

SATADA!

Introduction

'SATADA!' is a brief introductory adventure designed to be easily integrated into any region of Talislanta with the minimum of effort and preparation. This modular approach gives you, the GM, the opportunity to tailor the adventure as you wish, injecting your own creativity and style, and making it easier to adjust to the desires of your gaming group.

Brief Overview

Location: Any isolated habitation.

Why are the PCs There?: The PCs could be members of the habitation, traders, caravan guards, mercenaries, or travelers.

Synopsis: The habitation seems well guarded against attack, so the PCs settle down to relax for the evening. The problem is, that while the habitation is fairly well-guarded against 'surface' attacks, it certainly isn't prepared for an attack from below.

A small group of Satada on the Underground Highway break through into the center of the habitation and launch an attack on the surprised inhabitants. With the element of surprise on their side they successfully occupy the guards, take a handful of children captive and retreat into the tunnel system, leaving a small rear-guard to occupy the beleaguered guards. They fail to occupy the PCs sufficiently though, and the heroic characters enter the tunnels in hot pursuit of the retreating Satada and their captives. What follows is a short 'Aliens' style underground hunt and battle to rescue the children. When the children are safely returned, the PCs are hailed as heroes, and the adventure is over; for now...

Notable NPCs

The Habitation Leader

The leader of the habitation is a stern, churlish member of their race, with a heart of gold. He or she is middle-aged, short, and has lost an eye somehow.

Leader of the Guard

The NPC responsible for organizing the habitation defenses is a quiet and calm member of their race. While they are intelligent and possess great potential, they are also fairly young and inexperienced.

The Captive Children

The children (2 male, 1 female) are all fairly typical young of their species who play when happy, and scream and cry when distressed (which they are for most of this adventure). They are surprisingly stubborn though, and struggle like hell, slowing the Satada down.

The Satada

The villains of the piece. the Satada are vicious, cruel and cunning, with absolutely no regard for other life forms. They won't talk at all in this adventure, they aren't at all interested in banter or bargaining, and they'd rather fight to the death than surrender to such obviously inferior sentients. They're menacing in a very cold-blooded and reptilian way. Hiss a lot.

Size: 7'-7'6", 300+lbs

Attributes:

INT+1 PER+2 WIL+3 CHA-6

STR+4 DEX+2 CON+5 SPD+2

Level: 5-12

Attacks/Damage: Bite or Claws: DR6, Tail: DR8 (may be used to simultaneously defend from rear assault), capture Bow: DR8, or as per weapon employed.

Special Abilities: Capable of speech (dialect of sauran, possibly other languages), cold inflicts double damage.

Armor: Scaly hide, PR2

Hit Points: 33

Making the Adventure Your Own

Many of the notes in this adventure are generic in their approach, requiring you to provide much of the detail to fit your choice of location.

For example, this adventure must take place in an isolated habitation. This could be a small village, trading post, nomadic settlement or military outpost. In the Western lands the adventure could easily take place in a Sarista Gypsy camp; in the Eastern Lands it could be a Kang Military outpost; in the Wilderlands, a trading post, and so on.

After deciding on your location, go over the adventure and build in any details you desire to fully flesh it out. Bear in mind what the habitation would look like, what races would be present, and what how the various NPCs are likely to act.

For example, a trading post probably has a wide diversity of inhabitants in the form of traders and travelers from across the continent, while a nomadic camp, small village, outpost or military base is going to be composed primarily of people from the realms where it is located.

The type of habitation also determines what form the defenses are likely to take, and the likely professions of those present. A small village is likely to consist of subsistence farmers and their families, with defenses consisting only of a handful of residents on watch duty, and perhaps a wooden palisade. A nomadic camp might feature numerous sentries and patrols, while a military outpost would probably have stout walls and a number of sentries.

The Adventure

The adventure can be broken down into 4 main scenes:

Scene One - The Calm Before the Storm

The PCs are relaxing and enjoying a quiet evening.

Scene Two - Satada!

The Satada break through, launching an attack, surprising everyone, and kidnapping the children.

Scene Three - Pursuit into Darkness

The heroic PCs rush into the tunnels to fight the Satada. The Satada set up a small ambush, and then regroup to face the PCs at the edge of a vast underground lake.

Scene Four - Emergence in Victory

The PCs emerge from the tunnels, returning the children, and are hailed as heroes.

~ The Adventure ~

The Calm Before The Storm

Nighttime. Jhang, the red moon of war is full in the black vault of the sky, bathing everything in its crimson glow. The PCs are relaxing, playing games, telling tales, and having a few comradely drinks with like-minded adults of the habitation. The night is restful and quiet, save for the occasional mournful cries of nocturnal creatures in the surrounding wilds.

While running this scene, try to get the players to relax. They should be completely unprepared for the next scene.

