

The Oni of Ura

Rin travelled far that day, to a place that he had not expected to visit. Normally, he would stick to demon cases in the United States, but this was a special occasion. A small village in Japan, about seventeen miles north of Tokyo. It had been quite a long flight, and Rin got lost in thought. Why so close to his home? And why him? It had not been entirely his choice to go, but he had received a letter a few days prior, about a presence there. The supernatural entity called for expert, outside help. Rin was on top of that list, still held in high regard by the locals, after he got rid of a Yokai on the borders of Tokyo, just before he left for the United States. Thoughts rushed through his mind, the fur of his arm brushing against the seat as he uneasily tapped the window frame. His green eyes dashed as his gaze shifted over the clouds underneath. The vehicle had already started to lower itself through the white deck, with Japan below it. This was a bit uneasy for him. Not because he doubted his abilities and skills, not at all. It was uneasy for him because something felt off. Why did it have to be close to his old home? Why was he the one to deal with it? He did not ask himself this in accordance with the letter, but more so with fate, and how he out of all people was the one to receive the letter in the first place.

At the foot of a hill, a silent forest stood, peacefully, yet, in a sense, too quiet. Rin paced over the forest pathway, which was the only way to reach the village of Ura. His instincts were running rampant. It was so peaceful, so silent, but something was off. There was something in the wind, but he could not quite tell what. The letter had not been very specific. Some kind of demon or evil spirit, that was for sure, but the letter never specified what kind it would be. His senses were confirmed, however, when he arrived at the village. It was empty, sliding doors were left wide open, cloth was torn, rooftops were ravaged. There was nobody to be found, between the traditional Japanese buildings. At the end of the main road, a temple stood tall and proud, untouched, in contrast to the rest of the buildings, and the street, which had been wrecked altogether. Rin raised an eyebrow, one hand on a pistol on his right hip, and another ready to draw his blade if he had to. He did not take it slow, confident that he could take this thing on, whatever it would be. He paced between the buildings, looking over at one of the doors. The cloth had been torn diagonally, from the top right, all the way down to the bottom left. Traces of blood could be seen by the edges. And the way it went straight through the wood that lined the frame, it had to have been a blade of some kind, and a heavy one at that. This observation caused Rin to move his hand away from his hip, and closer to the hilt of his blade instead. If whatever caused this damage did wield a blade, he wanted to be ready to block it.

He kept walking, naturally drawn towards the temple. It was so quiet. The only sound to be heard was the rustling of leaves in the wind. The sun was high in the sky, but that did not make this place any less eerie. Something about it being so freakishly peaceful, while this kind of destruction was around, made the careless sunlight worse. There was a whisper on the wind, a voice in his head that spoke to him. A quiet call that warned him of something, something that he thought he was ready for. He would soon find out, however, that he was not. At least, not yet. There was a dark force approaching, out of sight, yet perfectly clear on the wind. The whisper continued, drawing him closer, as his vision tunnelled, and the gate to the temple became all that he could see. The temple's courtyard had been demolished, traces of water and a broken basin showing on the ground.

The wood, and how it splintered at the touch of time. The bricks that lead up to it, how they shifted, and then remained perfectly straight, up to the door.

He considered, for a second, to take off his shoes in respect, already having some coins on him to leave behind. Even after all this time, he had not forgotten the little ritual that came with visiting a temple like this one. He would not remove his shoes, though. He was on business, likely dangerous business at that. This was not the time for formalities. He slowly moved further into the temple's main hall, spotting an altar further up ahead, with a box for offerings right next to it. With no other place to go, he carefully moved on to the altar. He tossed a coin into the box, as per custom, but there was something off. Something was missing. There was a small pedestal by the altar, with two hooks on it. He recognised the type; they were often used to display katanas and other weapons. In his childhood home, they used to have a small decorative tanto displayed like that. It did not take a great mind to figure out what was missing, and it clicked in his head. The spirit was definitely hostile, that was for sure. But such entities did not just start cutting a place up. It was somehow bound to whatever caused this amount of havoc. A chill went up his spine, and he abruptly readied his weapon, turning around to face the disturbance he felt. Nothing, just the wind. Or so he thought, before he felt something breathing down his neck. He looked up, coming face to face with the entity. A large, humanoid figure, shrouded in traditional samurai armour, wearing an Oni mask. The armour appeared withered, a large piece of it shattered, but that was all he could see, before the entity dropped down, and kicked him to the floor, before he could actually react. Then, everything went black. He was caught in a moment of vulnerability, but it had not been entirely his mistake. The entity's figure became clearer as it spent more time in the mortal plane of existence, having manifested seemingly out of nowhere. The entity had plans for Rin, his story was not done yet. They had a game to play.

