



# ASSASSINATING THE ASHINA

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MURDER A PRINCE AMIDST A BRUTAL WAR







## BACKSTORY



In the storied expanse of the Vanguard Grounds, unity once reigned supreme among its diverse clans. This era of peace and solidarity was shattered by the rise of the orcish warlord Garag'thak Irontusk. Through a relentless series of brutal conflicts, Garag'thak seized control of the nation, demanding absolute loyalty under his tyrannical rule. Those who refused to submit faced his wrath.

Consequently, many clan leaders capitulated, becoming unwilling subjects of his savage dominion. However, not all bowed to Garag'thak's iron-fisted reign. Among the defiant was the honorable Ashina clan of menders, led by the valiant Ryu Ashina. Choosing the shadows over subjugation, they orchestrated a clandestine rebellion. This insurrection, steeped in bloodshed and valor, ultimately toppled Garag'thak, crowning Ryu Ashina as the Grand General of the Vanguard Grounds.

In the aftermath, Ashina's ascension marked a new chapter for the nation. Those clans that had served under Irontusk were branded traitors. In a swift act of retribution, Ashina stripped them of their titles and lands. This decree deeply embittered many, notably the Kaidoji clan, who nursed a simmering hatred towards Ryu Ashina for their fall from grace.

As time passed, Ryu Ashina's health began to falter, presenting a ripe opportunity for the scorned Kaidoji. Seeking vengeance without tarnishing their honor further, they now plot in the shadows. Eschewing direct confrontation, the Kaidoji seek to employ covert assassins to exact their retribution upon the ailing leader, setting the stage for a new conflict in the tempestuous saga of the Vanguard Grounds.



## PLOT HOOK

The party is made up of bounty hunters and killers of a varying degree of notoriety. While going about their business, they encounter a suspicious goblin man who wishes to speak with them about a business proposal.



## ADVENTURE SUMMARY



A group of seasoned infiltration experts, the party arrives in the tumultuous lands of the Vanguard Grounds, where the Ashina family rules with a history of blood and valor. Amidst the brewing discontent, a sly goblin, representing the disgraced Kaidoji clan, hires them for a daring mission: to infiltrate the Ashina's stronghold and topple their defenses before an upcoming siege. To gain access, they must disguise themselves, survey the defenses and plan their attack.

Once inside, they use the bustling activity of the castle to discreetly undermine its defenses. They identify structural weaknesses, plant explosive charges at critical points, and subtly incapacitate key guards to create chaos. As night falls, their team strategically positions itself within the castle, preparing to strike at the heart of Ashina's power.

As the clock strikes midnight, the siege begins. Explosions rock the castle, creating breaches in the walls and sowing confusion among the Ashina forces. In the ensuing chaos, the party leads a relentless assault on the keep, battling Ashina warriors and navigating the treacherous, trap-laden corridors. The climax of the siege sees them confronting Ryu Ashina, culminating in a fierce battle. With Ryu's defeat, the castle falls, signaling a new era in the Vanguard Grounds as they slip away.



# CHAPTER 1: A CLASH OF CLANS

In which the party discovers a seed of hatred.

## GET THE JOB

*GM NOTE: The job in this adventure is highly specialized. As such, the party's builds become relevant, especially as a reason for why the NPCs recruit them. Feel free to tell them the nature of the adventure, so that they can prepare their characters appropriately. Otherwise, you can alter the NPC's reasoning for why they recruit the party (such as desperation, need, etc.). Consider also that the job at hand is evil-coded, so a traditional party might not be overjoyed about doing it.*

Before starting the adventure, if you are playing this adventure as a one-shot or as the start of a campaign, this is the perfect point for the party members to introduce themselves. Once each party member has had some time to introduce themselves and their abilities, you may proceed.

Read this:

"In the dusky corners of a dimly lit tavern where you find yourself, having just finished another successful job, you cannot help but feel you are being watched. You've spent enough time taking down threats and infiltrating places to know when someone doesn't fit in. It is then your eyes meet with those of an unexpected visitor. A goblin, cloaked in a mantle of obscurity, approaches you with a sly gait that belies his small stature. His eyes, sharp and calculating, scans the room before settling on you. With a grin that reveals his jagged teeth, he introduces himself in hushed tones."

