

The Boy in the Rubble

A scenario for Golden Sky Stories

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For three players and one GM • Running time: 3–4 hours

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Unit 731 was a real thing that happened during the Second World War. However, Kitani Hospital, Kamoku/Jiro, and the events portrayed in this scenario are completely fictional.

Golden Sky Stories is available for purchase from Starline Publishing:
<http://starlinepublishing.com/our-games/golden-sky-stories/>

The Boy in the Rubble

GM Introduction

The Boy in the Rubble is a somewhat more serious scenario for *Golden Sky Stories*. It deals with loss, wartime atrocities, and other stuff that might seem a little heavy-handed for a game system that's about cute-looking mythic animal spirits where agency is measured in wonder and feelings, but it's overall still about **someone has a problem**, and giving the players the tools required to solve that problem.

I feel like this game works best if you can have a quiet, private, intimate setting. I've purposely limited the number of players to keep the game small and self-contained. It may not be the best game to play if you have a rowdy group of seven people playing *Kobolds Ate My Baby!* one table over, is what I'm saying.

Dealing with serious subjects

How should you deal with serious subjects in *Golden Sky Stories*? I'm not an expert, but here's some things that work for me, and could work for you:

- **Lead into, and out of, the darkness slowly.** Resist the temptation to play the seriousness and sadness for shock value. Let the players stumble into it bit-by-bit. Let them grow comfortable in their characters before the darkness takes hold. Similarly, let them pull out of it slowly at the end. Make sure you have plenty of play time—I'd recommend making sure you have the full four hours, even if you think it'll run quick.
- **Warn people at the start.** Tell them, "This *Golden Sky Stories* scenario deals with serious situations. If you're looking for just light-hearted happy play, it may not be for you." I recommend you do this: some people will be shocked when they learn about the content of the scenario, and not in a good way.
- **Continue to give out Dreams**, even when things get dark. I've found that as the situation gets more serious, the players stop being so concerned with Dreams, and forget to keep giving them out. Give those dreams out: when people do something kind, something nice, something great. Remind the players that Dreams exist, and that they can support other players with them.
- **Cool down at the end.** The final scene of the scenario is designed to pull people back into the whimsical, joyous feel of *Golden Sky Stories*. Do not skip this scene! Even with this scene, the players may need some time to come out of the game. If people are experiencing "bleed" (that is, starting to feel what their characters feel), this time can let them come back to themselves, to slowly disengage with the game. In your cool-down time, you might have a bit of silence, or you might ask what the Henge plan to do next. Following this, you could then ask the players how they found the scenario. Give everyone time and space to talk.

Scene moves

The way I've written the scenes in this scenario may look a little strange if you're coming here straight from the *Golden Sky Stories* rulebook. Each scene is still scripted to lead toward the next scene, but each scene also has a number of **moves**. If the scene starts to drag, this is your opportunity to introduce one of these moves to keep the game flowing. For example, **Scene 3: The Forest** contains the move, "Make the PCs feel small and insignificant." As they wander

through the forest, you decide to introduce this move, by having the weather show them how powerless they are:

You're scaling the bank when it starts raining, big fat drops that come down plop onto the leaves above you or onto the dirt. The wind starts whistling through the trees and the rain begins driving in at an angle now, through the trees and straight into you and the children. You keep going, but a minute later you look back and the kids are all huddled together underneath an giant oak. Even it is swaying in the wind.

While I have suggested the path of the story in the main text, you should not consider this narrative to be gospel. If you want, you should introduce new elements, using the moves to determine what happens. If the players are particularly interested in a particular facet of the game, feel free to stop and explore it more than you planned to.

I have also suggested difficulties for checks in the main text. Of course, if the players think up a novel or clever way to approach the problem from another angle, you should definitely change the type of the check (e.g. from Adult to Henge) or even decrease the difficulty if the solution is particularly clever! Also, chuck them a Dream, because they deserve it. The goal of these mechanics is to give you a break as GM, not to make the game a series of checks and balances.

