

OA7 - The Assassins Blade

Overview

The PCs have returned to the Nezumi network where the war has come to a stalemate. One night when they drink at the "Eternal Dragon Inn", a new establishment on the surface that caters to humans, they come across an old enemy and fighting breaks out. During the tumult, the son of a powerful mercenary leader is killed by an unknown assassin and the PCs are blamed for his death. Only if they find the true murder the mercenary captain will let them go.

You can use different motives for the murder, but when used within the context of this campaign, the reason is that the forces of the dark spirit want to bring disorder into the region which would open a direct path of attack from the lands of the Red Daimyo onto the Northern Empire.

Initial Set-up

For one reason or the other, the PCs decide to spend a night at the Eternal Dragon Inn. If they seem reluctant to go there, have some potential employer invite them there for a "business dinner". When the PCs arrive, the inn keeper is busy throwing out a couple of drunken brawlers. Inside the tab room the following company is present (see handout 1 which you should give to the PCs *after* this scene and then according to their *spot* rolls):

- **Wa and his cronies:** A skinny young boy (Wa, aristocrat 2) in silken robes stands on the table and tells a tall tale to his followers, which look like robbers or mercenaries. His tale evolves around his heroic efforts



to free a prince from an evil spirit. He and his friends are definitely drunk but strangely unmolested by the other patrons who seem to be really annoyed by the display. Wa is the son of the Song He, master of the 66 Crossbows, a mercenary outfit.

- **The Ten-Tailed Cat:** This female cat *hengeyokai* has striking green eyes, long black hair, and literally radiates grace. She is dressed lightly, holds a musical string instrument and has the air of a prostitute (expert 2). She reacts *very* friendly to males who talk to her and fits most of the clichés associated with her profession (including 1d3 sexually transmitted diseases)
- **Fat Wu:** Wu (expert 4) is an arms merchant who is currently negotiating a deal with the Nezumis (in fact he has frequently visited the network over the last half year). He is rich and well-dressed and out to enjoy himself. He shares a table with the ten tailed cat and several cousins, all of which are likely to die in the fight.
- **Grand Bureaucrat Chang:** Chang (expert 4) is a middle aged woman from the Northern Empire, who was sent here to negotiate a pact with the Nezumi.
- **Sung:** Sung looks like a member of the Woodsmen, but is really a cut throat of the Red Sash Society. He is under orders to kill Wa, when the opportunity arises.

After staying at the inn for a bit, all of a sudden an old enemy (e.g. Handsome, s. *Temple of Air*) of the PCs appears at the door, with the two deadly twins, Pleasure and Pain (see *NPCs of the Shattered Empire*). After 1d4 seconds of utter disbelief initiative is rolled and a fight ensues. Of course, panic breaks out and innocents get hurt.

When the fight is over one way or the other, Wa is dead and his father arrives with 30 of his men. Of course the PCs are held responsible and only by proving their innocence will they get out of this bad situation.

Chickening Out

Maybe the PCs will not be bullied into complying. They might fight the 30 members of the 66 crossbows and their warlord (*NPCsOTSE*). If they are defeated, they will be held in custody and given a chance to prove their innocence to save their lives after losing all their property. One of them will be taken hostage and guards will accompany them.

If they win, chaos will ensue in the region as the mercenaries go for each others throat. Everybody will hate the PCs, especially Bureaucrat Chang whose mission has been turned utterly impossible.

This of course ruins the adventure. Thus, if the adventure turns this way some NPC might offer the PCs money to find out who is really behind the death of Wa (maybe some agent of the Jade Emperor). The NPC wants to know who his enemies are.

The Corpse

Wa was stabbed by the person known as Sung during the confusion of the fight. The corpse clearly indicates death by stabbing even though there may be some damage from the heavy exchange of magic in the fight.