The party now meets Gorik (see Gorik sidebar).

### GORIK SLICKHAND (chaotic neutral goblin)

**Information:** Gorik Slickhand is a goblin with a knack for stealth and a penchant for finding people. Standing at a mere 3 feet tall, he boasts a wiry frame with greenish-yellow skin that seems to blend seamlessly into the shadows. His beady black eyes glint with mischievous intelligence, constantly scanning his surroundings. His most prized possession is a set of playing cards, each masterfully drawn on to represent his many contacts, and kept in a small leather case attached to his belt.

**Roleplaying as Gorik:** Despite his unassuming appearance, Gorik is a charismatic and witty goblin, always ready with a clever remark or a sly grin. He thrives in social situations, using his charm and guile to gather information or strike a deal. Gorik is also a master of haggling, always seeking to get the best value for his services or goods. However, his loyalty can be as fleeting as his attention, and he is known to prioritize his own interests. When dealing with Gorik, the party should feel the need to be cautious of his cunning nature and fleeting loyalty.

After being introduced to the party, Gorik will deal out his cards and ask the party to play. When the party members lift their cards, they can make a **DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check** to see the many drawings on the cards each representing a real person. Not just that, each party member has a card of themselves. Additionally, each party member who rolls an **18 or higher on the Intelligence (Investigation) check** notices that the cards each have the person's home location written in a different code.





Gorik will explain to the party that the game of cards is only so that no one in the inn gets suspicious. Then, he'll explain the current political situation to the party, as well as what is asked of them: to infiltrate the Ashina Keep and weaken its defenses anticipating a siege. As for pay, his employers are willing to give the party up to 400 gp each upon finishing the job, with an additional 1,000 gp bounty if the party can find the Ashina battle plans.

*GM NOTE: During this encounter, it is important that Gorik doesn't mention who his employer is. This way, he ensures the party cannot turn on them and doom their family. If the party try to pry this information out of him, Gorik will stand his ground unless he is intimidated with a successful DC 21 Charisma (Intimidation) check.*

The party can attempt to haggle with a **DC 16 Charisma (Intimidation) or Charisma (Persuasion) check**. A failure on either check will cause Gorik to take out playing cards marked with the party's loved ones as a form of intimidation. He will then only offer them 350 gold each because of their audacity. They will receive half of their payment upfront and a second half upon completion.

Once the party has agreed to work together with Gorik, he'll hand them over a contract in the form of a papyrus and instruct them to move quickly, while Ryu Ashina is sick. Lastly, Gorik will offer the party four deployable goblin bombs and a magic stone they can tap on when they wish the attack to begin, which they must lay out to weaken the defenses. The success of the siege on the keep will depend on their placement.

The party can now devise a plan and acquire any items they might need. Proceed to the next subchapter.

## PREPARATIONS

As to not get associated with the attack, Gorik will leave the party to plan it on their own and ask he not be told anything of how they want to do it, except the day it will take place.

The party might not know the exact way one could infiltrate a castle, let alone one inspired by foreign traditions. As such, lean into the characters' assumed knowledge. Allow each party member to make either a **DC 16 Intelligence (History), Intelligence (Investigation), or Wisdom (Insight) check**. On a successful check, give them the following information:

- On a successful **Intelligence (History) check**, they remember that the hobgoblin clans are particularly honorable, providing food and shelter to any bards, merchants, or diplomats who come to their home.

- On a successful **Intelligence (Investigation) check**, they find newspapers and documents that speak of Ryu Ashina taking particular liking to soldiers, promising to help them whenever he can, as a form of gratitude for the rough war he fought.

- On a successful **Wisdom (Insight) check**, they deduce that considering the Ashina family's affinity for healing and mending, they'll help anyone who asks for aid at their keep while injured.

Once the party has devised a plan, they go out in search of weapons, poisons, or any items they might deem useful. They can buy any common and uncommon magic items at the local vendors, as well as *potions of greater healing* for 200 gp.

In addition to buying items, the party can go to the town's quest board, where they find the following:

- A job offer for a groundskeeper at the Ashina Keep. Any party member can apply for this offer. If they have both a **Strength score** and a **Dexterity score of 14 or higher**, they will be hired, allowing the party to scout the keep for an extended period of time and prepare better for the siege. (Detailed further in Chapter 2).





