid luxuries and surrounded by courtiers, merchants, artists, and powerful samurai. All this although she had grown up never knowing her mother, who had passed away during the childbirth that brought her into this world.

Tomoe never missed her. And many eyes were on the little girl, since she was part of the Sakura Clan, more specifically the Teshigawara family, to which her uncle, the emperor belonged. It was not strange that she was selected to become a samurai, due to the remarkable aptitude she showed when she turned five.

Her training began with a ritual in which she received a symbolic wooden sword. Thanks to it, she gained a deep understanding of swordsmanship. At seven, she studied calligraphy and wielded her first bow. She was taught the secrets of martial

arts and instructed to handle the ko-naginata, a kind of curved-blade halberd, with ease. She became an expert hunter of wild boar, raccoon-dogs, and wily green pheasants. Due to this strict training, Tomoe became a full-fledged samurai, an onna-bugeisha, at the age of fifteen, when she received a real katana of purest steel with a jeweled sheath, and armor painstakingly designed to protect her youthful form.

Two more winters have passed, during which the young girl became more skilled, especially with the bow that always accompanied her. These last two years were a convulsive period that completely changed the reality she had known.

It all began with the betrayal of the Shōgun, which plunged Tomoe into a war she could never have imagined. She had managed to stay alive, but the price Japan paid was extremely high. Her uncle, the emperor, had been cruelly murdered. There was no trace of his son and heir —her cousin— although everyone suspected that the young boy had lost his life during the conflict. The Sakura clan had

been decimated and was now in clear decline, suffering strict surveillance by the Shōgun's troops.

Without a doubt, what tormented the dexterous archer most was the uncertain fate of her own father, Masaru Teshigawara, younger brother of the hapless emperor. After the war, when the Sakura Clan was completely crushed, his enemies imprisoned him and took him hostage to ensure that his family would not take up arms against the new leader. For this reason, Tomoe's great desire is to find him at all costs, although she does not know where he can be found, nor where she should begin her search. Rumors have reached her ears that the Shōgun keeps him far from the court of Edo, well hidden.

Night after night, nightmares afflict the young samurai, destroying her

sleep. Her mind is more tortured every day, thinking of the torments that her poor father must be suffering. To this is added her inordinate desire for revenge against the entire Inugami Clan and the tyrant who rules it, whose horrible betrayal decisively changed Tomoe's life.

For all this, the character of the young girl has suffered over the last year, so that the once jovial and sociable girl has become a distrustful samurai, noted for her cold-blooded courage and fiery charisma. The beauty of her face, the pure white skin she displays, and her long, proud jet hair contrast with the hard heart that beats in her chest, making her a warrior admired and feared.

Tomoe Teshigawara, from the Sakura Clan: until now, that has been her story.

501

When the Shōgun killed the emperor, he also killed your father, the emperor's brother, and hid his body. Or so most people say. But you are sure he's still alive. You can feel it! This entire world would be more empty without him.

You have been hoping for rumors that suggest where he is, and you have heard two that seem worthwhile: the Shōgun is holding a very important hostage in Osaka, keeping his identity secret; and a commercial caravan is approaching that is heavily protected by the Shōgun's troops, suggesting that it might carry an important political prisoner. Either of these

rumors could lead to your father. Which one will you investigate?

Decide:

- Place 1 Tomoe Personal Mission token in Takashima. If you interact with it, **502**.
- Place 1 Tomoe Personal Mission token in Osaka. If you interact with it, **503**.

If you do not interact with either of them by the end of this phase, mark "**Lost clue**".

502

You were fortunate to find the commercial caravan protected by suspiciously high-ranking Shōgun



soldiers. Not too many soldiers, either. You found a good vantage point to pick half of them off with your bow. One servant kachi remained behind, too frightened to run away, but the rest of them, little bastards that they were, all fled.

There aren't any prisoners here, a great disappointment. The caravan was carrying loads of documents, some of them likely to be important.