Rin would awaken again in the dead of night. His eyes opened slowly, his green iris slowly glowing up just a little bit in the dark, as he looked around, without getting up. He stared up at the ceiling, where he had seen the entity. His heart raced for a moment as he recalled where he was, but there was nothing there. All that remained in the temple was an empty hall. A hall now shrouded in strange shadows, like silhouettes on the walls. He got to his feet, looking for his katana, but it was nowhere to be found. His pistols had also been removed from their holsters, that much did he confirm when his paws traced his hips, looking for any kind of weapon to help him here. Part of him expected the shadows to come for him, but they never did. Something about them was almost familiar, in some strange sense, as they lingered along the walls, silently, lifelessly. The darkness shifted, and he knew that he had to leave. He could fight a lot of things, but a shadow was not something he could challenge. At least, not yet. He started walking, elevating his pace as his footsteps echoed eerily through the darkened temple hall. The wood creaked and shifted underneath his feet, as he moved closer and closer to the gate. His step seemed to become heavier, like he was drawn in by something. This time, his senses did not betray him. Something was amiss. He turned around, rapidly swinging around his gaze to see what was going on. Flying towards him was his katana. Then again, he was not without skill. Smoothly, gracefully, he dodged the weapon flying at him, as he lowered his body and rested his paws on the floor. Effortlessly, he let the weapon fly overhead, as it was flung into the wood of the door. The wood splintered as the metal collided with it. He again came eye to eye with the entity. The figure's hide appeared to be covered almost entirely in cloth, the only thing escaping it a faint red glint, right where the eyes would be.

The entity readied its blade but did not strike. Instead, its chest rose and fell with its breathing. Rin took a step back to the door and placed his paw on the hilt of his katana, swiftly pulling it out of the wooden gate, and readying it in front of him. He held it, steadily, confidently. He trusted his skills with the sword. He trusted his reflexes to block the attacks, and he trusted his feet to dodge any strikes that were not to be halted. He was ready. His stance was similar to the entity's, wide, unyielding, strong, and stable. And for a moment, Rin could feel their gazes colliding. After that split-second of eye-contact, the entity attacked, charging forward with the might of a thousand suns, a confident overhead swing. Initially, this boldness caught Rin off-guard, but he recovered nearly instantly, aligning his blade just in time, before the clashing of steel filled the halls. As the entity drew in close, forcing Rin to stand upright, as their blades clashed together, Rin could hear its breathing. It was ridged, uncontrolled, and rough. And with a grunt, the entity broke the blade lock, going for another set of swings, which were blocked rather easily by Rin. The half-mortal flashed a smirk as they both took a step back, circling around the middle of the room. This time, Rin would be the one to attack, dealing a series of quick and precise strikes. Precise, yet with a fury behind them. It almost seemed as if Rin threw his blade at the other, instead of actually striking, every time he went for another hit. At first, Rin got what he was looking for. Slowly but surely, he was guiding the entity's guard away from its face. He saw an opening and went to slice the malevolent looking mask off of this spirit's face, but the spectral warrior caught on right away, and parried Rin's attack harshly. Rin's eyes widened as his chest and stomach were exposed. Unable to recover his stance in time to strike at Rin's abdomen, the entity instead shifted onto one leg, lifted the other, and kicked Rin towards the door, striking his chest with untold force. Rin's body was thrown to the gate, and his body collided with the hard wood, one of the hinges hitting him between the shoulders. When he hit the floor again, he was left gasping for breath, struggling to get up, panicking for just a moment, before recovering. Yet when he got up, the spirit had disappeared again. Rin growled under his breath at the game the Oni was playing. "Coward!" He yelled out, trying to taunt the ghost into revealing itself, yet it did not.