Now, onto the good stuff.

History

Unit 731 was a subsection of the Japanese Imperial Army's Epidemic Prevention and Water Purification Department: however, its goals were much more sinister than its name suggests. The soldiers of Unit 731 were actually part of a covert biological and chemical warfare research and development unit, which performed lethal human experimentation during the Second World War. While the majority of Unit 731's activities took place either at their hospital in Tokyo or in mainland China, a small division of the unit was stationed in a refurbished sanitarium in the Nagano prefecture of Japan. Here, at Kitani Hospital, political prisoners and POWs were injected with lethal diseases in the guise of vaccinations, and observed to see how they responded. Following Japan's defeat at the end of the Second World War, the facility was demolished, what little paperwork on the facility burned, and all records erased.

Nurses and doctors were still required to deal with unclassified patients, and the Hospital itself paid well. One of these nurses was a young single mother named **Kaneko Rin** and her son **Jiro**. Like the majority of the hospital staff, they lived in one of a number of small houses surrounding the hospital proper. While Rin worked in the hospital, caring for the genuinely sick who were being treated there, her son Jiro either studied, amused himself at home, or played in the streets of the makeshift village. A shy boy, he didn't make any friends.

Cholera was one of the diseases studied in the classified section of Kitani Hospital. Cholera is spread by contaminated drinking water, and this is how Unit 731 infected its patients. At one point a medical officer accidentally sent some of the contaminated water to the nurses' wing, and several of them ended up contracting the disease. Rin was one of these nurses. Over the next week or so she started displaying symptoms, and was taken away by guards to be observed with the other victims. Jiro was distraught and caused enough of a fuss that the guards ended up throwing him into one of the basements rather than deal with him.

Over the next two weeks, one of the Privates, a young man called **Genda Kosuke**, developed an attachment to the kid, but was unable to convince his commanding officer to let Jiro go (without supervision, the child was considered a security threat by an already-paranoid management). When Japan surrendered, orders came to level the Hospital and destroy all evidence (including any patients who had been part of the programmes). Private Genda's Sergeant ordered him to shoot the kid, but the Private refused. The two argued until the Sergeant finally dealt with the

problem by shooting Genda and throwing him down into the basement along with Jiro. The child, understandably frightened, took shelter behind one of the containment tanks that occupied the basement. When the explosive charges went off, levelling the building, the tank jumped its supports and crushed the poor child.

That's not the end of the story, though. Without closure, still unsure what had happened to his mother, the spirit of Jiro remained around the Hospital, even when the spirits of the rest of the dead had left. Just over the hill is the small village of Shinizumi, and from time to time, people spot Jiro's spirit wandering the edges of the forest. As in life, Jiro's spirit is shy, and it's only recently that a couple of children from the village have tempted him out from the edges of the forest...

The Henge

This scenario is designed for three characters, and at the end of this document you will find character sheets for the three Henge. If one of your players particularly wants to play a specific Henge, you could always let them do so: I recommend swapping out the Dog-henge first, followed by the Bird-henge and finally the Tanuki-henge if all three of your players really want to play different henge.

The three Henge included in the back are:

- *Maru*, a Tanuki-henge
- *Ami*, a Bird-henge
- *Koro*, a Dog-henge

The village: Shinizumi

The village of **Shinizumi** is cut off from the rest of society, situated as it is in the mountainous regions of **Nagano**, central Japan. Maybe half the houses have electricity, and only a few people have radios or TVs. The adults who live here are either rice farmers, hippies, early retirees, or here on extended holiday for the clear mountain air. The elderly here are active, rural, and old-fashioned. The children spend their time either helping their parents, at the local school, playing outside, or trying to convince Mr Yamada in the general store to change the channel on his TV so they can watch cartoons.