• A job offer for mercenaries, which the party can hire for 300 gold. They form a band of **three thugs**, which the party can ask to join them inside the keep, assault the keep at a different date so they can acquire information or aid in any other way the party deems necessary.

Once the party has finished preparing and is ready to infiltrate the keep, you can proceed to the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 2:

# A GAME OF THRONES

In which the party prepares their attempt.

## WELCOME

*GM NOTE: Before you begin this chapter, if any party member has taken up the job of groundskeeper, they can navigate the map freely. This is done over a span of time during which the party member works as groundskeeper for the family, discovering the location. During this time, the party members cannot set up any of the explosive devices, as they'll be detected by the guards, but they can get a lay of the land. While doing so, they cannot be stopped by guards or samurais.*

Read this:

"Armed with supplies and all the information you need, you head out for the Ashina Keep, but not before informing Gorik. The time has come for you to put the plan into action. As you approach the Ashina Keep, you are immediately struck by its formidable and majestic presence. Rising proudly against the backdrop of a lush, rolling landscape, the castle is a breathtaking example of traditional hobgoblin architecture. Its towering, multi-tiered structure is crowned with elegant, curved roofs that gleam in the sunlight, their tiles resembling the scales of a mighty dragon. The castle's walls, robust and expertly crafted, are interspersed with sturdy wooden gates and stone watchtowers, each meticulously positioned for defense. Surrounding the castle is a deep, serene moat, reflecting the castle's grandeur like a mirror. Cherry blossoms dot the landscape, their delicate pink petals contrasting with the stoic grey of the stone. Perhaps more surprising than all the grandeur are the wide open gates, a sign of the family's openness. And it is there you arrive, prepared to their lives."

Show the party map 1. They begin at area 1. They must get through the gate (area 2), after which point a guard will attempt to guide them directly to the main building (area 5). Area 6 through 8 can only be investigated if the party isn't guided or if a party member breaks away from the guide with a **DC 17 Dexterity (Stealth) check**. Alternatively, the party can siege the forces of the Ashina family, fighting each **guard, mage and knight** present on the map.

## 1 - POINT OF ARRIVAL

The party arrives here. If at any point the party returns to this location, they retreat to safety and the adventure ends.

## 2 - FRONT GATE

Read this:

"The front gate of Ashina Castle is an unremarkable structure, but for two large stone sculptures. Flanking the gate are two stoic guards, their armor polished to a high shine, and their expressions unreadable beneath traditional kabuto helmets. They stand with unwavering discipline, hands resting on the hilts of their sheathed katanas, vigilant to any signs of threat or treachery."





The party now meets the two gate guards, Haruto and Kenjiro (see Haruto and Kenjiro sidebars), who they must speak to if they wish to be let in.

### **HARUTO TETSUYA** (lawful neutral hobgoblin **veteran**)

**Information:** Haruto Tetsuya is the embodiment of discipline and order. As a guard at Ashina Castle, he takes his responsibilities with the utmost seriousness. He is a man of few words, believing that actions speak louder than any rhetoric. He treats his superiors with unwavering respect and offers guidance to his juniors, fostering a sense of duty and honor among them. His loyalty to the Ashina clan is unshakeable, viewing his service as not just a duty but a calling. He has the utmost love for law.

**Roleplaying as Haruto:** When embodying Haruto, emphasize his disciplined nature. If the party arrive posing as diplomats, he'll let them in without asking any questions. Otherwise, he'll be combative and grill them with questions. He should speak succinctly, focusing on duty and security. Haruto is not one for small talk or unnecessary banter; he's all about the job at hand.