Rin had learnt though, and quickly stepped backwards, out of the temple and away from its gates. He tried his best to avoid a repeat of a situation that could very well have been his death. He once again found himself on the bricks of the street. The wind brushed against his fur as he backed away from the temple, daring the spirit to leave its grounds. An uncomfortable silence ensued, as cherry blossom blew from the nearby trees, landing at Rin's feet. His green scarf swayed a bit in the air current, as he focused all of his attention on the door. Nothing, it was just gone, completely off the radar. Normally he could sense a presence, but all he could sense was his own beating heart. At least it was still beating. He placed his blade back in its sheath, on his back, before stepping back some more. It had moved, but where? Rin was determined to find out. He quickly glanced up at the sky as he moved down the ruined road again. It was a clear night, and the moon stood high in the sky, casting her pale light over the rooftops. That would work in his advantage. When fighting such an entity, moonlight was far better than no light at all. He took his steps carefully as his gaze traced over the silver outlines. He glanced at the wooden beams that still stood, the red gates that lead up to the temple, and then at the doors to the houses. Then he saw something. A shadow, behind the cloth of one of the doors. Broad shoulders and samurai helmet could be seen, his target. He fixed his course and moved towards the door, slowly, quietly. He moved closer and closer, until he was standing right in front of the cloth and slashed after abruptly unsheathing his weapon.

The cloth tore in half, and the wooden parts that kept it together shattered, but his blade met no other resistance. He then heard... whistling? His ears twitched at the sharp noise, which was followed by a different kind of whistle. His eyes widened as he ducked, an arrow landing in the wood next to him. Once again, the spirit had gotten the drop on him. He turned around to face the arrow's origin. The entity stood on one of the rooftops, looking down at him as he stood tall, prideful. Something in the way the entity seemingly did not perceive him as a threat, in combination with the way it fought, made that angry flame inside his chest burn even brighter. He snarled quietly before starting to sprint towards said roof. The entity readied an arrow again, effortlessly pulling the string back, letting it brush against the side of its helmet, before carefully releasing it. Rin predicted the projectile arch it would make and quickly dashed out of the way, as it hit the bricks next to him. He kept sprinting, now having reached the other side of the street. He waited for another arrow to miss him before rapidly scaling the wall and reaching the roof after less than two seconds. Once he reached the top, he was greeted by the entity with a drawn sword, striking at him immediately, not waiting for Rin to recover this time. Rin dodged the first two strikes before drawing his weapon and blocking the third one in the chain. Then it was Rin's turn. He started to strike, unrelenting, letting that fury in his soul fuel his swings. Faster and faster, he lashed out at the entity, which continued to block the hits. Slowly getting a bit enraged by the ghost's passiveness, Rin moved faster and faster, before his arms started to tire. The spirit waited for him to slow down, before promptly parrying one of the attacks and hitting the back of his weapon's hilt against the side of Rin's head. Rin let out a small cry of pain as it hit him right by his eye, before snarling and recovering, taking a step back.

It did not take long for him to find that fury again, once more letting it drive him as he stepped forward and lunged at the entity. They locked blades once more, and the roof underneath their feet started to creak under that combined weight, right on a weaker spot. A small gasp left Rin's lips before they both fell, once the roof gave way underneath them. He grunted and groaned as he rolled to break his fall at least partially, rolling up against a wooden wall. Dust filled the room, obscuring his vision as he recovered. He peered through the darkness, his eyes allowing him some level of night vision. At first, he almost mistook an armour stand for his enemy, but he soon recovered. Then, he readied his blade again as the spirit came lunging at him from a dark corner of the room. He locked blades, recognising the situation as the spirit stepped back and went for another chain of attacks, trying to throw Rin off of his guard. Rin blocked the first one, parried the second, and used the opening to punch the spirit across the face, or mask. The entity let out a growl and chilling screech, which was closely followed by the sound of something shattering. The dust got thicker, and Rin could see the entity turning away before his vision was taken from him completely. He coughed and stepped back, getting out of the worst of it, just before it cleared back up. His eyes drifted across the room, empty again. His eyes then traced across the floor, to see what had broken. And on the floor, he saw a set of shards, the Oni mask, broken into pieces. He snickered a bit to himself at this small victory. He had finally landed a good hit. Maybe this would get the spirit on the run, at least for a moment. He reset his gaze to head height, before taking the opportunity to swiftly leave the building. He opened a sliding door and stepped back outside, greeted by that same breeze from before. It was time for the next act, the game had just changed. No longer was he fighting something untouchable. He would dismantle the entity piece by piece if he had to.