You interrogate the kachi before you let him go, and he tells you how to find a camp that holds high-ranking captives, even some from the Sakura clan. The kachi bursts into tears, telling you that he wishes it had been his fate to stand guard at that camp, an easy job where he would have been safe. He has probably given you one more lead to waste your time, but you can't ignore it.

You've got to be quick, because the soldiers who fled might return with reinforcements. You decide to destroy their mission by setting everything on fire. But first, you search as fast as you can, looking for anything important.

You've got to be smart, now. Can you find the right documents to read?

Attribute test (5)



518.



519.

503

In Osaka, you ask about the rumor that a high-ranking official is a hostage here. You hear that there were many prisoners, and a remarkable number of Shōgun troops mobilized and took them to the Tengus forest. The large number of troops suggests there were important prisoners.

It's imperative to follow them! The most obvious reason to take prisoners into a forest is to kill them all.

Consequences:

- Mark "Hostage".

504

You find a dying kachi who is still trying to bully a few hostages. You examine them quickly, but you realize at once that none can be your father. These poor people are worn out and near





death from their long forced march. It's important to give them water and help them escape, and this is no time for prolonged questioning. You might ask one hostage, or else ask the kachi before he dies, if they know where the rest of the prisoners are. Whom will you ask? Decide:

If you ask the hostage, 📖 505.

If you ask the kachi, 📖 506.

505

The hostage tells you she has seen your father! He was at a large prison

camp near Kyoto. The Shōgun's troops are expanding that camp and strengthening it to prevent escapes. This hostage was there only briefly and has no more information.

Consequences:

- Mark "[The Kyoto camp](#)".

506

The kachi wishes he hadn't been required to join this miserable forced march that's leading to his death. He would rather be guarding prisoners at a camp near Tamba. There's a

senior Sakura clan prisoner there, and guarding him would have been an easy job with benefits. No such luck for this kachi.

Consequences:

- Mark **"The Tamba camp"**.



507

The prison camp near Kyoto is extensive, and work is underway to expand it. Dozens of workers go in and out of the camp carrying food and construction supplies.

You hide near one of the approach roads until you see a lone worker pulling a wagon of dried whale meat and rice cakes. You come up behind him and knock him out. Then you drag him and his wagon into the nearby woods, where you tie him, naked, to a tree, and stuff a cloth into his mouth so that he can't cry for help.

Dressed in his clothing, which is rather tight—he was almost as tall as you—you enter the camp.

It's obvious where people are dragging their food wagons, but you pretend to get lost, wandering all over, asking for directions.

One person is not fooled by your disguise. He approaches you knowingly and whispers, "Tomoe?" Only his calm voice stills your desire to flee.

He's a Sakura spy who has been working in the camp for a month. He tells you that the entire purpose of this camp is to practice black magic on its prisoners. He has seen your father and is sure that they will do the same to him; maybe they have cast magic on him already.

You will have to decide which lead you want to investigate:

A

There are some hard-to-find ruins, where people say that strange things happen. Your father may have been taken there.

Consequences:

- Mark "**The Ritual**".

B

A group of high-ranking Shōgun officers departed a few days ago to recapture a prisoner, probably an important one, who had escaped. The spy tells you where they are going: it's a small town.

Consequences:

- Mark "**The shadows**".

C

Nearby villagers have mentioned a place where evil people meet, and dangerous magic is performed on

captives, to punish them. If your father has acted as bravely as you suspect, he might have been taken there as punishment.

Consequences:

- Mark "**The lab**".

508

You hear noises ahead of you, and you approach with caution. Crouching low behind a rock at the edge of a clearing, you watch a group of people all identically dressed in robes with the kamon of a dark rose. They have dragged a victim to this place who is definitely not your father. You watch them



perform a collective ritual with a horrible result: All the flesh peels off the victim, leaving behind his bones, which clatter to the ground. The members of this sect each cut off a handful of flesh and dart away, apparently intending to enjoy the spoils of their black magic elsewhere.