Satada!

Time this event for its greatest impact. The idea here is to shock your players. While speaking as one of the NPCs engaged in conversation with the PCs, break off their speech with a sudden, loud, cry of pain. If possible, really give the scream yourself, then describe the following scene in a frantic, fast-paced burst.

The speaking NPC screams out as a small harpoon erupts from his chest. Cries of alarm echo around the habitation as large, hideous reptilian monsters materialize; seemingly out of nowhere; and create havoc.

Describe the nightmarish scene as a battleground suddenly surrounds the PCs. Don't give any player more than a few seconds to react; if they hesitate so do their characters. They should witness many of the guards getting badly wounded, yet struggling valiantly, holding back much of the Satada onslaught.

One or two Satada should engage the party but be swiftly dispatched. As they send the Satada hissing madly to its grave they hear the screams of the children over the din of chaos, and look up to see the Satada knock a struggling mother to the ground, and disappear into the ground with the children.

The skirmish still rages around them, but they are unengaged, and a quick glance shows that the defenders are rapidly gaining the upper hand.

The panic-stricken mother will beseech the PCs to rescue her children, begging, and cajoling the PCs into getting her children back NOW. She's so desperate to see her children returned that she'll even make up bribes to influence the PCs decision. Point out the fact that they longer they leave off pursuit, the more difficult it will be for them to catch the Satada.

Remember, be descriptive, and keep the pace frantic. The players (and PCs) should have little chance to catch their breath.

Pursuit into Darkness

The PCs rush into the tunnels, hot on the heels of the escaping Satada and their captives.

This scene should be played in contrast to the frantic pacing of the skirmish. As the PCs enter the pitch-black tunnels, the sounds of conflict swiftly dim, and they find themselves in complete isolation.

The hunt for the Satada should be suspenseful and eerie. Think of the movie 'Aliens', with the only sounds being those they create, and their vision restricted to the radius of their light source as it creates deep shadows on the rough tunnel walls. Give them the feeling that if their light source were to vanish, the darkness would rush in and consume them. Mention that 'things' scuttle away, unseen in the darkness just beyond their light, and that the air grows notably cooler and damper as they descend. Even characters with dark-vision; such as Gnomekin; will feel uneasy, although they'll be able to see quite clearly. The PCs will find it easy to track the Satada, as one of them was wounded in the assault, and has left a trail of blood.

When the suspense has been built, shatter it with a child's cry from up ahead, goading them into rushing forward towards the ambush.

Ambush

As the PCs race towards the source of the cry, make a PER roll for each character. Characters with dark-vision suffer no penalty to their roll, but other characters suffer a -4 penalty. Any Jaka characters will feel distinctly uneasy as they approach the ambush site. Don't let the players do this roll themselves, don't tell them what you're rolling for, or what attribute you're using. Keeping this secret will make the players anxious, which is what they should be feeling anyway. Those who succeed at this roll notice a brief glint of metal in the darkness just as the Satada fires at them. Assume that those who succeeded can avoid the attack (if they declare they're diving to the ground etc.), but anyone who failed is fair game.

The Satada will only make one attack before rushing to catch up his comrades.

The Stand

The Satada, realizing that the PCs could catch them up, don't relish being attacked from behind, and decide to make a stand and eliminate the pursuers. They make their stand at the edge of a huge underground lake. They tie the children up, and wait for the PCs to enter the cavern, capture-bows at the ready. When the PCs enter, the Satada will each fire a single shot, before rushing forward to engage in melee. The cavern itself is vast, perhaps 10m high, and stretching far into the darkness.

As the conflict ends and the PCs make to leave with the children, something stirs in the depths and they hear booming sounds like gongs echoing under the lake. Give them a sense of foreboding, but make it

clear that the children are their first priority. Nothing will happen if the PCs stay, and the sound of the gongs die away after a few moments.

Emergence into Victory

The PCs return the children to the surface where their delighted mother welcomes them. They are hailed as heroes and a feast is held in their honor, but it is a feast tinged with sadness for the victims. The end, for now...

Further Adventures

So, the players have experienced their first adventure in Talislanta. What now? Well, the events of this adventure can lead on to any number of further exploits.

Here are some thought provoking questions that could easily be the seeds of new adventure:

Why did the Satada want young captives, and where were they taking them? Why were the Satada so willing to sacrifice themselves to capture them? Was the attack an isolated incident, or was it the start of an all-out Satada assault on numerous settlements? If this attack was only the tip of the iceberg, someone will have to spread the word and possibly help organize better defenses. Will the habitation need relocation? If they do, they may need to hire guards for the perilous journey. Now that the PCs know about the vast and mysterious Underground Highway, will they be tempted to explore it further? Just what was causing those gong-like sounds in the underground lake?

The players will likely choose their own path, but for now at least, they are heroes.