Then again, even with this newfound reassurance, he would very much like not to get caught by an arrow. He started to make his way across the street again, before spotting another taller building in the near distance. He had a funny feeling.

Right away, he started to make his way there, sticking close to the walls, so that he would be shielded from at least one side of the village. Quietly, he followed the sides of the road, until he came to the entrance of the structure. This was unmistakably a warehouse of sorts. Until now, this entity had been very fond of sticking to close quarters combat, the bow having been an exception. But even then, the Oni did engage him with a blade once he got closer. If it was going to be anywhere other than in the places he had already been, this was it. He wasted no time getting in, quickly finding a rather heavy wooden door, and opening it. The lock was already busted, no key would be required to enter, although it did make him wonder why it had been broken. What use would an entity like this one gather out of simpler material, like food and building materials? His question was soon answered when he nearly tripped over a corpse by the door. This poor soul tried to hide, judging from the way the body lied curled up in a corner. There were traces of blood by the door, droplets on the floor, but it did not reach further inside. This spirit had been in it simply for the blood, for the pain, and the death. It was an angry entity, hateful for reasons he could not truly understand. It had eliminated presumably the entire village, just prior to Rin's arrival. Rin took a deep breath, gagging a bit at the smell of rotting flesh. Either way, he had to push on. He was determined to put a stop to the spirit's rampage, and possibly to avenge the lost souls that had fallen to its blade. The floorboards shifted underneath his step, as he once again entered the darkness. There were many crates stacked up against the walls, making the place hard to navigate, as shelves in the middle of the room cluttered his vision even further.

His step was light, but his heart was heavy, even though he could not quite tell why it was. He kept moving, finding nothing in the empty warehouse, except for dried food, lumber, and building bricks. He was just about to leave that place before he noticed something that he had not spotted before. A backroom. He held his blade in a guarding stance, not wanting to be caught off-guard again, as he stepped into the room. When he saw that the room was devoid of the spirit, he looked up to check the ceiling above. Nothing. He levelled his view again, noticing a dusty mirror in the back of the room. He gravitated towards it. What he had mistaken for a mirror ended up being a plate of glass, a window to a display case. It displayed a set of armour, like the Oni's. Rin looked at the gear, admiring the craftsmanship for a few moments, as his eyes traced over the pauldrons. He aligned his body with the glass, looking at his reflection in the window, to see how the armour would fit him. He straightened his shoulders a little and tried to stand a bit more upright. He smiled quietly as he looked at the view, which, again, seemed vaguely familiar, so similar to something he had seen, and not just the Oni's armour, no, it lied deeper than that, much deeper. Then another reflection appeared from the darkness, and he froze, as he saw the spirit walking up behind him, yet not carrying a blade this time. He held still, at first wondering if he was just imagining it. He asked himself it was his imagination when the figure placed a hand on his shoulder. The entity moved its gaze up, and Rin stared at the reflection, as the shadows that had been shrouding the figure's face were finally lifted. He gasped a bit, his eyes widening, as he was confronted by the now unmasked face. Not by its repulsiveness, the rotten flesh that he had expected, or maybe empty eye-sockets, which he had previously imagined. No, he froze up because the face he saw was not that of a demon, it was his. Everything was exactly the same, from the texture of his fur to the shape of his muzzle.

The only thing different were the eyes. Rin's eyes remained a vibrant green, glowing in the darkness, but the entity's eyes were crimson like the blood of its victims. The figure smirked at Rin's disbelief, which was only strengthened when Rin envisioned a strangeness in his own reflection.