When they are gone, you come out of hiding to take a good look. Near the victim's bones, you find a locked hatch flush with the ground. It appears to be an entry into an underground room. You try to force it open, but you can't. Its key looks unusual. In order to fit, it has three shafts set at irregular angles.

If you find that key, you should return here to see what else you can learn.

Consequences:

- Mark **"The Black Rose"**.

509

After you and your companions killed Landolfo, you were delighted when Hattori, checking his corpse, said, "Look, I found this." He held up a key with three toothed shafts set at irregular angles.

"I need that," you said, and he gave it to you.

Now that all is over, you have returned to the clearing in the forest where you saw an evil sect remove all the

flesh from a living victim's bones. The locked hatch in the ground called to you. You are certain there is something important down there.

You insert the key in the lock, give a turn, and the hatch springs open, revealing a stone stairway. Sunlight guides you down the stairs. At the bottom, you find a row of torches. You light one, and a room that was obviously Landolfo's secret laboratory springs to life.

Scrolls and books are stacked along the far wall. The side walls, and a few tables, bear witness to grisly experiments. From what Landolfo said, you realize what you are seeing: people were killed here in various ways, and experiments were then performed to bring them back to life. This room looks well-cared for, but no amount of cleaning could remove the stink of death that makes it hard for you to think.

Fear falls upon you, as you consider the strong instincts that brought you here. Will you discover that your father was one of Landolfo's victims? What other secret can this room preserve?

In desperation, you thumb through a dozen or so of the books that line the far side of the room. One of them is a collection of Landolfo's notes.

From these notes, you learn that your father has been here! He had fallen in love again, with a woman who soon

died. It's not clear, but in some way, her body was paused at the point of death. Your father had offered Landolfo honor, distinction, and money in exchange for discovering how to bring his beloved back to life.

Landolfo's notes display pride: The brother of the last emperor, the very Masaru Teshigawara, had aided him, Landolfo, in his experiments!

You are thankful that Landolfo's notes do not say what your father did for him. You don't even want to imagine this. But you do understand that people do extreme things because of love.



You know this for sure: your father was here. You try to relax and sense his presence, but the stink of death prevents you. Where did he go, when he left here? What is he doing now? You must find out.

510

You spend some time tracking the high-ranking Shōgun officers who were themselves seeking to recapture a prisoner. The officers' trail has been easy to follow. They fear no one, and they leave a trail of beatings and unpaid debts behind.

Their trail leads you to the person they have been tracking, but he's not your father. You find him lying alone on cold, forest ground, dying from his wounds. You recognize him, an older man who occasionally dueled with you when you were young, for practice.

All his wounds are bleeding. He points weakly to your water flask, and you pour a little into his mouth, enabling him to speak. He tells you that members of this terrible sect were about to perform an experiment in black magic on him, when your father tried to help him to escape.

"I fled," he says, "but they tracked me down."

He tells you exactly how to find the place he fled from, where those experiments in magic were performed.



Consequences:

- Place 1 Tomoe Personal Mission token in the location to the right of Gojo. If you interact with it,  508.
- If you do not interact with it by the end of this phase, mark **"Lost clue"**.

511

You have found the place where evil people use dangerous magic to punish captives. At least, that's what the villagers told you. It's a flat, pebbly shore at the edge of a very small lake. You wonder why anyone would use magic that can backfire if not handled correctly. But the Dark Shōgun's minions seem to be willing to risk injuring themselves in order to torture their victims.

There are many signs here of construction and destruction, as if the

wanton greed of the punishers could not be contained. Benches have been erected for sightseers to watch the torture, but many of them were cut to pieces long ago. There are also little huts and big boxes, some of them hewn cleanly in two.

