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Protect the Master

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PROTECT THE MASTER

WE WILL NOT DIE PEACEFULLY, BUT WILL DIE
BY THE SIDE OF OUR MASTER.

—SAMURAI OATH



INTRODUCTION EPISODES

Protect the Master is a short adventure for RPGObjects' historical fantasy Japanese setting *Legends of the Samurai* and SkeletonKey Games' *e-Adventure Tiles*:

Oriental Sword School. In this adventure the PCs are called upon to protect the dojo of a revered Kenjutsu sensei and the powerful sword he and his students have sworn to protect.

This adventure makes an excellent starting point for a *Legends of the Samurai* campaign, providing the game master with a potential home base for his players to adventure from (the dojo) as well as a potential contact/mentor (the master himself). The adventure itself, while relatively straightforward could serve as a springboard to many future adventures depending on the resolution of the adventure.

USING THIS ADVENTURE

One goal of this adventure was to be usable in a wide range of PC levels. No recommended level is set for the adventure, except that the PCs should be less than 12th level. In each encounter the term "average PC level" is used instead to balance each encounter. So if four PCs of 4th level participate in the adventure, they would be offered 800 tn in Episode 1, 1,600 tn in Episode 2, and face 8 2nd level ninja led by a 4th level ninja, and so forth.

EPISODE 1: NIGHT ON THE TOWN

The purpose of this episode is to alert the PCs to the danger posed to Master Oshiro and the Ikazuchi dojo. This encounter occurs in a small peasant town, the type found all over Japan during any time period during which a *Legends of the Samurai* campaign might be set.

The PCs could either have assembled for their first adventure or be in town resting after a previous adventure.

Two possible encounters to get the PCs involved are presented below. The first is more likely to appeal to a group of roguish PCs and appeals to the PCs' sense of... profit. The second is aimed at a more "reputable" group and appeals to the PCs' sense of honor.





A MODEST PROPOSAL

As the group passes through the small squalid town (or perhaps stops for a drink at the dirty place's most "respectable" tea house) they are approached by a large, muscular man, completely bald but with a long mustache and full beard. His rough hands, calloused and burned mark him as a member of the artisan class.

He has approached the PCs because they look capable, if somewhat disreputable. He asks that they protect a school from attack and offers to pay them in coin. Since this adventure is usable for a wide variety of PC levels an amount equal to 200 times the average PC level should suffice to get the PCs interest. The craftsman will pay half the money up front and half when the task is completed.

If asked for a name he seems reluctant to supply one, but will eventually reveal that he is known as Mamoru.

TO PROTECT AND SERVE

The PCs, being of respectable stature, are making their way through the squalid, dusty town as quickly as possible. They might stop to buy some badly needed supplies (if such could even be found in a

town such as this) but have more pressing needs to attend to.

In the distance they see a fellow warrior, a samurai or perhaps a ronin. He seems to be down on his luck, wearing little armor and resting his blade on his shoulders, his hand resting on the blade's handle. As the PCs watch he is approached by a muscular bald man of the artisan class and after a brief conversation the samurai explodes in anger, knocking the large man to the ground in a shower of coins. "I may be poor but I am *no* mercenary, peasant!"

With that the samurai departs and the artisan quickly collects his coins. Seeing the PCs, he approaches much more cautiously, head bowed kneeling at their feet in the dusty market street when he gets close enough to be heard.

"My lords, I am Ijiri Mamoru, personal blacksmith Ikazuchi Kenjutsu school. My master, Sensei Oshiro Kanaye has fallen ill and our dojo is under attack. We need the protection of great men such as yourselves. If he should recover from his illness, my master could teach many sword techniques to the warriors among you, and I am sometimes referred to as a skilled swordsmith, one who would use all his art if you aided his humble cause."

There is a strong possibility that the PCs have heard of Oshiro Kanaye. Any PC with Knowledge (nobility and royalty) or Knowledge (history) should be allowed a skill check. The DC is 20 but the check receives a +8 bonus from Kanaye's Reputation modifier.

There is also a chance that the PCs have heard of Mamoru. The skills and DCs used for this check are the same, with a +4 bonus from Mamoru's Reputation modifier.

If asked about the earlier incident Mamoru will say, somewhat embarrassed, that he is willing to hire mercenaries to protect the school, paying coin for their services if necessary, and that he regrets that he mistook the poor samurai for a ronin whose sword could be bought.

EPISODE 2: ROADSIDE ENCOUNTER

On the way to the dojo, the PCs are approached by a small group of ninja disguised as wandering farmers, dressed in simple shawls that conceal their armor and large peasants' hats that conceal their faces. The ninja will attempt to use their Hide and Move Silently skills to get on the road in front of and behind the PCs before they are aware of their presence.