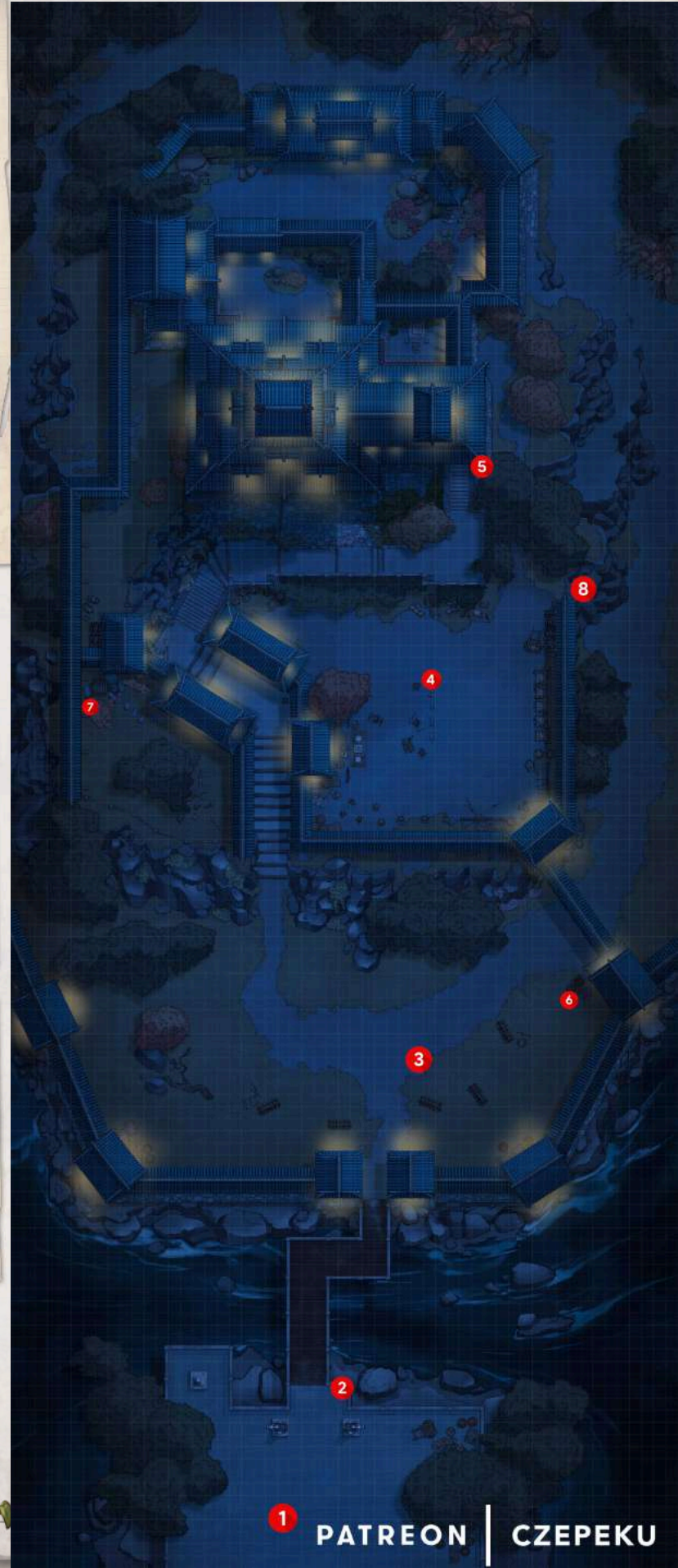
### **KENJIRO YAMATO** (chaotic neutral hobgoblin **veteran**)

**Information:** Kenjiro Yamato stands in stark contrast to his counterpart. Kenjiro is known for his spontaneous and spirited demeanor. When he was younger, he relished in the thrill of combat and often sought out challenges to prove his prowess. Despite his sometimes unruly behavior, Kenjiro is deeply loyal to his clan and would fiercely defend them in any conflict. His boisterous laugh and easygoing nature make him approachable, yet he remains vigilant, always ready to switch from joviality to combat readiness at a moment's notice. His unpredictable nature adds an element of surprise at the castle gates, making it hard for anyone to anticipate his next move.

**Roleplaying as Kenjiro:** Portray Kenjiro as lively and spirited. He's the type of character who enjoys a good laugh and isn't afraid to speak his mind. If the party arrives as bards, merchants, or hurt warriors, he'll tend to them and offer to let them in. Otherwise, he'll be the one to question them. Keep an undercurrent of alertness and readiness for battle in his interactions, showcasing his dedication to his duties despite his chaotic tendencies.

