

The Kappa Scourge

Introduction

How the group hears about a fisherman murdered by turtle demons, a shortage of Hideo's Poultice which is used to protect the boats, and how is drawn into a fight between bandits, cultists, and monsters.

Kappa have attacked the fishermen in Nikko and hurt FUCHIDA Nori badly. He dies of his rotting wounds within hours of the attack. His body is cremated, a sacrifice is made to Kawa No Kami at the little shrine. His wife and two daughters cry all day, for not only has their loved one passed away, things being as they are, they will probably end their lives in poverty unless something is done.

Bonus points (1 EL) for players who find a creative solution for the FUCHIDA family to earn their livelihood. Escorting them to Hakone where FUCHIDA Ayame's sister TAKISHITA Hanae lives would be an option; offering to marry her would also be an option. (Although such a solution would imply that a certain amount of money be paid every month.)

The Village

On the way to Hakone, the party happens upon the remains of an assault. There are tracks to be followed that lead to the hide-out of Musashi, a newly arrived robber from Akaki. An evil agent tries to use the party to replace the notorious bandit.

The village has a little wharf with three boats used by fishermen. Behind the village is a small lake fed by three streams, the black, white, and purple Kako. The village itself is defended by a stream coming down from Gassan mountain, little Yukawa. It flows around the southern edge of the village, forming a natural barrier. A frail bridge leads across the Yukawa into Nikko itself. At the right side before crossing the bridge, there's a shrine to the river god Kawa-no-kami.

In all, the village consists of about ten houses housing about thirty males able to bear arms plus wives and children. There's a simple teahouse with two rooms on the upper floor and a raised corner for richer clients. At night, there will always be at least five or six men at the teahouse, drinking, talking, and gambling.

It turns out that there is not enough of Hideo's Poultrice to go around for all three fishing boats anymore. The richo of Nikko, Jumonji Kazu, asks the party for their help: Get message to the richo of Hakone and ask for more poultrice, then bring it back as fast as possible.

Help is Needed

The richo of Nikko is desperate. He needs help. The boats of fishermen, the local bridges, and the moorings are usually protected from the terrible rotting kappa touch by a secret poultrice distributed by the provincial government. The supply has been dwindling, but a plea for help has been ignored by the neighbouring village of Hakone down river.

Would the party travel downstream along the Kako river to Hakone and ask for help, and hopefully bring back new supplies?

Unfortunately, using a raft would seem a dangerous idea in such troubled times.

On the River

Should the party choose to travel by raft, it will be attacked by a kappa who overturn and perhaps even smash their boat or raft.

The turtle demons believe that humans are encroaching on the rivers, lakes, and swamps that are rightfully theirs. The kappa will attack furiously, trying to take down as many humans as possible before escaping back into the water. If they are unhurt in the water, they'll attempt to grapple with their foes. If stunned opponents are not freed within four rounds, they drown.

HP 4d6+15, AC 17, Atk claw +4 (2d4+2 and save Phys+DEX vs. the attack roll or be stunned for 1d4 rounds; alternatively, no damage and save Phys+STR vs. DC 15 or be slowed for seven rounds). CR 3¹/₂.

On the Road

How the party reaches the site of a slaughter and finds the bandit's lair.

On the way to Hakone, the party happens upon the remains of an assault on people coming the other way. There's blood on the ground, two dead bodies, nothing of value left behind. It seems that there was quite a struggle, and that not all the victims were killed.

As the party searches the two remains, there's a reluctant "Help! Please!" to be heard. Behind some bushes lies Tori.

Tori

This traveller had joined a delegation from the richo of Hakone to travel to

Nikko and on to the Gassan shrine. On their way they were attacked by the notorious bandit Musashi who killed two soldiers and took away two others, the bureaucrat Sayuki and the young ONISHI retainer Koto.

If asked why he knew the bandit's name, he says he overheard them say it, and he knows that there was once a bandit of that name in the neighbouring province of Akaki, driven out by the warlord Taira no Hitoshi. He is said to rule the province with an iron fist en lieu of the provincial governor.

Tori will recover quickly from his wounds and wants to go and drive Musashi out of his new hideout. This would be the honorable thing to do, earning the gratitude of the richo in Hakone. He will also hint at the treasures Musashi must be guarding.

Following the bandit's trail to Musashi's lair is not too difficult, once you know what you are looking for.

Tori, cleric 3, STR 12/+1, DEX 12/+1, WILL 16/+3, Comm +6, others @ +3, HP 23, AC 11 (no armor), Atk +4 (1 unarmed), CR 3.

