

Campaign: Blood & Shadow

Campaign Introduction (Can Be Read Aloud)

Through a strange turn of events, the sleepy hamlet of Ox Horn Village has become for the first time in two generations a place of interest to anyone other than its inhabitants. While celebrated at one time for its abundance of **Aurochite*** and its virtuoso swordmaker, Ona Hashi, Ox Horn has since fallen off the maps of Eastern Nopo. But mysteries and odd stories have surrounded the village in recent weeks, cropping up on all sides from confused neighbors and merchants.

- The Andurhan city of Valenz has received reports that a military **Airship*** missing and presumed destroyed has been seen in the vicinity of the village.
- The largest **Tomishi*** settlement in the region, Stone-Plow Fort, has not seen traders or artisans from Ox Horn or their shared neighbour Black Hoof in more than two weeks.
- Guanxi governors of Iron Hill have recently heard strange reports of violent Tomishi aggression against the charter city's sister settlement to the south.

Each party has sent agents to Ox Horn village to investigate firsthand.

Background Information (PLAYER SPOILERS! Do Not Read Aloud)

A cadre of thirty Guanxi **Blood Wizards***, eunuchs all, have stolen and refurbished the Red Foot Raven, a powerful Valenzi airship, to target Tomishi villages and create an undead horde with which to wreak vengeance on the Guanxi State. The wizards are agents of the *Xan*, a cultish secret society that held supreme influence over Guanxi politics until the recent regime-change less than a generation ago. Their direct goals are to eradicate or dominate the two Guanxi charter cities, secure their resource streams, found an independent state, and control all Guanxi-Nopo relations as the singular liaison between the two.

Note: The wizards are not bent on "evil" or pollution or corruption, and the fact that they are amassing an undead army can be viewed more as simple practicality (they happen to be blood wizards) than some form of unnatural evil. The *Xan* have a politico-economic goal, and are using a logical strategy to meet their objectives along the way. The clandestine nature of their operation is natural enough, as any new player in the Nopo struggle for power would keep cards close to the chest until the right time. The wizards surely do not want the Guanxi state to invest any more military might into Nopo before they have time to strike.

If the plan is successful? The *Xan* would eventually become a rather mundane state ruled by a theocratic oligarchy of sorts. The undead horde may stay on as soldiers for a

time, but such a large force would tax the energies of the wizards and most likely prove inefficient.

Episode I: Slaughter At Ox Horn

The Story (Can Be Read Aloud)

Ox Horn village is a modest but robust farming hamlet at the southeastern edge of the Nopo Plains, settled at the intersection of Red River and an old road that has seen busier days. Over 30 families live in the settlement. Though the predominant exports of Ox Horn are sour melons and tree-nuts, local artisans are known for red dyes, durable aprons and sashes, and tightly woven sandals. The village itself is made up of thatched-roof buildings of varying sizes. Built at a more lively time, the Common Hall features stone walls, is two storeys tall, and has a footprint over thirty feet square. Most homes are simple structures of mixed construction: stone, bamboo, and thatch. Straddling both sides of the road, the village fills a flat space between Tall Gate bridge, which crosses low above Red River and leads into the northern fields, and a small shrine, Iko Atahanabe, which marks the southern end of town.

Past the shrine, the road leads further south into a dense forest, sparsely populated but for an ancient temple and a six-family village. To the west is the majority of the great Nopo Plains. Following the river east leads to Black Hoof village and eventually the coast. Mazaki City is several days to the northwest, spoken of in Ox Horn only in tall tales and song.

Whichever group the PCs happen to be starting in, the three investigative parties approach the village from the northern side. The Red Foot Raven can be seen rising out from the southern treeline and approaching the large field upon which you all stand.

Simultaneously, the dozens of investigators feel waves of nausea and a slight magical tremor. Suddenly, the ship lets loose a barrage of cannon fire. Armed with **Jade Cannons***, the Red Foot Raven makes quick work of the three companies. Bodies explode in clouds of blood and steam as cannon after cannon unloads on the unsuspecting parties. After a few minutes, when no traveler remains standing, the ship flies at a steady speed back over the trees.

