

## ***Campaign: Blood & Shadow***

### ***Episode II: Clash in the Silent Forest***

#### **The Story (Can Be Read Aloud)**

**(Some of this will depend on how the Extra Encounters from Episode 1 went)**

Pursuing the Red Foot Raven as it flies south over the forest, the party follows the dirt road leading away from Ox Horn Village and enters the Silent Forest. Any local Emishi in the party know stories of this forest and its inhabitants, though how things have changed in the area since these stories were first spoken is unknown. At the heart of the forest, so the tales go, stands an ancient **Tomi\*** temple dedicated to the Forest **Gami\***, Juhi, protected by a small village of mighty priest-warriors.

Although colloquially known as a lush and wild place, the misty wood seems colder than it should be for this time of year, and a general malaise permeates all visible forms of life. Grasses have yellowed, flowers wilt, trees shed their leaves, and the few creatures you spot are sluggish and thin. True to the forest's name, only the uncertain footsteps of your party break the oppressive silence.

#### **Background (Do NOT Read This Aloud, Goobers)**

Before reaching Ox Horn over a week ago, the *Xan* wizards dispatched a single member of their coven, Gong Dahu, into these woods to prepare the Temple Village for a similar treatment of undeath followed by poisoning. Dahu carried on his person documents detailing specific instructions on when and where he would be retrieved by the ship. Failing to make it to the retrieval location in time, the documents continue, he should make for a backup rendezvous in Mazaki City.

If the party attempted the "Trailing the Ship" Extra Encounter in Episode 1, they would have seen the ship attempting to meet up with the wizard. If the party retrieves the documents in this Episode, let them figure out that such was the case.

Upon approaching Temple Village and judging the tall tales of the "priest-warriors" to be quite tall indeed, Gong Dahu prepared himself to cast Undeath ahead of schedule. Although he assumed the small village would take little effort to fully encircle in his Blood Magic, Dahu was not expecting the presence of a true Gami so close at hand.

Upon breaking his own skin to shed the needed blood and whispering the first syllable of the proper incantation, Dahu was immediately overpowered and consumed by the ocean of life writhing within the presence of the Gami Juhi. His undeath magic recoiled, unable to contain such a lifestream, and Dahu fell dead in place, bleeding out from the self-inflicted wound and dropping the vial of poison he carried on his person. The

combination of blood magic, concentrated poison, and spiritual friction irritated the Gami, the distress manifesting itself physically as a White Tiger marked in blood red stripes. Over the last few days, this **Hangami\*** slaughtered a handful of Tomi villagers who wandered alone beyond the treeline and dragged their corpses to a spring cavern. As the party enters the forest, a band of panicked villagers patrols the area looking for the source of these disappearances.

This Episode introduces a very important character for the whole Module, **Biru the Kitsune\***. He will approach the party either after they calm the villagers or, if the villagers are slaughtered, when they are wandering in the woods.

## Scene 1: Tensions Loom

### The Story (You May Read Aloud)

Your party wanders deeper into the woods when the silence is shattered by the clang of swords and a ravenous battle cry. In an instant, you are ambushed by a band of people who could only be Tomi. As you gather yourselves and realize what has happened, you notice that these shouting people appear more like frightened villagers than any legendary priest-warriors. They scream incomprehensible questions and accusations (the only discernable word being “murderers”) in your general direction, and yet seem more interested in your imminent demise than any response you might give.

### GM Tips (Do Not Read Aloud)

This fight is a good example of a role-play event in the guise of combat. The optimal solution is for the party to use a few free turns and perhaps weather a few rounds of combat to diffuse the drama of the scene and calm the villagers.

## Setting the Scene:

### Themes (Blue):

Fever Pitchfork

Flashpoint

Where There’s Smoke There’s Fire (If the Wizard Burned Ox Horn in Episode 1)

Harbingers of Harmony (If Shrine was Consecrated in or after Episode 1)

### Conditions (Red):

No Clear Path

Actions Speak Louder Than Words

Mass Hysteria (See Below)

### Obstacles (Black):

Irate Villagers: *Armed and Derrangerous*. 4[1]. Begins with 6DT.

### Facedown Obstacles:

Undead Soldier: *Shambling Undead*. [2].

### Playing the Scene:

**Mass Hysteria:** Start this as a Hidden Condition that is immediately revealed if the players mention the horrific tragedies of Ox Horn without any buffers or sugar-coating. If the villagers are hysterical, of course, they will be much harder to calm down.

**Villagers Tile:** If the Villagers Tile reaches zero Drama, there is a chance the party can reason with their accusers. At least hint at the possibility of ending things non-violently, though the decision is of course up to the players. Spending turns and/or defensive rolls attempting to speak with the villagers instead of dealing damage will easily Trigger the “Actions Speak Louder Than Words” condition and help calm the villagers. Of course, the inverse is also true, and dealing damage to the villagers may make future reconciliation impossible.