Shinizumi has a rail line passing through it, although the passenger train will run straight through without stopping more often than not. The village itself is surrounded by rice paddies and fields to the south and east, foothills to the west, and a thick forest (referred to as **Kitani Forest**, or just "The Forest") to the north. A truck comes through once every fortnight or so with various amenities: Mr Yamada, the proprietor of the general store and mayor of the village, is generally the one buying up on supplies to resell to the village.

This scenario takes place in November of 1978. Japan is flourishing, but while the big cities are booming, the countryside is still relatively undisturbed. After a long, mild autumn, winter has finally started to take hold. It won't snow in the cities for another month or so, but up here the mornings are crisp and there's often a covering of frost on the grass.

The children

Takahashi Daiichi (14, male) and his younger sister **Reika** (10) are both good friends of the Henge. Their parents, **Akio** and **Yuko** are businesspeople from Nagano. They moved to Shinizumi when Reika was born, so that their children could grow up in the country. Yuko runs the town's bakery, while Akio helps out at the school.

When they're not helping out at the bakery, the two kids are either studying at school (Reika more diligently than Daiichi), hanging out outside Mr Yamada's store with the other kids, or having adventures with the Henge. While Akio and Yuko don't believe in such things, the two children are quite happy to have adventures with shape-changing animal spirits. Even if Reika doesn't quite get why she can't tell her parents about them, Daiichi is willing to explain at length why this would be a bad idea (and, as necessary, guide the conversation onto another topic when required).

Takahashi Daiichi: Henge-0, Animal-2, Adult-1, Child-2

Takahashi Reika: Henge-1, Animal-1, Adult-2, Child-1

Takahashi Akio and Takahashi Yuko: Henge-0, Animal-1, Adult-3, Child-0

A few nights ago, Reika was looking out the window of their house when she saw the ghostly spirit of Kaneko Jiro walking along the edge of the village. She crept outside and ran to see him, but he'd gone by the time she got there. Last night, she saw him again: this time, he stayed longer, but vanished into thin air when she got close. She called the boy "Kamoku" ("shy"), and has been trying to convince Daiichi all day that she did actually see him. Daiichi is a bit put out—why wouldn't a spirit boy reveal himself to his sister, rather than him?—and is acting contrary as a result.

Visions

Throughout the course of this scenario, the Henge will be confronted with visions taken from Kamoku's memories. When the visions start, the Henge won't really be able to interact with the visions. As the visions progress, they'll be able to interact somewhat, asking questions of people to gain more information. Around the last vision, they'll finally be able to act on the visions.

It is suggested that the first vision occur at the end of Scene 3, the second somewhere in Scene 4, and the third and fourth visions in Scene 5. Depending on the tone of the game (and what the Henge are doing), you may want to re-order them. The visions can be found as outlined here - look for the shaded boxes.

Scenes

The following scenes set the course of play. They're only recommendations: if one scene seems to be going on too long, feel free to split it in two as required. The players may not necessarily go between scenes in the order indicated. As long as they head in the right direction, everything should progress fine.

Scene 1: Introductions

Scene moves:

- Develop relationships between the parents, the children, the Henge
- Ask the Henge questions about their history
- Show the Takahashi's life
- Introduce Kamoku

The story opens at Friday night dinner. The Takahashis know that the Henge are friends of Reika and Daiichi (although for some reason they never wonder where the Henge live, or who their parents are...), and have invited them over. Akio is an excellent cook, and Yuko's dinner rolls are superb. The Henge arrive slightly before dinner, which allows them to help out with things. What might the Takahashis need help with? Perhaps:

- Someone needs to prepare vegetables for the soup

- Yuko would like help transferring the risen bread to the oven
- The table needs to be cleared off and set
- Someone needs to pound rice for the mochi

Akio and Yuko always stories about the Henge: the kids try to keep the supernatural out of their stories, but they still use them as the reason why some nights they've been out late, or why they come back from school covered in dirt and leaves. Both parents assume that the occasional slips Daiichi and Reika make (like the whole conversation where Koro was a bird) are just kids being kids. Exactly how well the family knows the Henge is up to the table to work out. Much of the dinner conversation involves the parents asking the Henge how their weeks have been.