As the smoke clears, you [however many PCs are in the party] are the only to rise to your feet, the lucky survivors. You dust off yourselves and look to the dead companions now scattered over the field. What just happened? The survivors come together and work through the language barriers--some of you are probably bilingual enough to translate quickly among the group--to combine agendas. Following the ship or continuing your mission means moving through the village.

Background (Only an Idiot GM Would Read This Aloud)

Two weeks ago, the *Xan* wizards came to Ox Horn, offering trade and wealth. Over the course of a few days, the wizards weakened themselves casting **Undeath*** over the entire village. They used area-effect magic, targeting as many individuals as possible. The villagers had no time to realize what this sudden wave of nausea and unrest meant before the wizards killed the entire population with a gaseous poison. As the people died, the wizards triggered their Undeath magic to awaken the best soldier bodies, taking them up into the ship and leaving the unwanted dead lying about motionless. The *Xan* stuck around for a week collecting supplies and making arrangements.

The three investigative parties arrived without warning and at the same time. The wizards did not want to leave witnesses and had no choice but to engage: They moved the ship close to the northern fields, cast Undeath hurriedly on the masses of travelers, and then bombed them to pieces. They then fled southward, leaving behind a single wizard and a clean-up crew to sort through bodies and maybe grab some useful undead soldiers.

Undead: Congratulations! This setup gives you an indefinite number of undead warriors for the duration of the campaign! You've got random undead villagers and an assortment of undead Emishi, Guanxi, and Andhurans. Any encounter can be augmented with undead enemies resembling any culture or character.

Scene 1: Investigating Ox Horn (Casual Role-Playing)

The Story (You May Read Aloud)

As the newly formed party enters the village from the north, the smell of rotting flesh is apparent. Nothing stirs, and even the breeze that swept boldly over the plains on the north side of the bridge seems reluctant to disturb the sleepy village. There are several small huts and a larger central building of stone. The road runs directly through the center of town.

Bodies dead for several days lie about, mostly women and children. Judging by the stench, the throng of buzzards, and the innumerable flies, dozens more bodies remain in the many buildings, homes, and outlying huts.

GM Tips (Do Not Read Aloud)

We are assuming you have played through the first *Mazaki No Fantaji* encounters included in the Quickstart enough to understand the basics of combat and scene-management. That might not be completely necessary, but we are starting this Scene with a little nuanced, non-combat action that will demonstrate the versatility of the system and how to handle and heighten “casual role-playing” outside any particular combat or challenge. Why not make those narrative, descriptive times between encounters a little edgy and competitive? Why not have a few mechanical consequences to the actions characters take?

Setting the Scene:

Themes (Blue):

- Sudden Horror
- Step Lightly
- Everything In Its Right Place

Conditions (Red):

- Have An Eye on the Ship (+)
- Checked Perimeter (+)
- Defensive Positions (+)
- Party Split Up (-)
- Disturbed Corpses (-)
- Overexposure (-)

Obstacles (Black):

- Keep An Eye on the Ship (Passive): *Cloud-Soaring*. Begins with 3DT.
- Investigate Village (Passive): *Bloody Murder*. Begins at 4DT.

Facedown Obstacles:

- Undead Butcher: *Leave it to Cleaver, Shambling Undead*. 2[2]. Carries a cleaver.
- Undead Little Girl: *Lost Innocence, Shambling Undead*. 1[2].
- Undead Grandmother: *A Stitch in Time, Age Before Beauty, Shambling Undead*. 1[2]. She fights with Aurochite knitting needles.
- Xan Wizard: *Groundskeeper, Stranded in the Shadows, Hot Blooded (2X Trait)*.
Powers: Force of Nature (3DT deals DT- to all enemies), Mind Control (Deals [2] to himself to take one target's turn), Environmental Effect (Create a Condition that deals damage when Triggered or Forced). [3], [2], 3[1].
- Desecrated Shrine: *Uncarved Stone*. [3]