**Undead Soldier:** The soldier will only make a Move when it senses magic, hears loud clanging, or smells blood. Roll Moves against a Difficulty of 5 in secret only when such clamor occurs. It will shamble out of the woods at 4DT. If the Soldier appears during combat with the villagers, reveal “Mass Hysteria” and add 3DT to the villagers.

### Conclusions & Consequences:

If the party massacres the villagers, the group must wander in the woods until Biru finds them. You can fill in this wandering with the **Listless Undead** encounter below (or anything from the Extra Encounters of Episodes 1 or 2 that makes sense really).

If the villagers are calmed, they will mention that it is not safe to wander the forest now. They offer to lead the party to their village where Biru has been waiting for them: **Chilling in the Village** under extra encounters.

**Biru the Kitsune:** This fox is a very mysterious creature. He has three tails and only speaks when he feels it necessary. Each Kitsune interacts with the human world only to push events towards one particular goal (much like Merlin in certain versions of English and Welsh folklore), always kept secret. Biru will hint that the players may be able to deal with the Hangami without fighting it outright, but do not push too hard as Biru wants to learn the party’s natural demeanor.

## Scene 2: Juhi, Gami of the Forest

Whether upon directions from the village or after wandering for days, the party will eventually arrive at the Temple.

### **The Story (May Be Read Aloud)**

Built atop a natural cavern system at the heart of the forest, the Temple is surrounded by many crevices that lead beneath the forest into the tunnels below. Let the players know that they are constantly dodging and side-stepping these dangerous fissures. It is as though the forest floor is made up more of roots and tangled vines than of soil in many places. The lack of rich soil is one sign of the waning health of the forest. The roots are almost like the skeleton of the forest showing through.

Nearing the temple, the ground becomes more solid, and the players discover a large, round building almost 30' tall but only 10' in diameter. It appears most of the temple is underground.

### **GM Tips (Do Not Read Aloud)**

You can add some flair to the temple by letting the party “dungeon crawl” a bit to avoid traps and other Obstacles you create on your own. There may be **Blood Puddles** around corners or other signs that the temple is sickly and corrupt.

Any trespass into the Temple will result in an encounter with the **Juhi Hangami**. Players may have trouble with Juhi and seek to escape. He will let them flee readily. Maybe they come back with a smarter approach or seek an alternate way to deal with the Hangami.

## **Setting the Scene:**

### **Themes:**

Bloody Awful  
Convulsion of Nature

### **Conditions:**

Narrow, Twisty Passages

### **Obstacles:**

**Hangami Juhi:** *Furious, God Among Ants, Blind Eyes of Sorrow.* Powers: Area Effect (6DT deals [2] to all enemies), Force of Nature (3DT deals DT- to all targets), Corruption (Can deal [2] to himself on a turn for 3DT), Tainted Blood (Whenever Juhi suffers a [2] or [3] of damage, his flowing blood spawns a **Blood Puddle** Familiar). [3], 3[2]. Begins with 6DT.

(!) If the Shrine was Consecrated in Episode 1, remove Force of Nature.

(!) If you calm the villagers, remove 2 initial Drama from Juhi.

**Blood Thrall:** *Coagulated Horror, Rusty Blood*. Powers: Corruption Reservoir (Can suffer [2] to heal [2] of an ally), Undead. 2[2].

**Blood Puddle:** “*Overwhelming Power!*”. Powers: Pulse (Rolls against a Difficulty of 5 to give DT+ to all **Blood Puddles** and **Juhi**). [1].

### Playing the Scene:

**Juhi Hangami Tile:** A 12’ long white tiger with red stripes. This combination of powers allows **Juhi** to quickly generate Drama Tokens and then spend them on his “Force of Nature” or “Area Effect” abilities. The first action **Juhi** makes in combat is to unleash his 6DT by casting Area Effect on the party. He will spend turns regaining Drama and using mostly his spells on offense. The **Hangami** is enraged and will seek every opportunity to deal big damage.

**Blood Thrall Tile:** A humanoid shape, appearing as an inside-out corpse. The **Blood Thrall** power acts as a “battery” for **Juhi**. As **Juhi** uses Corruption to sacrifice his [2] for 3DT, the Blood Thrall will use its turn to sacrifice a [2] to heal **Juhi**.

(!) This is the Xan wizard who dropped the vial and ended up dead. The Hangami has the wizard as a puppet, the spirit in a way bound to the thing that summoned it. As the Thrall spends or suffers its [2]s, it will become more human-like and eventually wither.