He claims to be the son of a priest from a southern town, able to wield a club but unschooled as a fighter. He will not use his spell where the party can see it until the very end. Preferred spells: Inflict Wounds (1d8 or 2d8 +3), Magic Stones (3x 1d6+1 using Atk +4), Bull's Strength (STR +4 for three rounds), Summon Spider II (HP 2d8+2, Init +3, AC 14, Atk +4 for 1d6 bite + poison DC 12 or loose 2x 1d4 STR).

This nasty fellow is an agent of evil, having convinced first the kappa and now the party to attack the bandits in order to weaken Musashi. His plan is to try and convince the bandits that they would do well to erect a shrine to Kayutsuchi, the god of fire. All he needs to do is to kill Musashi and take his place. At the same time he cannot allow the group to reach human settlements lest they call for help before his hold on the bandits has grown strong enough.

Tori will fight honorably with the party until Musashi is dead, if provided with weapon and armour. If the party does not help out, he'll tag along, trying to keep an eye on them, calling upon kappas to attack them if they are moving in the wrong direction. If the party is forced to flee from the kappa onslaught, he'll direct the party to the bandit's lair. If the party manages a peaceful agreement with Musashi against the kappa, Tori's next move will be the assassination of Musashi while the kappas attack.

When Musashi is dead, Tori will use his magical powers to convince the bandits that he's here to help, and he'll use them to attack the party, if possible.

Remember: In any combat, Tori will be in favor of taking prisoners instead of killing the bandits! He'll accept any surrender, planning to use these poor fellows

Rear Guard

If the party is very fast, or by the time the old Kaku castle ruins are reached, it

is possible to fight the rear guard. He has been delayed and will be unable to call for help. If he escapes and makes it to the bandit's camp, however, they will be warned and well prepared. This will mean that three of them will be hiding in the trees, shooting at the party with their yumi, while the others are hiding in the bushes, ready to sneak up and backstab any party members passing by.

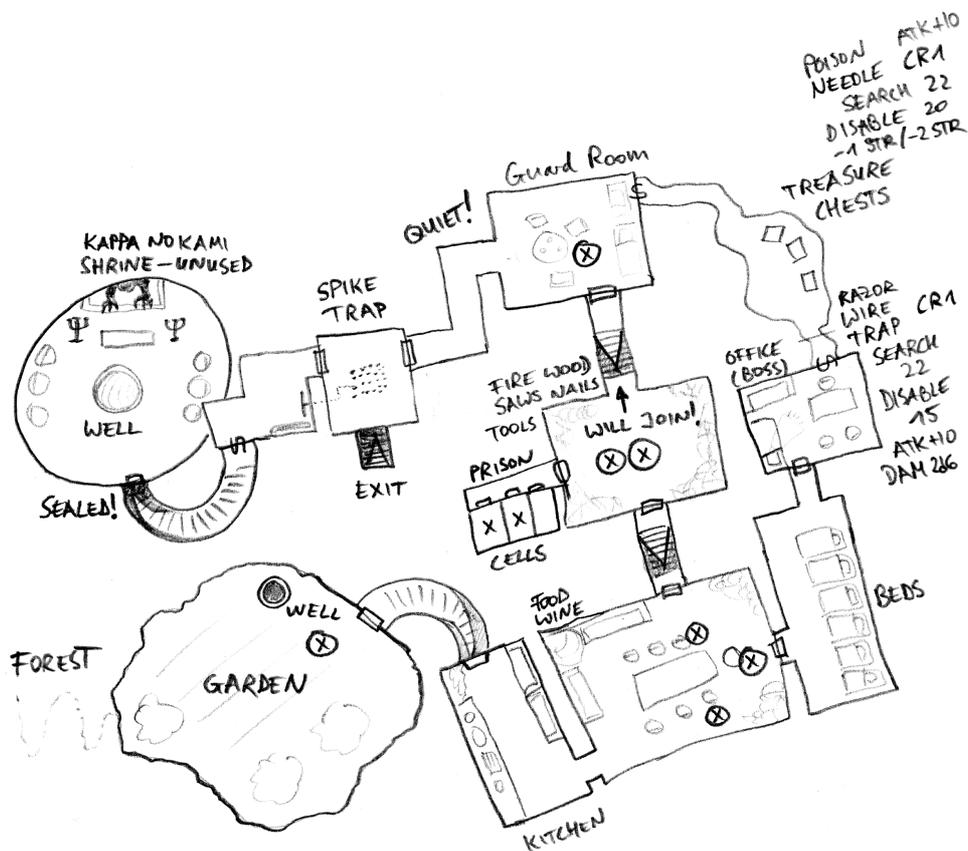
Shoichi, Fighter 1, STR 12/+1, DEX 10/0, WILL 8/-1, Phys +5, others @ +2, HP 16, AC 12 (Leather), Atk +2 (1d6 Mace), CR 1.