Laying The Tiles

Begin the Scene with only the "Sudden Horror" Theme and the seven Obstacles on the table. The Conditions are held in the Storyteller's hand and kept secret. These are **Latent Conditions*** that the players do not yet know to be important factors in the scene. Let players investigate the village casually. They may take Moves if they like or attempt any amount of exploration. As they do things (such as touch contaminated food or water, split up in search of information, or disturb bodies) reveal the latent Conditions. Remove Tokens from either the players or the Obstacles if needed, depending on whether that Condition was immediately positive or negative (marked above). If the players are smart (not disturbing bodies, checking the perimeter, keeping an eye on the fleeing ship, etc.), they will remove Tokens from the facedown undead or the "Keep An Eye on the Ship" Obstacle as appropriate. If they are irresponsible (splitting the party, messing with poisoned food or water), they may lose Tokens they have gained from taking Moves thus far.

See below for how to handle the “Investigate Village” Obstacle.

Creating and Forcing a Condition in the same turn?! It’s okay. Breathe. Think of it this way: These Conditions are already Created and in effect, they are just “facedown” or unknown to the players. When players trigger them accidentally, reveal the Condition to them and apply the DT- as fitting. In this way, you can use Latent Conditions to reward smart role-playing and let the players earn their knowledge of what extenuating circumstances exist in the scene. The players will learn about their situation/context through smart role-playing.

Cool? If not, just ignore the mechanical side of investigation and let them just role-play to find out any backstory information. No need to bring in the dice unless your group likes the objectivity and “checklist” mindset.

Check out new Gameplay Videos available online to see this action.

Playing the Scene:

Let the players investigate as they see fit. Some actions will be risky or take on a “pass-fail” feel. Count those as Moves, and allow players each two or three Moves if they take them. Let them role-play and explore the village. They may try to set up Conditions to keep an eye on the fleeing ship. Great. They might climb trees or try tracking somehow. Cool.

Ship Tile: Begins at 3DT. If players push their [1] enough to reduce the Tile to zero Drama, tell them that the ship seems to be slowing down over a certain region of the forest. It is not getting away entirely. If the Tile reaches 5DT, the ship has disappeared without a trace.

Investigate Tile: Begins at 4DT. This Tile will take no turns and cannot increase its Drama. Players will take Moves to Create Conditions and slowly reduce the Drama of the Tile and learn about the village. Suggested Conditions could be “Always On the Look For Facts” or “Moving Carefully” or the like, Conditions that can be used against them later in the Episode. In this instance, we would most likely call for Moves before Conditions could be set, but not require any rolls to remove the DT. When players figure things out, ask questions, and role-play investigation, we would remove the Tokens from the Tile and let them know that they have gotten closer to learning what there is to learn about the village. Reveal facts about the backstory as fitting with each DT removed.

- Most of the adult men are missing
- The buzzards seem to be avoiding some of the bodies (!!)
- The bodies appear to have been poisoned
- There seem to be new Guanxi and Andhuran goods in town, rare for a Tomishi village this far from the coast

Of course, you could entirely omit this mechanical code (or the Tile itself) and just role-play out the facts. Conversely, you could force players to roll Moves to reduce the Drama of the Tile as though this were happening in combat. It is up to you. We play in a combination of modes depending on the mood of the group and the nature of the scene.

Undead Tiles: The Storyteller will take Moves for each of the undead. Have them awaken and lurk about the village, gaining Drama. Do what feels right. Like little chess pieces, the players and the undead will be slowly moving through the village in search of one another.

The final module will include a map of the village and some items that can be found while players explore.

Take your time as long as folks are having fun and role-playing. If any undead comes within sight of the players, flip over all the undead Obstacles and place all the Latent Conditions on the table. The Wizard and Desecrated Shrine will remain facedown unless explicitly located. The moment of spotting the undead triggers Scene 2 below.