The Locals

Of the people present during the fight, only 4 have survived. They have different statements to make about what happened. Whenever the PCs question a person hand out the appropriate cards (some people have several cards):



- **Chang:** The grand bureaucrat spent most of the time cowering in a corner. She has seen nothing useful about the murder. In fact she is very distracted and talks only about how worried she is that civil war will now break out. This will jeopardise her diplomatic mission and isolate the Northern Empire.
- **The Ten Tailed Cat:** This hengeyokai has long been abused by the merchant Wu (Spot DC 18 to see her carefully hidden scars). If questioned privately, she will insist that Wu killed Wa due to a long-time feud (an utter lie). A sense motive vs. her bluff (+7) will reveal the fact that she is lying. The cat hates Wu who is brutal and uses her debts to ensure continued "services". If the PCs call upon her lie, she will tell them that the Woodsman at the bar is responsible.
- **Fat Wu:** The merchant is very upset and does not even have to be asked to tell the PCs that the Woodsman has killed Wa. He is very upset if the PCs accuse him of being the assassin (bogus sense motive rolls to keep the PCs guessing whether he is lying). If they threaten him, he will try to make their lives difficult with his connections until ordered to stop by the Nezumi.
- **Other Locals:** If asked on the topic, other locals will tell the PCs that they know nothing about a feud between Wa and Wu. They also know that Wu has abused the Cat in the past!

River Pirates

It is easy to find the Woodsmen who have set up camp near the city. They will be very surprised if confronted with the accusations and will deny everything (several bogus sense motive rolls should keep the suspension). They claim to miss

no one and none of them looks like Sung.

After the PCs are done questioning the mercenaries, some of the Crossbows arrive 'to get even'. If the PCs do not stop them they slaughter the other mercs save for the ones who manage to escape. These will come back with a small army about 3 days later and the plan of the Dark Spirit will bear fruits.

The Hut

The players should now suspect that somebody else is responsible for the murder. There are several ways to get to this final stage.

First, the PCs might search the area to find if there are any hidden camps. If they do this, they will quickly stumble upon the little hut that Sung uses as a base of operations.

If they do not take this route (not that unlikely) they will notice that they are shadowed by somebody (a Nezumi that moves oddly - actually a Kappa with a hat of disguise that can only make one look like a Nezumi). If they tail him (by splitting up) or question him, they will find out that he is a spy who reports to Sung daily. The assassin is eager to find out more about the success of his deed.

If the PCs arrive at the hut and manage to sneak in, they will surprise the assassin and his retinue:

- 2 Kappa mercenaries wearing red bandanas, with 1d20 gp each.
- A small undead-looking korobokuru with wild eyes, pointy teeth, and a torn black cape, who jumps around madly like a monkey. The Red Sash Society turned this member into a vampire but would not be too sad to lose this less and less controllable abomination.

The assassin will try to flee almost at once, his henchmen will try to stop the PCs until they are low on hit points. The vampire will fight to the death, using

flurry of blows whenever possible or grappling people. If the PCs manage to capture a henchman, they will be told that they know nothing about who was to be killed etc. (true). The assassin will rather die than talk but there is a list with names among his things - it is obvious that these killings were intended to cause discord among the defenders of the Network.

Korobokuru Vampire Monk: CR 3; Size:S Type Undead; HD (1d8); hp 8; Init +8 (+4 Dex, +4 Misc); Spd ; AC 23 (flatfooted 19, touch 17), Att: +7 unarmed (1d6+6) or +5 ranged (1d4 dart); SA: Evasion, Flurry of Blows, Turn Resistance 4, Damage Reduction 15/+1, Cold, Electricity Resistance 20, Spider Climb, Gaseous Form, Alternate Form, Fast Healing 5, Immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, and disease. Not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage.; Vision: Normal AL: LE; Sv: Fort +2, Ref +8, Will +4; Str 22, Dex 18, Con --, Int 13, Wis 15, Cha 19

Skills and Feats: Climb +10, Jump +10, Listen +6, Move Silently +6, Search +3, Spot +6; Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Grapple, Improved Initiative, Improved Unarmed Strike, Lightning Reflexes

Possessions: golden chain (150 gp)