This is a good job for you, as GM, to start asking the players questions about their characters, especially how they relate to the Takahashis. By setting up some relationships now you'll hopefully encourage people to play character as the game progresses. Here's some things you might ask:

- "Do you usually help with dinner like this, or is tonight special?"
- "Why does Reika trust you?"
- "Why is Daiichi your favourite of the two?"
- "What did Reika do for you one time that means you owe her a favour?"
- "What's the craziest thing you and Daiichi have ever done together?"

Daiichi and Reika are occupied in quiet argument. Occasionally Akio or Yuko will ask them a question and they'll button up, but as soon as their parents aren't paying attention they'll be back at it. The Henge may inquire about it, but all they'll get out is that both kids are angry at each other.

Dinner finishes, and Akio and Yuko clear the plates away. Once the parents are out of the room, the Henge have better luck getting information from the children: Reika insists that she's seen a boy wandering around the village at night, who vanishes into the darkness when she tries to run out and say hello; Daiichi says she's making it all up for attention. This starts a round of name-calling, until Akio comes out of the kitchen and tells them to stop arguing like little children.

Dessert, and neither child is talking to each other. Akio and Yuko try to make conversation with them, but their both sullen. As Yuko clears everything off into the kitchen, Akio tells them both, very quietly, that they're being very rude, she didn't bring them up like this, and what's gotten into them?

After dinner, Yuko takes the Henge aside and asks if they'd take the two kids camping tomorrow night. When the kids were little, the family went camping all the time, and they loved it. Akio and Yuko have so many things to do over the weekend, they can't take Daiichi and Reika camping as well - but the Henge are responsible and the family still has all the camping equipment, so could they possibly take them instead? The Henge, of course, don't have anything big planned for the weekend.

Once he's extracted a promise to help from the Henge, Yuko tells the kids the good news. They'll head out to the forest tomorrow afternoon, spend the night on the outskirts in the big tent, and then head back on the Sunday.

The children arrange a meeting place with the Henge, and say they'll meet tomorrow after lunch. The rest of the evening proceeds normally, although neither of the children bring up Kamoku's name.

Scene 2: The meeting

Scene moves:

- Hint at the supernatural surrounding the village
- Allow the Henge to reveal their magical natures
- Reveal the children's reactions to the supernatural
- Take time to describe the beauty of the land

The children and the Henge meet up just outside their house. When the Henge arrive, they find the parents helping Reika and Daiichi with their packs (proper rucksacks!), tent (a proper tent!) and sleeping bags (proper sleeping bags!). Akio gives them a waterproof torch with a good strong beam, "In case you get trapped in a ravine and need to signal the village," she says, smiling.

Yuko takes the most adult-acting of the Henge aside and asks him to look after the children. "I know out here isn't anything like back in the city, but I still worry for them."

They head out right after lunch, away from the village. Kitani Forest is in the distance: close enough that you could reach out and touch it on a clear day; far enough away that there's plenty of space to walk and make camp before you hit the outskirts proper. It takes them maybe half an hour of solid walking to get to the edge of the forest. By this stage the sun is still up, giving them plenty of time to pitch the tent, get snacks, and generally good around. By about five o'clock the sun goes down behind the mountains, and someone has to get out the torch.

I should point out now that the torch will probably not run out of batteries during the adventure. Yuko is the sort of person who'd check that the torch has new batteries, and this isn't the sort of game where your torch might fail, even though sometimes it might feel like it is...

Once they're settled into their tent (it's a four-person tent, but the kids and the Henge can fit in as long as they squeeze in), they start waiting. You can easily control the pace of the game here: if the first two scenes flew by, now might be the chance to breathe for a bit, and let individual characters have time to act and react.