**Blood Puddle Tile:** Each **Blood Puddle** should use Pulse every turn to generate DT+ for **Juhi**, itself, and all other **Blood Puddle** Familiars. This circuit will produce a powerful amount of Drama for **Juhi** during the course of the battle. Storytellers should be clear in their descriptions of each turn how the powers of the foes are connected. Obviously, killing the relatively weak **Blood Puddles** as soon as they spawn is the best option.

### Conclusions & Consequences:

As the [2] of the **Blood Thrall** are consumed or destroyed, reveal a mangled corpse at the center of the sticky, bloody mass. Once defeated, the corpse should fall to the ground and wither, leaving behind Xan clothes, a scroll, and a bronze medallion.

If there are Guanxi in the party, they should be able to recognize the medallion as the “passport” of a civilian wizard registered with (but not in service of) the Guanxi State. They should also be able to read on the scroll the wizard’s objective and rendezvous plans in Mazaki City. To most residents of Nopo, these papers would seem sophisticated

and almost religiously ornate, but a Guanxi Citizen would recognize them as the work of a mid-level notary, probably someone living in Nopo by the looks of it.

If the party has no Guanxi members, they should be still be able to recognize the name “Mazaki” printed in the brief and maps of the rendezvous point (the place from the Episode 1 Extra Encounter) as pointing to the city. The party may or may not decide to take the medallion with them, but it will make looking for clues easier in the next encounter.

Off to Mazaki to find the Red Foot Raven (or, you know, cleansing the cavern of the noxious poison, but that’s optional since nobody knows about it)!

## ***EXTRA ENCOUNTERS***

Feel free to add these encounters before, between, or after the two encounters of this Episode. The climax of the encounter will most likely be the showdown with the **Hangami**, though more tactical/peaceful groups may wish to find ways to fix the balance and avoid harming Juhi himself. In that case, the party can navigate a good ‘ol dungeon crawl through the spring cavern, hack and slash some zombies, and find the poison polluting the spring for a more mega-happy ending.

If the **Hangami** was killed in the Temple, then there will be no **Fear**, **Revulsion**, or **Sorrow** Tiles in the following Encounters.

### **Cleansing the Caverns**

Unfortunately, Gong Dahu carried not only incantations and documentation. He also possessed a glass vial carrying a liquid concentrate of the poison the Xan planned to use to kill all those living in Temple Village. When Dahu’s body dropped dead on the ground, the vial fell through a small crevice into a system of caverns that extend beneath the Temple and contain the natural spring that feeds the forest. The vial, which cracked in the fall, remains submerged in a pool at the center of the cavern, leaking poison slowly into the waters that nourish the entire forest.

- The Hangami stole away the wizard’s body, which can be found either during the fight with Juhi above or abandoned in the caverns after the fight below.

The party may be able to recognize a patch of dead forest that marks the crevice through which the vial fell. If they investigate, they can find the collected corpses of those who have been kidnapped and killed by the Hangami stuck into overgrown and moss-hidden crevices and pits nearby.

After players discover the trail of poison and the crevice, they may look down into the shimmering pool and see the inky poison. Or, maybe after fighting the **Hangami** in the Temple, they take a passageway through the caverns to find the pool from below. Either way, you can make a Scene something like the following:

### **Suggested Obstacles:**

**Remove the Leaking Vial:** *To Stem the Tides* (x2). Powers: Leak (When in the pool, the **Vial** will roll against a Difficulty of 3 to give DT+ to the **Oozing Poison**). [2], 2[1].

(!) The Resistance of this Obstacle represents the difficulty of getting to the submerged **Vial** and retrieving it from the pool of spring water. Attacks will take the form of diving in the pool, clutching the slippery vial, pulling it up past the serpents, avoiding the poison swirls in the water, etc.

**Oozing Poison:** *Drop by Drop*. Powers: Multiply Mist Serpents (Spend DT to add [1] to the **Mist Serpent Tile**, 1:[1] ratio), Summon Blood Serpent (Spend 3DT to create **Blood Serpent Tile**). Begins at 6DT.

(!) The **Poison** will never use a power to end below 3DT on a turn.

(!) When the **Vial** is removed from the water AND the **Poison** is reduced to 0, the contamination is under control. Players may need to use clothing or cloaks as filters/nets to scoop up the poison from the water.

**Mist Serpents:** *Sight Unseen*. 3[1]. Begins with 3DT.

**Blood Serpent:** *Territorial* (x2). Powers: Guard (at 3DT or higher, neither **Oozing Poison** nor **Leaking Vial** can be Attacked or Forced). 1[2]. Begins at 3DT.

(!) **Blood Serpents** are always summoned at 3DT.

**Juhi's Fear:** *Furious, Blind Eyes of Sorrow*. Powers: Force of Nature (Spend 3DT to remove 1DT from all monsters and players). [3], 2[2]. Begins with 3DT.