Someone has made a sketch with a thin stick of charcoal on the wall of a smashed hut. It shows a few people bowing down to a very large monster wielding an immense battleaxe. It's the Blood Oni, and the drawing shows him in remarkable detail. You can see exactly how well its armor gives protection, and exactly where to find its exposed flesh. You finger one of your arrow points, imagining how to score a perfect hit, if you ever face this creature again.

One of the undamaged boxes is easy to open. It contains scrolls, letters and books. You go through them quickly,



until you see something that amazes you: strokes of ink in your father's elegant hand. It's a letter, short and half-finished. You read: "My dear brother, my just ruler, I know you are no longer alive, but to you I owe this apology. I shall write here, what I intend to do. Judge me harshly, for I deserve it. I am in love and must do what I must. I shall betray humankind. That means I shall betray you and the rest of my..."

There's more writing after these words. It looks like meaningless chicken scratches. You fear that when he wrote this, he was dying, no longer able to form his symbols. You stare carefully at those careless marks for any sign of weakness. But no, these marks were set down with intention. You wonder what made your father end the letter in such a way. But worse, you wonder: what awful thing had your father decided to do? You take his letter with you. It might be your last reminder of him, and you will read it again and again.

Consequences:

- Mark **"Revealed anatomy"**.
- Mark **"Last will"**.

512

Once again, you take out that awful letter that your own father wrote, in which he apologized and announced



he was about to do something awful. Your eyes, as usual, wander quickly to the chicken scratches that conclude the letter.

Reading these words has always filled you with dread. But the marks at the end have always cheered you up, reminding you of long distant days when you were studying the samurai arts. Why? How can these marks recall anything good for you?

You gasp out loud as the answer hits you. How can you have forgotten? Those marks are a code! Your father made it up and taught it to you when you were young. He would often send coded messages to you, things like, "There will be Hundred Year Eggs for dinner," or "Your bow master is angry with you for breaking three targets." Always, light-hearted messages that never needed to be coded. And he



always encouraged you to write him back. How could you have forgotten? Well, you remember the code. It was never easy to decipher. You feel like a nine-year-old again, struggling to put the marks in order so that the meaning would pop out. And there it is, the rest of his message:

"...clan. Dearest daughter, I fell in love again. Such a wonderful woman. I hope you understand. And then, she fell sick, and she died. But her body is preserved. If you ever see her, I hope you will understand. There is a man whose eyes are not in his head, who is learning how to bring her back to life. In return, I have vowed to..."

You stop reading here. You don't want to know the rest, but given the way the code works, you already know. You know that the letter ends, "...serve the Shōgun as no one has ever served him before."

513

You have found the prison camp near Tamba. Hiding at its outskirts, you understand why that dying kachi told you he wanted to work here. The guards have it easy, casually standing around, rarely threatening captives with their weapons. The captives are severely undernourished, too weak to escape. You decide that the best way to learn more, and possibly find that

high-ranking Sakura clan prisoner, is to become a prisoner yourself.

The prisoners wear only undergarments, so you bury most of your clothing and gear in a quickly-dug pit and wait for a chance to stand near one of the prisoner's huts.

"Ho! An escapee!" a guard cries. He grabs you, and you allow yourself to be tossed into a cage with a dozen other captives.

The prisoners are tired and parched, but they all answer your questions. There is a high-ranking prisoner here, another samurai who had a good reputation. Your father is certainly not here, but two prisoners who came from Osaka tell you that they heard Shōgun soldiers talking about the Blood Oni's prowess. The oni was present at the attack on the emperor, and anyone in the palace left alive was surely kidnapped by him. The Blood Oni might have taken your father!

You learn one more thing from the prisoners. There are only twelve guards at this camp, and four of them are asleep at any time.

When you are ready to leave, you break the bars of your prison, a simple challenge for one of your strength. You take the guards by surprise, kill them, and release the prisoners.

Combat is about to begin. Everything is in motion, but you must act!