This is also a chance for the children to talk to the Henge, and reinforce their relationships. If the Henge ask about the lost child, Reika will tell them what she knows: that he hangs out around the forest, they've only seen him at night, and he's very shy. Reika calls him "Kamoku", which means "shy".

Eventually, everyone will settle down to sleep. Sometime just past midnight, however, the forest starts to glow faintly. Anyone who can't sleep will probably notice this first - otherwise, the first they know is when Reika shakes someone awake to show them. It's a faint blue glow, hardly noticeable unless you're up close - like the Henge are. Every leaf and plant is gently outlines.

This is when Kamoku appears, standing against the backdrop of the forest. It's a gibbous moon and a relatively cloudless night, bright enough to see the figure against the trees. While no one moves, he stands there watching them. If one of the Henge starts forward, Reika holds them back and says that if you approach him he runs away; if the Henge insist, however, the children will let them approach. Henge may use their innate magical knowledge to determine what Kamoku is:

Divine Kamoku's Nature: Henge 3

Any Henge who uses their abilities will quickly determine that Kamoku is no ordinary boy: he glows faintly when a cloud passes in front of the moon, for example, and if they get close they will see the trees faintly visible through his form. Kamoku will watch people who approach, and

may acknowledge them (by waving back if they wave to him, for example), but is reserved and will not speak to anyone. If they get too close, he'll look frightened and run back into the forest. If someone tries to grab him, they'll meet flesh, but the boy will panic, let out a yell, and vanish, reappearing some distance away inside the forest. As Kamoku enters the forest the glow of his body illuminates the surrounding vegetation.

It's very possible that the Henge will try to chase or contact Kamoku. When it feels appropriate, this can trigger the first vision:

The First Vision

An alleyway between buildings on the outskirts of a building. The place looks high-security: big walls, check-points, etc. A number of chimneys poke up beyond the wall, like it's a factory or something.

A young boy is playing with a spinning-top in the dirt alleyway, alone. It's Kamoku - although he looks a lot more alive and real here.

A woman approaches, calling out, "Jiro! Jiro!" She's thin and tired-looking, with bags under her eyes. She's wearing a nurse's uniform. She takes him by the hand and scolds him for playing close to the wall. If the henge make themselves known, she apologises and says it's really time for him to be getting home. She drags him out of the alleyway, and he drops the top.

If the Henge were chasing Kamoku into the forest, this vision gives him a chance to escape. Daiichi, excited by the Henge's proactive attitude, will suggest that they venture into the forest to find out where the boy lives. Reika wants to find him too, to work out why he looks so sad.

Responsible Henge will send the children back to their tent to sleep out the night. The children will probably try to follow them, regardless, because there's no way they're missing out on an adventure.

A Henge using their powers can probably track Kamoku by the trail of his spiritual energy into the forest. Indeed, if the Henge want to find out more about the poor boy, they'll have to enter the forest.

Scene 3: The Forest

Scene moves:

- Make the PCs feel small and insignificant
- Make the forest sinister
- Demonstrate the children's vulnerability
- Hint at the bigger picture

The forest is dark, especially when only lit by the moon. Reika uses her torch to lead the children, and the Henge will probably also help guide them. Daiichi balks at not being in the lead, but Reika doesn't let him have the torch. The Henge can keep track of progress, either by making a map and using a compass (Reika has one in his pack, I think) or by their innate animal natures:

Track their progress through the forest: Adult 3 | Animal 4

Kamoku makes a racket as he flees, but he's faster than the children. The Henge could probably keep up with him through the wilderness:

Keep up with Kamoku: Animal 4

If a Henge catches up with Kamoku, he tries to fight them off. He doesn't recognise them as friendly, no matter how hard they try: instead he yells, "You're not my mother! Where's my mother?!", flailing about. A particularly determined Henge could even try connecting with him spiritually, which would draw them into a vision.