Musashi's Lair

How the party clears out the lair and finds a mysterious Kappa temple.

Currently Musashi employs six men only. They are preparing the ruins of the old Kako castle for the arrival of their comrades. Thus, there will be about two dozen bandits arriving in the next four weeks. Plenty of opportunity for revenge should anything happen to Musashi.

If a lot of time is spent observing the ruin and searching the environment, Jumonji and Kanada will be seen leaving the ruin and making towards the road. If attacked, they will try to flee back into the ruin, trying to use the spike trap in the entrance to their advantage, and warning Fujio in the guard room. See the Mess section for the stats of these two rogues.



Hooks for Future Sessions:

- Should the party feel like taking over, it should be possible to attract a small following up here, specially with all the rogues from Akaki still to come. Whom to trust, however...
- Further searching reveals the remains of a pyre; amongst the ashes there will be non-human bones and pieces of a kappa carapace. Further searching will reveal a hidden kappa lair near the bandit's camp housing several grown kappas and some young. Tori will be unwilling to follow this trail; should the party follow it anyway, Tori will make a getaway, because the kappa will recognize him: He nudged them on to the first failed attack on the bandit's camp! See Kappa Temple below.

Entrance

The main door is closed but unlocked, since they're expecting the rear guard, Shoichi.

Anybody carelessly entering the room will step on the trigger plates that will release sharp iron spikes from the floor using Atk +10 (1d6), use Sub+Know vs. DC 13 to find the trap and Sub+Know vs. DC 22 to disarm it.

There are two doors leading further into the underground section of the former castle: The door to the right leads to the Guard room, the door to the left leads into the trap room where several turns of the wheel will reload the trap.

Check Sub+MIND vs. DC 15 to find the door hidden behind lots of trash, firewood and an array of 4 very simple sankaku yari (the simplest spears). The door is locked and has not been opened in ages. Tori will suggest not to investigate and clear out the bandit lair first.

Kappa Temple

Old temple with a big statue of a black kappa god seemingly trying to reach out to the people in the round temple. There's a well, here, filled with water. The water is potable. The well is too deep to tell what lies beneath the water.

Hooks for Future Sessions:

- Let this be a secret water-filled tunnel to a kappa lair that has an exit towards the river. The lair itself is air-filled, so all that is required here is a dive 5m down into absolute darkness, 2m swim in a horizontal tube, and back up again. No problem for a trained diver, if he knows what to expect. On the other side, the pool is connected to the kappa lair via a tiny crack, small enough to allow the passage of a human without any armour, but not wide enough for a kappa's carapace to fit through. In an emergency, just improvise: Long tunnels, cold, a central chamber with beds, chests, a big altar for Kawa No Kami, the river dragon (chaotic neutral), acting as a PR 2 shrine, some treasure (three jade turtle figurines, each worth 200gp, 120 silver coins), one kappa to be surprised

in the tunnel, five grown kappas and several children in the main chamber, two more outside the lair, scouting the area. Killing kappa children is bad for your prestige.

Guard

If the door from the entrance is just opened and nothing happens, the guard Fujio will call: "Hey, is that you, Shoichi? The boss wants to see you!"

If alerted by the noise of more than one person in the corridor, Fujio will try to flatten himself against the wall to sneak up on them (Sub+DEX vs. Sub+WILL of the first person entering the room) using Atk +6 (1d6+6 Mace).

Fujio, Rogue 1, STR 10/0, DEX 12/+1, WILL 8/-1, Sub +5, others @ +2, HP 13, AC 12 (Leather), Atk +1 (1d6+1 Mace), CR 1. Treasure: 5gp, 3sp, 12cp.

In the second round, Fujio will shout at the top of his lungs. This will alert Masamune and Kondo from the storage room. They will arrive in round five.

The room has a table, three stools, a cupboard, and a sleeping mat for the guard.

A secret tunnel starts behind the shelf, search DC 20. Only Musashi knows of this tunnel.

Storage

There are two guards in this room, talking to each other about the plans for the prisoners: Musashi will try to ask for money from Nikko for 50% of the poultice, keeping the rest to himself, and he'll send a ransom note to Hakone for the two prisoners.