If this fails they will talk to the PCs from the cover of the rice paddies on either side of the road.

Once the ninja reveal themselves they will offer the PCs twice whatever the blacksmith paid them to walk away (400 times the average level of the PCs). They also make it clear that others, more powerful than them, have decreed that the Ikazuchi dojo must fall and that if the PCs refuse their "generous offer" they will be killed.

HONOR

The opening scenes of *Protect the Master* offer opportunities for the PCs to increase their Honor. First, simply accepting the assignment, even with the possibility of reward, counts as a Moderate Benevolence virtue. If the PCs are of higher rank than Mamoru and treat him respectfully, this is a Moderate Politeness virtue. Finally there is the possibility that a PC might take the assignment but refuse any sort of compensation. This would be a Grand Benevolence virtue. Keep in mind each of these scenarios could reduce the Honor of PCs who behave badly. The PCs could demand an exorbitant reward (Rudeness transgression) or follow the example of the poor samurai and mistreat Mamoru (Rudeness transgression). And of course, the PCs could refuse the job because it sounds dangerous (Cowardice transgression).



The ninja outnumber the PCs two to one and their average level is half the PCs' average level. The leader of the ninja is equal to the PCs' average level.

OPTIONAL ENCOUNTER: JUDAS SILVER

If the PCs accept the ninjas' offer and return about their business, they will find themselves getting sick. The money provided by the ninja has been soaked in a contact poison. Each day the PCs handle any of the money they must make a Fortitude saving throw, DC 15 +1 for each consecutive day they have handled the poisoned money. If the PC put any of the money in his mouth increase the DC by +2 for that day. If the PC fails this saving throw he is awoken by wrenching and nausea, losing a point of Constitution. A PC who fails this save three days in a week is fatigued from lack of sleep and one who fails this save four or more times in a week is exhausted from lack of sleep.

The only way to begin recovering is to discard all of the affected money (which might be difficult if it is mixed in with the PCs other monies). The coins were soaked in the poison for so long that the only way to remove it from the coins is to melt them down (and remember to count any attempt at cleaning as a day in which the PCs handled the money).

If the GM chooses to use this encounter it could, sadly, befall a virtuous part as well, since they will find the coins on the body of the lead ninja once they kill him.

HONOR

Should the PCs refuse the ninjas' offer they qualify for a moderate Loyalty virtue. Should the PCs accept the ninjas' offer they will suffer an Honor loss equal a Severe Cowardice and a Severe Disloyalty transgression.

EPISODE 3: ARRIVAL

Upon arrival to the school the PCs will find that it is all but deserted. Only a few loyal students remain, including the assistant Sensei Saito Shonichi. The Sensei fell ill several days ago and now barely clings to life.

The PCs can learn that all attempts to cure the Sensei's illness have failed. Shonichi will do everything in his power to further the idea that the Sensei suffers from a disease. Of course all attempts to cure this "disease" have failed because the Sensei has been afflicted by the same poison described above in the Judas Silver encounter.

If the PCs diagnose the Sensei's poison and cure it early enough, they should have a much easier time with later encounters. Diagnosing the poisoning early could also lead to conflict with Shonichi, the Sensei's assistant. Mamoru has suspected him of treachery since the last attack on the school and if poisoning is revealed as the cause of the Sensei's malady he will make this accusation public.

This will lead Shonichi to attack the smith, a fight he will almost certainly win. Should one of the PCs make this accusation, particularly a warrior PC, then Shonichi will challenge him instead.

Unless the PCs within a few levels of 10th, this duel is not likely one they can win. There are ways to avoid a bloody duel if the PCs wish it. First would be an apology by Mamoru and any PC making the

accusation. This would cause a loss of Honor (Mild Dishonesty transgression) and would also allow Mamoru to continue bringing the Sensei tea every evening which may or may not be tainted with poison.

An even better option would be for the PCs to ask that the duel be delayed until the Sensei has recovered and the ninja attack repelled. This would make sense in terms of preventing the attacks on the school, which Shonichi claims he wishes to defend.

Questions and Answers

While preparing the dojo's defenses for the attack the PCs are likely to ask some questions about those they are defending as well as those seeking to destroy them. Some potential questions, along with their answers are provided below. Of course not everyone the PCs talk to will know all this information and it's possible that the PCs will get conflicting views on what's actually happening.

Before each answer, in parenthesis you will find information on who would be able to provide that answer.

Why are the ninja attacking?

(Anyone) Master Sensei has a great influence on the nearby peasant towns and offers him his protection. Without the Ikazuchi school the peasants would be completely at the mercy of the ninja clan.

(Mamoru and Master Sensei Oshiro Kanaye) The Master Sensei guards a powerful weapon, the Katana of Light. It is prophesied that this weapon will one day destroy the ninja family attacking the school.