His eyes shifted from that green that fitted him so well, to that same deep red. He gasped and stepped away from the glass, recoiling at the sight. The phantom disappeared from behind him, as Rin looked over his shoulder to check. His breathing became faster as he understood what this was. He was not fighting some ghost that had been out for his blood specifically, he was fighting himself. Well, not truly himself, but a version of himself that now did not seem so distant anymore, not now that he had seen the vision. He had assumed that it would be an Oni, judging from the enraged destruction outside, but he had been wrong. It clicked in his head, he had been fighting an Obake, a spirit that had tapped into Rin's very self, and now used that power to fight him.

Rin flicked his gaze back to the glass, and was greeted by the spirit again, this time without his own reflection cast over it. The entity drew its sword again, shaking Rin out of his haze, making him step back once more, as the entity stepped through the glass in front of him. Rin drew his own katana, standing ready. This time, the entity did not wait for Rin to strike first, it attacked with an overhead swing again, which Rin blocked, followed by another chain of attacks, faster than the ones from before. Block, block, block, block, then a quick yelp as Rin tried to dodge the final one. Blood had been drawn. He glanced at his shoulder, where the sharpness of the hostile phantom's blade had pierced his hide, cutting through flesh. He was just about to figure out how deep, exactly, it was, but he was granted no such time. Another chain followed, and Rin could feel the rage. So familiar, so powerful, yet different. Block, block, block, parry, strike. He lashed out at the being's partially shattered armour once again, this time aiming for its chest, where the material had already been cracked up. It did not quite connect, as the entity blocked out most of the attack with its blade. The metal did scrape part of the chest piece, though, leaving a scrape across the ancient gear.

The clashing of steel went on for another two minutes, both sides not making another dent in each other's forms. It was only when Rin parried one of the Obake's attacks that he saw an opening, lifting up one of his legs and kicking the entity with the intent of throwing it into the glass. There was no impact, as the demon hunter had expected, but the entity did fade away again, right after touching the armour stand in the display case. It had retreated once more into the shadows, no doubt to try and catch the hunter off-guard once more, something that it had been succeeding at a lot. *No more.* That was what Rin thought when the spirit retreated. He made his way back out of the warehouse, not granting the Obake an opportunity to strike from the darkness. The vision he saw, it scared him, and he began to wonder. *If this is an Obake, and it touched into me personally, then why is it constantly so aggressive?* The only answer he had was the Obake touching a part of Rin that he had previously been unaware of. This scared him, because Obake's did not just summon this kind of thing out of thin air. The way it moved, the way it acted, the way it looked, all that was somewhere deep inside of Rin. Untouched potential and danger, something that could be if he was not careful. Now aware of this, Rin started to hatch a plan. The only way to outplay the Obake was to do something he would never do; play it safe, strategize.

He thought to himself. After all this, what had he learnt? Just throwing chain attacks at the entity would not work, it was too fast. It liked ambushes and would use rooftops if he remained out in the open for too long. The Obake could predict his movements, recognise patterns. It liked to toy with his sanity and appeared to move from building to building every time it disappeared from view. Its next destination would not be hard to spot now that he knew where to look. And now that he knew what it was, he could trick it.

Rin knew what to do. He had to find it, trick it into believing that he was still on his usual mindset, and then suddenly change his fighting style drastically. It was time. He left the warehouse behind and went to the next major building, an extension of the temple. He was not happy with the way this was playing out, but at least he was getting somewhere now. He stuck to the shadows, not taking the main road, but instead moving through smaller alleyways. He shuffled from corner to corner until he reached the temple door again, this time a much smaller one in the back. He took a deep breath, clutching the hilt of his sword tightly, before making his way inside. Here, too, it was dark, as expected, though there was one hole in the ceiling that allowed a few rays of moonlight to stream into the room, illuminating two of its corners. Rin tried to bait it into trying to ambush him again, as he slowly moved towards the middle of the room, trying his best to act casual, while he listened for sound, anything at all. And glad he was that he had been paying attention, when he heard the sound of a shift in the draft of cold air that arrived from the hole in the ceiling. He felt it blowing down the fur of his neck, and abruptly turned around, blocking the initial attack of the spirit, as it showed itself once again. He was ready to end this but remained something that he had not been in quite some time. Patient. He was the first to attack after the Obake's opening, using his usual attack chain, trying to use just a little bit of variation, so that the Obake would not believe him to be too predictable. As expected, the entity easily deflected the hits, opening its own chain. It mirrored Rin's guard perfectly. Up, down, left, left, down, up, right, left. Rin even went so far as to fake almost failing to guard one of the attacks, as he dodged the final one, just barely grazing the figure's blade as he stepped aside.