Make a spiritual connection with Kamoku: Henge 4

At some point the Henge must either keep up with Kamoku and leave the children to wander around the forest on their own (*really?*) or let Kamoku escape. Soon, the children start regretting their decision to plunge into the forest. Cloud covers the moon, Reika starts shivering, and even Daiichi's facade is starting to slip a little. Worse: if they try to back-track, the Henge soon find themselves walking through unfamiliar forest.

The Henge may come up with a plan that lets them keep track of Kamoku *and* stay with the children: good work them! Kamoku is making a zig-zag route towards the ridge, and while it's hard going following him, it's still doable.

The Henge may also try to lure Kamoku back to them. Calling him will be difficult, but not impossible. The Henge may catch a vision as a result of this. When the vision ends, Kamoku is gone (and they're still trapped in the forest).

The Henge quickly work out that they're trapped in the forest: whichever way they turn, it keeps them contained. The compass stops working, occasionally just spinning in place and sometimes changing by 45° over the course of ten paces. Any Henge who opens themselves up and uses their Henge powers can investigate the nature of the anomaly: that the forest is magically containing them, and drawing them to a point over the ridge of the hill.

Determine the cause of the anomaly: Henge 3

Alternatively, someone who examines the actions of the compass can work out it's always pointing up to the ridge of the hill:

Work out the compass' malfunction: Adult 4

Even if they don't determine this, the forest slowly pulls the Henge (and the children) up the slope. Reika starts crying, saying this is terrible and she doesn't know why she came. Daiichi yells at her, tells her to grow up. Depending on the mood of the group, you can make this trip as long and arduous as is required. Creatures howl at the moon, someone gets their coat caught in a bush, the Henge are confronted by a slope too steep for the children to climb. The Henge can make the journey a lot easier by comforting the children and helping them out:

Comfort the children: Child 4

Find an easy path up the hill: Adult 3 | Animal 3

An easy path may especially be handy if someone twists an ankle.

This is the point at which people tend to stop giving out dreams. As the GM, it's your job to make sure this keeps happening! Be liberal with your dreams, remind the players that they're still there to be given out.

As they venture up the hill, whoever is in the lead stumbles into a second vision.

The second vision

This vision takes place inside a small house – a one-room affair, with two pallets and a tiny bench for preparing meals. Jiro/Kamoku is sitting in the corner of the room, writing in a book.

The door opens and the nurse from the previous vision comes in. She still looks tired. She greets Jiro and asks how his day was. She's about to say something else when she

breaks out into a fit of coughing. Jiro rushes over to help her, asking what's wrong. She says she'll be fine, that she's just tired, and needs a lie-down. She goes to the bed, says she'll take a nap before dinner, and quickly falls asleep. Jiro continues practising writing.

If a henge pushes into the vision, Jiro will react like they're supposed to be there, answering questions about his mother ("She works at the hospital", "They bring sick people there to get better", "They don't let me in there. Mother says she doesn't want me getting sick too.").

At this point, the scene is in a state of stasis. Jiro will continue writing, and his mother will continue sleeping, until the Henge leave the house.

Near the top of the ridge, someone spots a figure standing, silhouetted against the light of the sky. When they reach the top of the ridge the figure is gone, but the clouds clear and they can see right down into the next valley. The valley is covered with small bushes and saplings, but no old trees. Scattered amongst these bushes are the ruins of a large complex. A fence runs about ten metres beyond the ridge, and a few hundred metres to their right is a gate. There's an old sign in the grass next to the gate, half-rusted which states:

Unit 731 Fiel
Japanese Imp
No unauthorised ac

The Henge have found the hospital.

Scene 4: The hospital

Scene moves:

- Tell the story of the hospital
- Instil a feeling of sadness

Kitani Hospital is made up of two main sections: the hospital proper, and a number of assorted buildings that lie outside. The hospital is surrounded by the remains of a stone wall, while the buildings spread out from the hospital organically.

There's a few things of note about the outside buildings: first, that they're all about the right size for a one-room living quarters; second, that they're almost identical; and third, that they were torn down, not just left to the elements.