In a few moments the Blood Oni may be dead, and everything he knows will be lost. You jump into the middle of everything, heedless of danger, and you cry, "Stop!"

Everyone stops: heroes, yōkai, soldiers, whatever.

The Blood Oni growls, "Foolish woman. What do you want?"

"You kidnapped Masaru Teshigawara, my father," you say. "Where is he?"

The oni smiles. He responds in an oily, pleasant voice. "Someone told you what I had certainly wished to do, but that person was wrong."



Consequence:

- Mark "*Kidnapped*".

"You lie!" you cry. You're desperate. You don't want this to be another dead end.

"I have many sins," the oni says. "Telling the truth is definitely one of them. Your father has a new home. In Edo. He is nobody's captive. He is highly regarded. If you ever see him again, you will not recognize him."

The Blood Oni readies his weapon as if to toss it right through your throat. You jump back. The oni cries, "Death to them all. Even this woman!"

Consequence:

- Mark "**Changed, in Edo**".

515

You began with only a hope that your father was alive. Now you dare to hope that you were right. You must keep searching.

The Blood Oni is dead. There's only one way to understand what he said. The oni plainly hinted that your father has become the Shōgun's servant. But how could that be? If you go to Edo, you might find out.

516

Hattori kneels and goes through dead Landolfo's clothing. He does this cautiously, in case Landolfo has yet another way of returning to life, but the corpse puts up no resistance.

At last, Hattori stands and holds up two things: an amulet with the symbol of the black rose, and an irregularly-shaped key that you recognize at once.

"Anybody need these?" he asks.

Silently, you hold out your hand. He drops them both into your palm, and clasps your fingers around them.

"We have more important matters right now", you tell him.

517

You began this adventure convinced your father was alive. A lot has happened, and all that remains to you is hope. Keep searching! You may be right.

518

A bundle of papers document resurrection experiments. They are signed with an unusual black rose symbol. They specify the location of an underground laboratory where these experiments are held.

Consequences:

- Mark "**The lab**".
- Mark "**The Tamba camp**".

519

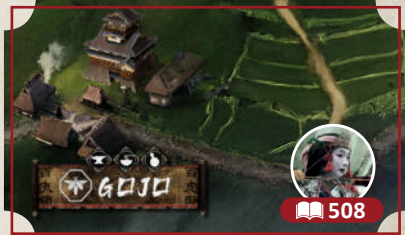
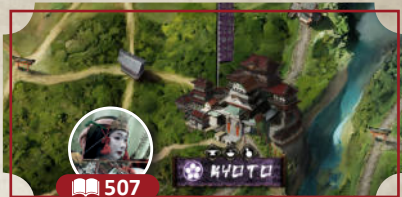
At least, that kachi told you how to find another prison camp.

Consequences:

- Mark "**The Tamba camp**".

It's time to infiltrate the enemy camp to see if you can shed some light on your father's disappearance.

- If you marked **"The Kyoto camp"**, place 1 Tomoe Personal Mission token in the camp to the left of Kyoto. If you interact with it, 507.
- If you marked **"The Tamba camp"**, place 1 Tomoe Personal Mission token in the camp southeast of Tamba. If you interact with it, 513.
- If you do not interact with either of them by the end of this phase, mark **"Lost clue"**.



521
You must continue your search, there is no more time to lose.

- If you marked **"The Ritual"**, place 1 Tomoe Personal Mission token in the location near Gojo. If you interact with it, 508.
- If you marked **"The shadows"**, place 1 Tomoe Personal Mission token in the location south of Tamba. If you interact with it, 510.
- If you marked **"The lab"**, place 1 Tomoe Personal Mission token in the location to the right of Tsuruga. If you interact with it, 511.
- If you have neither of those, and do not have this mark yet, mark **"Lost clue"**.
- If you do not interact with either of them by the end of this phase, mark **"Lost clue"**.