Masamune, Fighter 1, STR 12/+1, DEX 10/0, WILL 8/-1, Phys +5, others @ +2, HP 16, AC 13 (leather do + kote), Atk +3 (1d8+2 heavy mace), CR 1. Treasure: 9gp, 9sp, 7cp.

Kondo, Fighter 1, STR 12/+1, DEX 10/0, WILL 8/-1, Phys +5, others @ +2, HP 17, AC 12 (leather do), Atk +3 (1d10+2 katana), CR 1. Treasure: The three prison cell keys, 7gp, 8sp, 3cp.

The room contains the armor and weapons of the two prisoners and the two soldiers killed, as well as lots of stuff used to rebuild the hide-out: 5 leather do (AC +2), 2 leather kote (AC +1), 3 leather sune-ate (+1), 1 katana, 3 yari, 1 yumi, 20 arrows in a quiver, 4 tantos, hammers, nails, saws, axes (for wood cutting), ropes, linen, pegs, tents, etc. This should suffice to build a hide-out for twenty to thirty people! There's also lots of other stuff such as an empty, portable apothecary's chest, crude chairs, tables, etc.

Prison

The three prison cells are all locked; two prisoners are kept here. Both are wounded from the fighting, but unharmed. They are brothers serving as guards in Hakone.

Eisuke, Fighter 1, STR 16/+3, DEX 5/-2, WILL 8/-1, Phys +5, others @ +2, HP 5/17 (badly hurt), AC 8 (none), Atk +5 (1+3 unarmed).

Kurusu, Fighter 1, STR 15/+2, DEX 11/0, WILL 8/-1, Phys +5, others @ +2, HP 7/18 (badly hurt), AC 10 (none), Atk +4 (1+2 unarmed).

If the bandit lair is not cleared, the prisoners would like to equip themselves, and leave as fast as possible, bury their two friends back on the road, and rush back to Hakone to inform the authorities and return with a larger force of men. If the party does not agree, they will propose to leave on their own. If the party agrees to that, authorities in Hakone will be forewarned.

If the bandit lair has been cleared, the prisoners would like to search for the poultice, and bring it to Nikko as fast as possible.

Two sets of armor (do, kote, and sune-ate for AC +4) and two yari (1d8) in the storage room belong to these two prisoners.

Hooks for Future Sessions:

- It is not at all clear that the authorities will be pleased with the party's meddling. After all, they are involved in a disturbance of the peace instead of letting the authorities handle it. Soon enough a group of Kouken-agensuto-Zaigou will be looking for the party on the road between Hakone and Nikko. They are Guardians against Sin, a branch of the province's Jingikan (Office of Deities), and not to be trusted.
- The MARIOKA family will be in the party's debt in times to come if the two brothers make it back to Hakone. Their father was a warrior in the service of the imperial army many years ago. Even though he's retired now, he's still an impressive man: Strong, tough, wily, a valuable ally.

Mess

This is where the bandits eat and drink. At the moment Musashi is sitting here with two of his team, explaining how one of them will travel to Nikko and the other to Hakone, how to deliver the ransome and extortion letters, how to retrieve the money, and so on.

Most probably, they haven't heard any noise from the storage area through two sturdy doors. And if the door is opened, Musashi will not immediately realize that strangers have entered the room and mistake them for Masamune and Kondo. He'll order them out of the room while he's talking to the messengers. This will allow the party to surprise the three, if they act decisively.

Jumonji, Rogue 1, STR 10/0, DEX 12/+1, WILL 8/-1, Sub +5, others @ +2, HP 13, AC 12 (leather do), Atk +1 (1d6 tamagusari), CR 1. Treasure: 12gp, 5sp, 3cp.

Kanada, Rogue 1, STR 10/0, DEX 12/+1, WILL 8/-1, Sub +5, others @ +2, HP 13, AC 12 (leather do), Atk +1 (1d6+1 mace), CR 1. Treasure: 4gp, 2sp, 13cp.

Musashi, Rogue 4, STR 14/+2, DEX 16/+3, WILL 13/+1, Sub +8, others @ +5, HP 35, AC 17 (leather do + kote + sune-ate), Atk +7 (1d6+2 nunchaku), CR 6. 3 smoke grenades to cover his retreat. Treasure: 14gp, 12sp, 15cp.

Musashi is an excellent fighter but no fool. If he's the last man standing, he'll run for the secret door in his office using the smoke grenades to cover his retreat.

Should the party have tarried outside for too long, Jumonji and Kanada will be gone on their mission, and Musashi will have retreated into his office. There, he should get enough advance warning through the open doors for him to make a disappearance through the secret door. That's what he'll try to do, hoping that the secret door and the razor wire trap behind will delay pursuit long enough for him to make it out of the ruin and hide in the the forest.