The wall surrounding the hospital proper still stands, although it has been torn down in several places and it's overgrown with plants and climbers. It's easy enough even for the kids to climb through into the hospital proper.

The children are unnerved by the hospital, and won't enter unless persuaded. Reika is crying by this point, Inoue is on the edge of it, and even Daiichi is frayed. If the Henge leave them, they'll sit by the edge of the ruins with the torch and huddle together.

Kamoku appears outside one of the half-collapsed houses outside the hospital. When approached, he disappears around a corner. Anyone following him is sucked into the third vision.

The Third Vision

The first the Henge notice is a scream from the ruins - if they follow it, they find Jiro being held back by a Japanese guard wearing a face mask. Two others are carrying a

stretcher with a cloth over it - these guards also wear face-masks. Jiro is yelling at them to give his mother back.

If the Henge interpose themselves, the guards will be non-communicative, saying they're only following orders or if threatened telling the Henge to stand aside (and then walking straight through them anyway). They take the mother to a door in one of the wards, where another guard is on duty. They tell the guard that she's taken sick, probably from exposure to "Maruta" (logs) in the southern wing. The guard asks if she's still alive ("She is") and then says to take her to one of the observation rooms. If the henge follow the stretcher any further, they find themselves stumbling into the ruins of the modern day - the only piece of the building still standing is the door they just went through.

This vision leads the Henge inside the hospital proper, to one of the wings. The thing is rubble and concrete - it looks like it used to be several storeys high before it was ruined. Henge can inspect it to see what caused it to fall down:

Inspect the rubble: Adult 4

A suitably responsible adult will find remnants of iron beams that look like they've been melted: this place either collapsed in a fire or an explosion, not just due to time.

As the Henge explore the rubble, they hear a sobbing coming from another wing. It's coming from under a mess of rubble.

Shift the rubble: Animal 6

Under the rubble is a trap-door, rusted shut with time. It takes a good deal of pulling but eventually it comes free.

The final vision

Down here the henge find large aluminium drums, all sealed up, with big valves on the side. They're all intact, although several have fallen off their supports (but are still sealed). Kamoku/Jiro is sitting in the corner.

Unlike before, the Henge do not need to force themselves into this scene. Jiro will talk with them if they ask him questions. He tells them that after they took his mother, he yelled and screamed until one of the guards took him and threw him down here. It was dark and cold and a guard would come down twice a day to give him food and water. If he misbehaved, the guard said, he'd open one of the valves on the tank and kill Jiro the way his mother died. (Of course, Jiro knew that his mother wasn't dead because she'd come to say goodbye before she died, right?).

Some time later, there was a lot of noise above-ground. The guard came in, told Jiro they were leaving. Someone was coming and they needed to get rid of the Hospital. Then there was someone else at the hatch, saying they were leaving now. The guard and someone else had an argument - the guard wanted to take Jiro somewhere? And then there was a gunshot and the hatch closed and then people, and a rumble and the ground shook and the tanks jumped off their foundations, and now he's here, waiting. And could he go see his mother, please?

(The body of a guard lies to one side of the stairs, half-covered in rubble and debris. The body of a small child lies crushed under one of the tanks.)

Jiro won't disappear from this vision: in some way he's still here. He can't move unless someone picks up his body and carries him. He's jumpy around the Henge, and noticeably calmer around the children. Reika gives him a hug, and Daiichi holds his hand as they emerge from the cellar.

Jiro says he needs to go find his mother. He leads them to the west, away from the building and the village, across the wall and right up to the edge of the forest.

At the edge of the forest is a small hill, only a few metres high. Jiro reaches the top of the hill and looks around. "She's not here!" he cries, falling to his knees.

Unknown to him, they're standing on a mass grave of the victims from Kitani Hospital. If they start digging, they will quickly find the remains of a hand sticking out of the ground. It's the hand of Jiro's mother. Jiro throws himself on her body as they dig it out, crying profusely.

