



In Darkness, Death by Dorothy & Thomas Hoobler

Subjects: Samurai; Ninja; Mysteries

Award: Edgar Allan Poe Winner

Book Lists: Gifted, Grade 6, Middle School, Reluctant Readers

Props: Kimono, gong, Japanese music



(Wear kimono and hit gong before starting. Play Japanese music) On a dark night long, long ago, in 18th Century Japan, a shadow climbed onto the windowsill of the top floor of Lord Inaba's castle. The shadow stopped, looked back at the widening pool of blood as it flowed across the floor, then stepped out the window and disappeared into the night. *(Stop music)*

Later that day, 14-year-old Seikei (Seh-tee, Setee) wrinkled his nose as the coppery odor of death filled the room. Lord Inaba had been killed. The Lord had gone to sleep thinking he was well protected. After all, he was surrounded by guards throughout his castle. But for some reason, not one of his guards had stopped the assassin. In fact, no one had even seen the assassin.

Seikei's foster father, Judge Ooka (oh-oh-ka) had been asked by the Shogun of Japan to investigate the Lord's murder and find the assassin. Judge Ooka, a samurai, is a warrior highly trained in the martial arts and honor bound to protect and serve. Early that morning, Judge Ooka had awakened Seikei and the two rode horseback to Lord Inaba's castle.

Walking up the stairs to the top floor of the castle, Seikei and the Judge were greeted by Lord Inaba's son, "Are you the judge who is supposed to find the criminal who did this? You've taken your time getting here." The judge bowed as if he hadn't noticed the man's rudeness. He introduced himself and offered his condolences for the loss of his father. The young man bowed in return

and the three began to climb the stairs to the room where the Lord had been killed. As they walked, the judge questioned the son as to why the guards had not seen the assassin, but he had no answers. The judge turned to Seikei and asked if he had any answers. Seikei remembered that the judge had once told him that when we do not know the answer, we must consider all possibilities, no matter how unlikely. An answer came to him. "Well," Seikei said, "he could have been invisible." The Lord's son snorted with contempt. But the judge merely smiled and said, "He could have been invisible, if he were a ninja."

Seikei knew that ninjas were spies and assassins. That they could come and go wherever they wished because they had magic powers and were capable of disappearing into thin air and turning into animals. When Seikei was a child his mother threatened him with stories of ninja who came in the night to capture naughty children while they slept and punish them in ways too horrible to be described.

Seikei must help Judge Ooka find the murderer, a ninja. But how is it possible to find an invisible man? Learn the secrets of the ninja for yourself. Read *(Hold up book) In Darkness, Death* by Dorothy & Thomas Hoobler.

(This is a sequel but it is also a stand alone novel, meaning you can read it without having read the previous books.)