Then he did something that worked, throwing the hostile entity off, by starting to dash around the figure in circles, unpredictably switching directions every few seconds. The spirit was left trying to hit Rin in a flurry, visibly panicking as its predictions were in vain. No hits were landed, and when the spirit was just a little bit too slow, Rin struck. He dashed up behind the Obake and hit it with an upwards cut, right across the spine. The armour on its back shattered, revealing what he had been looking for. A weak spot. A vibrant crimson vein, pulsating, running slow across the figure's lower back. Rin had just acquired his target. Now he had to find a way to hit it. As soon as the armour was removed from the being's back, it spun around and pushed Rin away in the moment that he stood still. Rin coughed a bit as more dust was released, when he collided with a wall, making the structure weaken even more than it already had. The destruction had made the support beams give into the weight, very slowly letting the upper parts of the wall collapse as time went on. The roof then fell onto their heads, separating them as the room was filled with debris. Rin took this opportunity to leave the building, a reckless move. He hoped that the entity would predict him staying inside, which would give him an edge in a few moments. He sprinted back onto the empty streets, looking back to see the broken down structure. He huffed a bit, frowning as the entity effortlessly moved outside through the debris. Rin made a run for it, sprinting back towards a building that they had previously visited, where he had gotten ambushed by the Obake's ranged weaponry. He could hear the spirit following him closely as he sprinted into the building.

He ran through the sliding door and promptly closed them behind him. The entity slowed, menacingly pacing forward, approaching Rin's location like the hiding the place of a cornered rat. It dragged its blade behind it, having dropped the mimicking of Rin's stance completely. The way it held the blade was now savage, reckless, feral, as it stalked Rin, like a predator stalking its prey.

Closer it walked, growling under its breath as it approached the cloth, which was vaguely being illuminated by the moonlight. There, it saw a silhouette, the silhouette of a person. It snarled quietly before ripping through the cloth and wood with its blade, carving a way through the door. In its haze, the entity entered the building, bewilderedly lunging at the figure. There was a sound of wood breaking, and fabric tearing. When the haze cleared, the being looked at its blade, which had been covered in ragged fabric from an armour stand that it had struck. The entity's ears perked up at a soft thud behind it, but it was already too late. Rin dropped through the hole in the roof above, and jammed his blade into the Obake's back, twisting it after it pierced the vein. The spirit screeched in pain, letting out a chilling scream that travelled through heart and soul. It turned around, making Rin lose its grip on the blade. Rin shielded his face, shutting his eyes, when the spirit went to swing at him with its weapon, but the hit never came. Instead, silence settled upon them. Rin slowly opened his eyes again, lowering his arm and staring at the being. It had been stopped in its tracks, standing still like a statue hewn of stone, its eyes now standing lifeless, as the red faded. The being then started to disappear entirely, slowly retreating into nothingness, returning to a pile of ash on the ground. What stayed behind was a pile of cloth, a set of decorative samurai armour, and both of their katana's, all settled in a small cloud of dust. To make sure that it was over, Rin pulled out a small flask, sanctified water. In the heat of the battle, he never got to properly make use of it, but at least it would come in handy now. He unscrewed the bottle's cap, before pouring some of the fluid onto the cloth. No response, exactly the way that it should be. Rin quietly nudged the pile with his feet, raising an eyebrow as his foot hit something solid. He knelt down and dug through the fabric before finding that Oni mask again, fully intact this time.