The children will be shocked - they have, after all, just uncovered a body. Jiro will be distraught. It's up to the Henge to determine what to do here, how to cheer Jiro up. It's traditional to cremate the dead, so a Henge may think of this. A cremation - the ceremony, building a pyre, and so on - will give Jiro something to do, and will calm him (and the other children) down.

Spend some time here. This is the last act of the scenario. Describe the cold, pre-dawn air, the smells of the forest, and so on.

Whatever they do cheer him up, they need to set his body to rest so his spirit can be let go. Once he's free, he hugs the Henge and the children, before heading down the valley. As he leaves the hospital, his body steadily gets fainter and fainter, until he disappears.

The return journey is uneventful. The trip down from the ridge is easy enough, and the steep forbidding hillside of last night seems a lot easier now. The group finds their way out of the forest easily, like it no longer wants to hold onto the children and the Henge.

Their camping supplies are where they left them, just outside the forest. As they reach the camp, the sun just starts to crest the horizon. As they head into town, sounds of normality reassert themselves: dogs barking, early risers on their way to the fields, the sound of a car starting up. The children are almost asleep on their feet as they come into the village.

Scene 6: Epilogue

Scene moves:

- Provide a feeling of optimism and quiet joy
- Gradually re-introduce elements of the mundane

By this stage, the players are probably feeling a bit raw - sad, perhaps. Give them a little bit of time to decompress, before leading into the epilogue.

The epilogue takes place a couple of weeks later. Both kids have understandably been affected by their adventure. Daiichi has recovered well enough (although those who have high connections to him may notice that he has his quiet moments), but Reika is still a lot more reserved than normal. Still, they aren't fighting any more.

The Epilogue scene starts when Daiichi and Reika seek out the Henge. Ask what the Henge might be doing on a Wednesday afternoon, and where they might be. Daiichi is the first to find them, running down the road at breakneck speed. Reika follows behind, not bothering to try to keep up.

Both of them have news for the Henge: a new boy is arriving in town. He and his mother have come from Nagano to live in Shinizumi, and they're going to greet them at the train station. The train is due in ten minutes, and if they hurry they (and the Henge) can get there just as the train's pulling in.

The Boy in the Rubble

When the train arrives, there are a few people getting on and off: people who work in Nagano, people who went shopping for the day, and even a couple of tourists who're spending the weekend at the bed-and-breakfast just outside town proper.

There's also a mother and her child: it's Jiro and Rin! Or, it's *not quite* Jiro and Rin, but they look very similar. The child introduces himself as Takabe Kei, and his mother as Sanae. Kei is eager to meet the kids and the Henge: he starts telling them all about their trip. Sanae looks tired: it's been a long journey and she's ready to sit down for a bit. They're renting a little house from Mr Yamada while they're here, but they have no idea how to get there.

The Henge can help guide them to the house. Neither of the Takabes have any knowledge of Jiro and Rin, or the events at the hospital, but there's a few hints that they're somehow connected: Sanae isn't in the best of health, with a constant cough, and Kei's favourite toy is a spinning top.

When the Henge leave the Takabes at their house, Kei waves goodbye. Daiichi and Reika say they'll be by tomorrow morning on the way to school, to pick him up. Kei yells back that he's sure they're going to become fast friends.

Cooling down

Congratulations! You've completed *The Boy in the Rubble*. Your players may well be a bit emotionally exhausted from the ordeal, so it's recommended that you take a little time to debrief. Thank them for playing. Ask them how they're feeling, if they have any comments on the game. Ask them what they think happens next - how do Takabe and the Takahashis get along? What do they do after school the next day?

As people talk, you can use this opportunity to let them slowly pull back from the game. Ask them how they enjoyed the game. What scenes stick by them? Do they feel like the story is complete? Is there anything they want to get out of their system at this point?

The length of your cool-down period may vary depending on your players. You may only need ten minutes for cool-down, or you may want to spend half an hour talking amongst yourselves.