Wizard Tile: The wizard will also make Moves to gain Drama. He will not be spotted unless the players pass a Move searching the roof of Common Hall.

At any time during Scene 1 or 2, if the Wizard gains 6DT, he will set fire to the village and Tall Gate bridge and flee to the north out of reach, taking his Drama with him for a later encounter. Decide whether or not to reveal the wizard when this happens, depending on whether your group likes the mystery of the village or needs a concrete enemy to focus on.

Shrine Tile: If players approach the broken shrine at the very south edge of the village, read the following aloud:

“You come across an Emishi shrine of ancient construction: A small stone wall fitted with various cubbies that seem to have once held carved stones that now lie scattered about. The shrine shows signs of carbon scoring and chipped edges, the damage most likely the result of the Red Foot Raven landing too near the wall. The missing stones and broken pieces may be strewn about nearby.”

If they vocalize a desire to fix it, flip over the Obstacle. Players can take Moves if they like, or they can just roll an Attack against the shrine to score the [3] needed to fix it. Any Clashes will offer DT+ to the shrine, making it harder to fix: Maybe the carved stones are lost or hidden by debris. If the shrine is repaired at any time during Scene 1 or 2, reveal “Step Lightly” and “Everything In Its Right Place” Themes.

If they just shrug and move on, leave the Tile facedown: They'll miss out on the opportunity to gain the two Themes connected to this Obstacle.

Conclusions & Consequences:

As soon as any undead are spotted, trigger Scene 2 below.

If the ship escapes, man, it's gone.

If the players move beyond the shrine, whether on purpose to chase the ship or accidentally, immediately trigger Scene 2 below. In the case of the players moving this far south, the wizard will take the opportunity to flee silently with any Drama he has built. Simply remove the Tile and its Tokens and save for later.

If the shrine is repaired, let any Emishi PCs know that it still needs to be consecrated before it will regain its spiritual potency. Repairing the shrine will also remove 2DT from the Spirit Beast in *Episode 2* and have other consequences later.

Scene 2: The Ox Horn Undead (Combat)

The Story (Read Aloud)

Three undead Ox Horn villagers limp towards you. From surrounding angles, they step closer and closer. It appears you are surrounded.

GM Tips (Do Not Read Aloud)

Feel free to add more undead if your party is experienced with *Mazaki No Fantaji*. The undead villagers are tricky but not too difficult.

Setting the Scene:

Tiles

Themes:

- Sudden Horror
- One Day Closer to Death
- Everything Put Together Falls Apart
- Run That Body Down

Conditions:

- (Relevant Conditions from Scene 1)
- Surrounded Heroes

Obstacles:

- (Relevant Tiles from Scene 1)

Laying the Tiles

Reveal the appropriate Tiles based on how the Scene was triggered. The Latent Conditions may still be in play, hidden or not, though the “Disturbed Corpses” and “Overexposure” will most likely be irrelevant now.

You may give someone the initial “Sudden Horror” Theme Tile as **Experience*** for Scene 1 and then rewrite the Theme again for this Scene. Or, you can just carry the Theme over and award it only after Scene 2.

Playing the Scene:

Fight it out, buddies.

Ship Tile: Players must still keep an eye on the ship with spare [1]. The ship will take turns increasing its Tokens to escape.

Investigate Tile: Allow players to still spend [1] here and there to figure out facts about the backstory. They will smell the poison in the air, notice the arrangement of corpses, realize that all the adult men are missing and only women and children remain, etc.

Wizard Tile: If the wizard escapes and carries out his arson plan, the GM has discretion to create a “Burning Village” Obstacle. This is optional, however, and should be avoided if the players are having difficulty with the zombies alone.

Conclusions & Consequences:

If the players defeat the ghouls before the wizard escapes, allow them to decide if they will keep looking around the village, or chase the fleeing ship into the forest.

If the players defeat the wizard before he escapes, end the scene with the ghouls falling apart.