Kitchen

Ventilation shafts above the fireplace lead up to the garden. The two doors leading up to the garden are closed, but not locked.

Careful searching of the kitchen will reveal the tools necessary to poison weapons, but no poison itself. Needless to say, the possession of these tools is illegal. They could be transported in a portable apothecary's chest, however. And indeed, there's one such chest to be found in the storage room.

If questioned, the bandits will say that the kitchen was Masahiko's domain and they don't know the details. In fact, Musashi has used some of Masahiko's poisoned needles to secure his treasure chests. But nobody knows this, of course.

Garden

Masahiko is the bandit's cook. If he hears fighting in the kitchen, he'll hide in the garden. If the party has found the hidden entrance from the forest, he'll be busy with plants. If he hears about an imminent kappa attack, he'll lead the party inside, lock the door, and call for a bandit meeting in the mess.

He has two kamas (sickles) and a poisoned tanto. If he is surprised by the party, he'll greet the party as liberators if they look too strong for him to take down. He'll try to exploit a moment of weakness to sneak attack a character (2x Atk +5, 1d6+5 each)

Masahiko, Thief 2, STR 10/0, DEX 14/+2, WILL 12/+1, Sub +6, others @ +3, HP 13, AC 12 (Leather), Atk +4 (1d4 Tanto, with DC 14 -1 STR/unconscious poison), 2x Atk +2 (1d6 Kama, can disarm foes standing nearby who did not attack him), CR 2. Treasure: Keys to the doors leading

from the garden down to the kitchen, three more applications of the Blue Whinnis poison (120 gp each).

Masahiko could be persuaded to help in the murder of Musashi with some gold. He's a shinobi spy sent by another faction from Hakone and knows that there must be some treasure hidden here somewhere.

Hooks for Future Sessions:

- Depending on what happens to Masahiko, there will be a shinobi clan in Hakone with an attitude towards the party. Assuming that there is a contact man that Masahiko meets on a regular basis it will only be a few days until the clan learns what happened. If played well, the party could get involved in the destiny of this shinobi clan as incursions from TAKE-ODORIKO (Bamboo Dancer) shinobi from Akaki start to threaten endanger local shinobi activities. At first the clan will suspect the party to be part of an Akaki incursion, of course: Some newcomers killing other newcomers; that must look like an old story to local observers.

Quarters

Sleeping quarters. Beds. Smelly. Thorough searching will reveal 15 cp and 3 sp.

Office

A shelf, a clean bed, two carpets hanging at the wall (they don't look too clean), a table, three chairs, and no treasure. A secret tunnel starts behind one of the carpets, search DC 15. Only Musashi knows of this tunnel.

The poultice the bandits stole from the delegation on its way from Hakone to Nikko is on the shelf right here. The prisoners will be interested in bringing it to Nikko.

Secret Passage

The entrance from the office is protected by a razor wire. Atk +10 for 2d6, search DC 22, disable DC 15 (or just destroy it by cutting the wire).

Three little chests stand by the cave walls. The first chest contains 2 pp, 70 gp, 100 sp, 110 cp, the second chest contains 10 smoke grenades (50 gp), and the third chest contains a golden circlet with four aquamarines inlaid (4000 gp) plus a brass mug with a jade dragon winding its way around it (500gp). Chests 1 & 3 are protected by a poison needle trap: Atk +10, search DC 22, disable DC 20, poison -1/-2 STR, CR 1.

Arrival in Hakone

How the party finally reaches its destination.

Hakone is a small town lying in the crook of the Kawa river. On the other side of a river, the west bank rises darkly into the Kuroiwa (Black Rock) mountains. They protect the north-western dark forest. Hakone itself overlooks the settled part of the vale towards the east. The road goes east before it splits into north (Nikko, Tobu) and south (turning west towards Kurobano).

There are about four dozen houses here, for a total of about 5000 people living in the area here. Nearly all the families in Nikko and Tobu have relatives here. With access to Mt Takenaga in the north endangered by the encroaching forest and Kurobano bearing the weight of the armed forces lodging there, Hakone has become the hub of the north-eastern economic activities. Here is where the loggers tie their huge rafts, where the north-eastern Toriyama dyes are produced, and bull market one the first Monday of every month.

Hooks for Future Sessions:

- The FUCHIDA family belongs to the Fukabayashi shinobi clan; the clan is known in Sairyuukoe province for its use of all sorts of spider poisons. Players interested in forming an alliance with this clan will be instructed to obtain spider poison for the clan out in the wilderness.

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