(!) Out of ignorance, **Juhi's Fear** will attack the **Vial** or whoever holds it. When Attacking the **Vial**, any successful hits add Drama to the **Oozing Poison** at a [1]:1 ratio.

(!) If the **Vial** is guarded by **Serpents**, **Juhi's Fear** will Attack those **Serpents** or the players.

(!) If the **Oozing Poison** is resolved, **Juhi's Fear** will fade on its own.

## Listless Undead

Concerned by the **Undead Soldier**'s appearance from nowhere in Scene 1? Good, you should be! Exploring the woods for answers will land your party in the middle of three undead **Andurhan Pilots**. No fancy mechanics or elaborate strategy here just [2]s that need hacking (slashing is also encouraged). Come up with a reward Theme to make it worth their while.

### Obstacles:

**Undead Andurhan Soldier** (3X Tiles): *Shambling Undead*. [2].

The party should realize after this encounter that these undead minions they have been fighting are the original crewmembers of the Red Foot Raven. They can safely assume that the Xan have taken over the ship and the Andhurans are not to blame. Whether the Xan were the reason the ship went AWOL in the first place is another matter... But, the clothing and

## Clearing the Corpses

Throughout the optional encounters, your party should have either found or produced a fair share of corpses. If your party has a chance to speak with the Village Elder, he may request your aid in administering funeral rights to the the villagers found near the spring cavern and/or the corpses of any undead soldiers. While he could normally perform the ceremony with ease, he insists that these cadavers carry something called the "Touch of the Hangami."

When any **Undead Soldiers** (from Listless Undead Encounter or Scene 1) are placed on the funeral pyre, from the smoke will arise a giant stinky mushroom, **Juhi's Revulsion**.

When the villagers found in the crevices around the cavern are burnt, a large toad will manifest itself as **Juhi's Sorrow**. The party does not need to fight them at once.

### Obstacles:

**Juhi's Revulsion**: *The Stench of Rot, Touch of the Hangami*. [2].

**Juhi's Sorrow**: *Mourning Glory, Touch of the Hangami*. [3].

## Chilling in the Village

Role-play the village as you like. The Tomi have been hosting the silent **Biru** out of custom: Tomi always provide any peaceful guest food and shelter. They have no idea

what he is doing in this region, and he hasn't said a word to them since he arrived twelve days ago. Biru will attach himself to the party whether they want him to or not, though he does not seem too concerned with whether any of the members live or die exactly. His guiding intentions will be made clear only later.

The party can learn a few things from the villagers:

- One of the Xan wizards was spotted near the Temple, but he went missing.
- The ship was seen overhead a while ago, but no sign has been seen for several days.
- The forest has been dying quickly over the last 10 days.
- The villagers are totally unaware of what went on in Ox Horn, and you can decide whether to tell them or not.
- Maybe the party talks some of the priest-warriors into coming to the Temple with them (as Familiars):
  - **Village Priest-Warriors:** *Devout 'til Death*. 3[1].

## **Glossary**

**Gami** - A spiritual being that has neither consciousness nor will *per se*. Gami can feel affects (fear, rage, revulsion, attraction) but do not have minds or personalities. They are more living forces than spirits or ghosts. While the world of Mazaki is rich with magical beings and spirit beasts, there are but a handful of true Gami.

**Hangami** - Literally "rotten limb of the gami," a Hangami is an incarnation of a part of a polluted or corrupt Gami that manifests when a natural balance is violently disturbed. Unlike the Gami it is a part of, the Hangami can have a will and self-consciousness after it is made manifest in the physical world. Killing a Hangami is tantamount to cutting a gangrenous limb from the polluted Gami; it will not utterly destroy the Gami, but it will maim that Gami permanently. There may be ways to mollify an imbalance in nature that can heal the Gami enough to cleanse the Hangami as well, but such feats are rare indeed. In most cases, both the Hangami must be slain and the balance restored to bring any kind of spiritual peace to the area.

**Kitsune** - One of the five non-human animal races, the Kitsune are enigmatic figures. Messengers and agents of the spiritual realm, Kitsune appear in our world and latch onto a single individual, offering aid in exchange for a good faith contract to follow the desires of the Fox Spirit. It is said each Kitsune has a single mission to fulfill here on earth and then will fade back into the spiritual world from which it comes. Some Kitsune are kingmakers, others fortune-takers. Some death-dealers, others matchmakers.

**Tomi** - The Tomishi people are made up of the populous Emishi Tribes to the North and East and the more sparse Tomi tribes to the South and West. The greater part of the map now available in the game focuses on Emishi-dense areas, though several pockets of Tomi reside there as well. Other, smaller tribes are the Onishi, Nikawa, and Urutomi.