Pay attention in *Episode 2* for notes about the Shrine and other consequences. Depending on the players’ decisions, the Spirit Beast may or may not have the “Force of Nature” power. Also, the overall encounter may or may not have the “Mass Hysteria” Condition depending on how detailed the characters are about telling other villages what happened to Ox Horn.

EXTRA ENCOUNTERS

Hunting the Wizard

If the wizard escapes, he will return in a fight later in *Blood & Shadows* to aid his master. But who wants to wait that long? If your party wants to track the wizard, you can create an entire Encounter around trailing him and his clean-up crew through the forest, where he plans to meet up with the ship in a few days. What might that encounter look like?

Themes:

 Cornered Quarry
 Getting to the Root of It

Conditions:

 Gnarly Trees

Obstacles:

 Wizard: Same
 Undead Soldiers: *Mindless Aggression, Shambling Undead*. Powers: Lance
 (Expend 3DT on successful hit to increase damage by [1]). 1[2]
 Xan Assistants: *Red-Handed*. 4[1]

Consecrate the Shrine

If the party fixes Iko Atahanabe, they may decide to fully restore the shrine by consecrating it as well. Any Emishi character would know that the shrine will not perform its necessary spiritual functions without being consecrated according to particular local custom. Andhurans or explicitly religious Guanxi may also realize this necessity. The consecration becomes a small side-quest of sorts. But, hey, it gives you a chance to see a Gami, right?

Read the following aloud:

 “A moment after you repair Iko Atahanabe, a spectre appears near the shrine. You recognize the face and clothing of the undead grandmother in the spirit before you and see in her countenance an urgent worry. Silent as a grave, the blue wraith steps back towards the village.”

If the players follow the wraith, she will walk to Common Hall and direct their attention to a mural painted on the far wall. This mural will portray an elaborate journey that spells out the steps to consecrating the shrine. Describe the lovely painting and let the heroes figure out that they must proceed likewise. If the players do not follow the wraith, the

ghost will wander around attempting to draw them to Common Hall without any urgency or obvious pointing or prompting... Just leading by walking.

The gist: The party must travel down the Red River to a small grove of trees that are the original source of Ox Horn's nut trees, gather some nuts, and then perform a ceremony at the shrine. Many generations ago, when the Ox Horn farmers first took nuts from these trees to sew their orchard, the gami of the grove was disturbed. Building the shrine in the village and offering regular homage of the gami always worked to ensure the health of both the grove and the orchard. With the shrine destroyed, this gami is now feeling the separation of the two. When the party arrives at the grove, an old hermit has been captured and ensnared with tree roots by the gami. This hermit will explain the nature of the problem to the party and ask for help getting out. And he can then come and do the ritual at the shrine with the nuts and, you know, stuff.

Themes:

- Go the Extra Mile
- Off Without a Hitch

Obstacles:

- Free the Hermit From the Gami: *Twisted Mister*. [2]
- Perform the Ritual: *Perfect Timing*. One of the players must deal [2] on an Attack against this Obstacle to successfully complete the ritual. Everyone gets one try. Any clashes add Drama to the ritual for the next player's attempt. Consecrating the shrine offers the "Balancing Act" Theme for the next Scene, whatever that might be.

Tailing The Ship

Maybe you want to spend a session stalking the Red Foot Raven as it flies over the forest, extending the chase that will culminate in *Episode 4*. After successfully trailing the ship through the trees (first Obstacle), the rest of the Obstacles are revealed.

The gist is this: The ship was supposed to pick up a wizard at a particular place and time. The ship will land in a clearing in the woods and await this wizard, who never arrives. If the party successfully trails the ship, they will come upon this missed rendezvous. This is not designed for the players to actually get in/on the ship in any way. The action instead focuses on trailing and learning. The players can learn that the ship is made up of Guanxi wizards leading an Andhuran mercenary crew and several undead servants.

Themes:

- Tailgating Terror
- More Than We Bargained For
- Silence is Golden

Obstacles:

- Trailing the Ship: *Forest for the Trees*. Begins with 3DT.
- Remain Hidden: *Friendly Shadows*. Begins with 5DT.