The hunter sighed a bit under his breath, before getting back onto his feet, after picking up the mask and his katana. He sheathed the blade on his back again, looking at the Oni mask one last time. *That could have been me.* He thought to himself. This battle had done a number on his mind, making him realise the dangers of his enraged tendencies when it came to such heated battles. It hit him hard because he had never thought of it that way. He was already closer to the hellish realm. Not quite hell bound, but it could have been much closer if he had never encountered this spirit. He now understood that although rage could be a useful tool, he had to keep it contained. There was no room for him to challenge the higher powers into revisioning who he was as a person, and he would like to keep it that way. Soon enough, he made it outside again, looking towards the mountain close to the village. The fog that had once settled over the town had been lifted once more, and the sun was coming up. It started to brighten up the sky and cast its golden glow over the rooftops. It was perhaps more ruined than it had been upon his arrival, but at least he had been able of ridding it from this evil. He kept the mask on him, as a reminder of what could be if he did not control himself. The fire kept him going, but he would have to learn how to tame it if he wanted to keep using it. This fight had opened his eyes to such truths, and he would not let them be closed so easily. He stepped onto the road again, starting to walk back towards the hiking trail that had brought him to the settlement. It was time to revisit civilisation. There was nothing left for him there. It was a ghost town now, and generations to come would learn the story of the Oni of Ura.

Rin knew the truth, but perhaps it was better to let the true nature of the spirit be lost to time. He knew, for a fact, that if he let the word come out that he had dealt with an Obake, soon more people would come to claim the armour. That gear would have to remain with the entity's final resting place, where the rage died with it. Such items could easily be abused to summon another Obake, or worse. It would remain his little secret that The Oni of Ura was not much of an Oni. It made for a good tale, that was at least something. He informed his messenger that the deed had been done, once he returned to the edges of Tokyo. Once his payment was granted, it was time for Rin to be on his way once more. And though he left Japan behind, his past had gotten new meaning, and another chapter had just been added to that story.

Rin watched as the clouds grew closer and closer, before sitting back and closing his eyes, allowing himself to be pressed into his seat. He had come to Ura with questions, most of which had now been answered, though new ones had also revealed themselves. How close had he been to reaching such a state? Had it been a case of luck, misfortune, or fate that had led him there? He did not know, but that was enough for him, for now. He left Asia behind, and returned to the west, where his new life was staged. It would be good to return to a place that he could now happily call home. He had built a new existence there, and though it was important to learn from the past, he was ready to accept it, and move on. Perhaps he would forever be taunted by his unusual bloodline, but that was a problem that would eventually be his to face, yet it could wait. His eyes opened once more, and his gaze lowered itself to the mask in his hands. Three eyes, vibrantly red with a red face, powerful, angered, hateful. He was glad that he had gotten to avoid such a fate, at least for now. And in a way, that spirit lingered inside him, in his memory, as it slowly nagged away at his subconscious. He remembered the way it pounced on him when it first appeared, the way it always turned up in exactly the right place. He remembered his reflection, and the terror of realisation. It was all over now. That place lied in ruin, and he sincerely hoped that nobody would ever go looking for it again. He was not foolish or naïve, though. He knew that, eventually, someone would go and pay it a visit. Then again, the evil had been cleansed. Maybe a more harmless Yokai would take its place and keep overconfident teens out in the future.

He wondered, had there been a way for him to get there earlier? Could he have prevented the deaths of those people? The truth was that, perhaps, he could have, yet it was not his fault that they had met their demise too soon. It was to blame on whoever summoned that spirit to begin with. Such entities did not just appear out of thin air, assaulting some innocent backwater village that had nothing to do with anything, no. It troubled him. Someone was out there bringing vengeful Yokai into the realm. That was certainly not a fight that he was looking forward to. Such sorcerers were often a bit too well-prepared for when a demon hunter such as himself came busting down their door. Then again, he might just have to. Once more, a dilemma for another day. Now, he would rest, and mentally prepare himself for the rest of his journey homebound. He had almost drifted asleep entirely, when he felt a silent shift in the atmosphere, some strange draft. He opened his eyes again to look at the seat next to him. The man that had previously occupied the seat had disappeared, leaving only a note. Rin frowned as he grabbed the piece of paper, carefully unfolding it before reading the text it contained, reading it in his head. "Had a long night? You are on the right track. Keep your eyes on the road, young one, you are not done just yet." What was that supposed to mean? That was the question he asked himself. The simple truth? He had no answer. Perhaps someday, he would know.