



River of Hungry Ghosts

Campaign Brief – November 23, 2009

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???? – suggestions welcome

Campaign Themes: This is an episodic campaign with a wuxia feel and elements of supernatural horror.



If it would feel at home in a kung fu film or a ghost story, it's good for this campaign. For influences, think of the forest section in Jade Empire, anime like Requiem for the Darkness or other stuff that explores traditional asian supernatural horror, or wuxia like Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon and House of Flying Daggers. The setting is a mix of anime, wuxia, and dark fantasy tropes, with a pseudo-Chinese feel.

Character Creation: Begin at first level. No class restrictions. For races, keep in mind that reflavoring may be required to make some choices work in the setting. Elves and eladrin are more likely to be forest spirits and moon spirits than traditional European-style fey, tiefling features may more closely resemble oni, etc. Anything should be able to fit with a bit of creativity, but if you're not sure run it by me first. Try to make a character who can function as part of a team. Alignment should be unaligned, good, or lawful good. Note that that doesn't mean you have to be nice.



Religion: The core gods don't exist in this setting. The belief system in this setting focuses on venerating spirits and a Celestial Bureaucracy. Certain portfolios are still handled by major divinities. Domain feats are good, but if you wanted to be a follower of a specific god, feel free to reflavor it or talk to me about what that god would be like in this setting—for example, the Raven Queen here is the White Lady who watches over death, and so on. Be creative.



Starting Out: The campaign will begin in a small village, a week or more from a major city, set on the edge of an ancient, supposedly haunted forest. There is also marshland nearby, and a river runs through the town out of the forest. The village is small enough that it isn't even marked on most maps, and if there is an official name recorded somewhere the residents are either unaware of it or too apathetic to use it; they call it the village, or home, and they know what they mean by that. A few hundred people eke out a living here, mostly farmers and peasants, with a transient population that usually numbers a couple dozen at most—itinerant monks, thieves or murderers lying low, or other wanderers with a reason to hide. You are among those who have come to this town to lose themselves, for your own reasons, and have been resident for a few weeks—enough to start to get to know some of the other inhabitants.



Important People in the Village:



- **Madam Jami**, the proprietor of the village's inn. A pinch-faced, skinny woman of middling years, it is said she was once a great beauty, but an evil look from her silences any musings on her past while she's in earshot—and she moves quietly enough that most people prefer not to risk talking about her at all. She is quite cunning and business savvy, and runs the inn efficiently and above all profitably.
- **Old Chiang**, the eldest man in the village, has been around as long as anyone can remember. His memory is as sharp as a tack, and he knows most of the folk who stay longer than a week or two, but he's a crotchety old fellow, and occasionally perverse. For those who need to know something about the area or the other inhabitants, though, coaxing the information out of Old Chiang is usually worth the effort.
- **Bu the Elder**, the owner of the general store and much of the land in the village. Bu sends his son, Bu the Younger, out to trade for goods to sell in his shop, just as his own father did when he himself was Bu the Younger. As the wealthiest man in the village, he is accorded much respect by most of the inhabitants, though he puts on airs that would seem ridiculous were he in a more prosperous area. He is not known for paying much attention to his real estate holdings—if it's not about to collapse, it's good enough in his opinion.
- **Tseng the Ox**, a young man known for his size and prodigious strength, as much as his simple mind. In spite of this, he is generally well liked, and can generally be relied on to help out anyone who asks without demanding anything in return, which has made him a popular figure.
- **White Blossom**, an orphaned girl who has only recently come of age. She works for Madam Jami, at the inn, and is as innocent as she is beautiful, a combination that draws all the unmarried men (and several of the married ones) to the inn to see her sing for the customers. Madam Jami is not likely to let the girl go easily, since White Blossom's presence means great business for her inn.
- **Monk Tien Bo**, an itinerant monk who came to the village about a year ago and settled in to take care of the village's spiritual needs. Tien Bo has been saying he intends to continue his travels any day now, but he always seems to find a reason to stay.

Places of Interest:



- **The Red Lantern Inn:** The village's inn is larger than one might expect for a village of this size, given the population. Madam Jami is a harsh taskmistress, but friendly enough to her customers, keeping prices affordable, and ensuring their comfort. A satisfied customer is a returning customer, after all. Three evenings a week, White Blossom sings for the customers at dinner. Madam Jami also discreetly keeps a small stable of girls for her customers who desire "companionship", but dirty or brutish customers will be refused outright and those who harm the girls usually come to regret it.
- **Bu's Goods:** Bu the Elder can usually be found here, pompous and imperious. The store sells a surprising variety of goods, thanks to the efforts of Bu the Younger, but many of the more exotic ones end up gathering dust. Bu the Elder doesn't seem to care, though—most of his income

comes from his tenants, while Bu's Goods allows him to think of himself as a prosperous merchant. Most of those who travel to the village are less than inclined to disabuse him of the notion.

- **Bu's Tenements:** While The Red Lantern is unquestionably more comfortable and better appointed, many of those who reside in the village or expect to stay a long time end up moving into one of the tenement complexes owned by Bu the Elder. Generally run-down and slum-like, they consist of poorly constructed one or two-room apartments. Anonymity is all but guaranteed, however, as most of those living in the tenements are completely disinterested in the affairs of their neighbors provided they themselves are left in peace. Bu is notoriously disinterested in proper building maintenance.
- **The Forest Shrine:** Just within the borders of the forest lies a small shrine. Rumored to be haunted by spirits at night, it is still the destination of the occasional pilgrim, and Monk Tien Bo performs ceremonies here once a month to honor the spirits of the wood.



Character Questionnaire:

Please answer the following questions when creating your character:

1. **Why have you come to the village?** Are you a traveler on a pilgrimage? Are you hiding from something? Are you an itinerant monk? An out of work mercenary recovering from your last engagement?
2. **Where did you come from before?** What was your life like there? Were you a wealthy merchant? A noble? A simple peasant with blighted crops?
3. **Do you have a family?** If so do they know where you are? Do you communicate with them regularly? Are they out to get you? Did they all die in a plague or fire, leaving you alone?
4. **Do you have any enemies?** Do they know where you are? Why are they out to get you? Where do they live and work? How far is their reach?
5. **What is your biggest fear?** Are you afraid of fire? Of disease? Of marauding bandits? What frightens you, and how do you react when you're faced with your fear?
6. **What is your favorite thing?** Do you like a certain food? The sky at night? A favorite possession or person? Anything at all is fine—as long as you like it more than anything else.
7. **What do you regret?** What is the one thing that you would go back and change, given the opportunity to do so? If you don't have any regrets, is it because you've lived a charmed life, or are you somehow incapable of regret?
8. **Have you ever encountered the supernatural?** Goblins and oni are not common, but they're a part of life in this setting. Ghosts, hungry dead, spirits, and dark magic are somewhat less common, though—have you ever encountered them before? Where and when? What did you do? If you haven't, then what do you believe about them? Are you superstitious or skeptical?
9. **What was the last rumor you heard about the capitol?** Was it good news or bad? Did you believe it? Was it far-fetched or frighteningly believable? Be creative and imaginative with this question—you may find it's more relevant than it seems.