Undead Andhuran Crewmen: *Lumber Lumber Never Slumber, Shambling Undead*. Power: Gadget (A Move can steal 1DT from target and give it ally). 2[2].

Living Andhuran Mercenaries: *Hanging On Every Word, Sharp-Dressed Men*. 1[2], 4[1]. Begins at 2DT.

Begin the Scene with only the first Theme and first Obstacle. If the “Trailing the Ship” Obstacle reaches 5DT, the ship is gone. Sorry. Upon reaching 0DT, the ship lands. Trigger all other Tiles in this Scene after the ship lands.

If the “Remain Hidden” Obstacle is lost, then add [3] to each of the Andhuran Tiles and begin an immediate fight. The ship will take off in the meantime.

If the players actually get onboard the ship *somehow*, then we need something on there to encounter. So, here is what they get:

Cadre of Wizards: *Blood On Their Hands (2X Trait), Feeling Feisty*. Powers: Same as first Wizard. 2[3], 4[2]. Begins at 3DT.

Cobbled Horror: *Larger Than Life (2X Trait), Meat-Fisted, Shambling Undead*. Powers: Horrify (Any Attack that deals [2] to heroes causes *Stun*: Target cannot use 1 Trait of the Horror’s choice for an entire Round), Belch (A Move against a Difficulty of 5 that Creates or Forces a “Cloud of Stench” Condition to effect 2DT- on nearby targets). 2[3], 4[2]. Begins at 2DT.

“In the chamber of the ship, you spy a large shadow. Moving into the light, the shadow becomes visible, a hulking humanoid construct of flesh and metal. It appears as though at least six corpses were stitched together into the undead mess/mass before you. Thick and putrid, the Cobbled Horror stands at nine feet tall. It feels your presence and moves to attack!”

Glossary

Airship - The Andhurans are masters of Flight Jade. They manufacture large, aesthetic airships that resemble boats only superficially. The levitational properties of the Jade are tied to its temperature and the presence of carbon. Lower temperatures increase the levitational power of Jade, whereas carbon greatly decreases or even nullifies the flight capabilities. This has led Andhurans and others to develop soot-firing weapons to coat exposed Jade in carbon. Engines will include large carbon rods that can be inserted into Jade cores to quickly lower the airships. The Red Foot Raven would be almost 150' long by 60' wide by 20' tall.

Aurochite - An organic metal that grows on particular species of animals as ivory grows on elephants. This is a very strong and powerful metal sought after by Andhurans and Guanxi, but only truly mastered by the Tomishi.

Blood Wizards - These are wizards who have studied Blood Magic, one of the families of Facets available to player-characters as well. Some of the wizards will have non-standard powers that augment the Facets available to players in the full version of the game. These non-standard versions will actually be made available in the final version of this module.

Experience - At the end of every Scene, the Storyteller picks up the Theme Tiles and hands each Tile to the player who best demonstrated and role-played that Theme. Maybe the Scene had four Themes and four players each get one. Maybe one player gets three Themes, and two players get none. So be it. This is how ***Mazaki No Fantaji*** handles experience: Earning Themes. When a new player-character saves up 4 Themes, for instance, he or she can hand them back to the Storyteller to purchase either a new Trait or a new Facet, improving his or her hero. Check on the Character Tile to see how the costs for upgrades are recorded just next to the "Fate" and "Traits" and "Health" menus.

Jade Cannons - These are cannons that are hydraulically powered by Jade, creating a more powerful shot than gunpowder alone.

Latent Conditions - These aren't official things, really. We're just using the term to represent Conditions that are facedown or secret. Players will trigger them inadvertently during casual role-playing moments. You'll see this worked out very well in the other module as well.

Tomishi - The Emishi and Tomi tribes, as well as lesser tribes, make up the greater Tomishi people.

Undeath - A Facet available in the full version of the game. The wizard casts this spell on a living target. Once the target dies, it will then be risen as an undead body. This cannot be cast on already dead corpses.