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MAP 1





As the party arrives, they must speak with the two guards and convince them to be let in. This can be done through a mixture of **DC 17 Charisma (Deception) checks**, **Charisma (Persuasion) checks**, and other checks the GM deems appropriate. Once the party has convinced both guards to be let in, the guard that they convinced first will offer to guide them over to the keep.

If the party has failed 3 or more consecutive checks, the guards deny them entrance into the keep and they must find another way in.

***GM NOTE:** The exact interactions between the party and the guards will differ greatly based on personalities, story, and original roles. As such, there is no precise, roll-by-roll structure you can have to the interaction. Rather, let the interaction evolve naturally, with the two guards speaking to the party and amongst themselves. Then, ask for rolls when they feel appropriate. For example, if the party is posing as bards, ask for a Performance check. If they are posing as nobles, ask for a History check to remember noble families.*

### 3 - FIRST COURTYARD

Read this:

"Beyond the front gate lies the first courtyard, a vast expanse of grass broken up by a neatly raked gravel path, designed to highlight the elegance and order of the Ashina clan. The courtyard is alive even at this hour with the presence of samurai defenders, their movements a graceful yet deadly dance of discipline and martial prowess."

The courtyard hosts **six knights**, patrolling the width of the courtyard or resting behind the spikes. While passing through, any party member can make a **DC 17 Wisdom (Perception) check** to inspect the surroundings. On a successful check, they notice the unattended barrels of gunpowder (area 6) and the well (area 7).

**Encounter: Samurai.** If any party member walks through the courtyard unattended or diverts from the main path, the samurais question them. Unless they are persuaded to calm down with a **DC 17 Charisma (Persuasion) check**, they are attacked.

### 4 - SECOND COURTYARD

Read this:

"Deeper within the castle walls, an inner courtyard unfolds, a stark contrast to the quiet order of the first. Here, the air rings with the sounds of combat training - the clashing of wooden swords, the shouts of exertion, and the crisp commands of instructors. Guards, both seasoned and novices, engage in rigorous practice drills, honing their skills and reflexes. The courtyard is bordered by wooden dummies and weapon racks, each bristling with an array of traditional weapons. The intensity of the training is palpable, a clear display of the Ashina's dedication to martial excellence, even when the sun is down."

The courtyard hosts **eight guards** and **three veterans** training them. While passing through, any party member can make a **DC 19 Wisdom (Perception) check** to inspect the surroundings. On a successful check, they notice the end of the wall (area 8).

**Encounter: Training Grounds.** If any party member walks through the courtyard unattended or diverts from the main path, the trainees will ask them to come join the battle in a joking manner. If the party member fights and wins, it will alert the guards as to their abilities, having an impact later in the adventure. If the party member fights and loses (deliberately or not), they'll be invited by the guards to dine with them, which will also have an impact later in the campaign.

### 5 - KEEP ENTRANCE

Read this:

"The entrance to the keep proper is marked by a set of ornately carved wooden doors, their panels depicting scenes of historic battles and legendary warriors of the Ashina lineage. As the main threshold to the inner sanctum of the castle, it is guarded more heavily, with elite warriors standing watch, their presence an unspoken challenge to any who seek entry. The air here is cooler, the ambiance shifting to one of hushed reverence, as if crossing this portal means delving into the heart of the Ashina's power and legacy."

When the party walks through the door and enters the keep, you can proceed to the next subchapter.



## 6 - GUNPOWDER BARRELS

Read this:

"In a quiet corner of the courtyard, several unguarded barrels of gunpowder sit, their dark wooden sides bound with iron, hinting at potential danger."

The party can place the explosive charges near the barrels with a **DC 18 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check**. This will have an impact when the siege begins. Alternatively, they can be detonated early with fire to cause a distraction.

## 7 - WELL

Read this:

"A quaint, stone well with a thatched roof sits in the back side of a garden, complete with a wooden bucket and rope."

The party can poison the water with any poison they might have bought beforehand or any poison they find within the keep. If poisoned with the nightbloom root found inside the kitchen, this will have an impact later in the adventure.

## 8 - END OF THE WALL

Read this:

"The formidable stone wall encircling the castle ends abruptly, giving way to a mix of shrubbery and rocks, subtly suggesting a less guarded point of entry."

The party can place the explosives near the end of the wall to signal it for the siege. This will have an impact when the siege begins.

## MEETING THE MAN

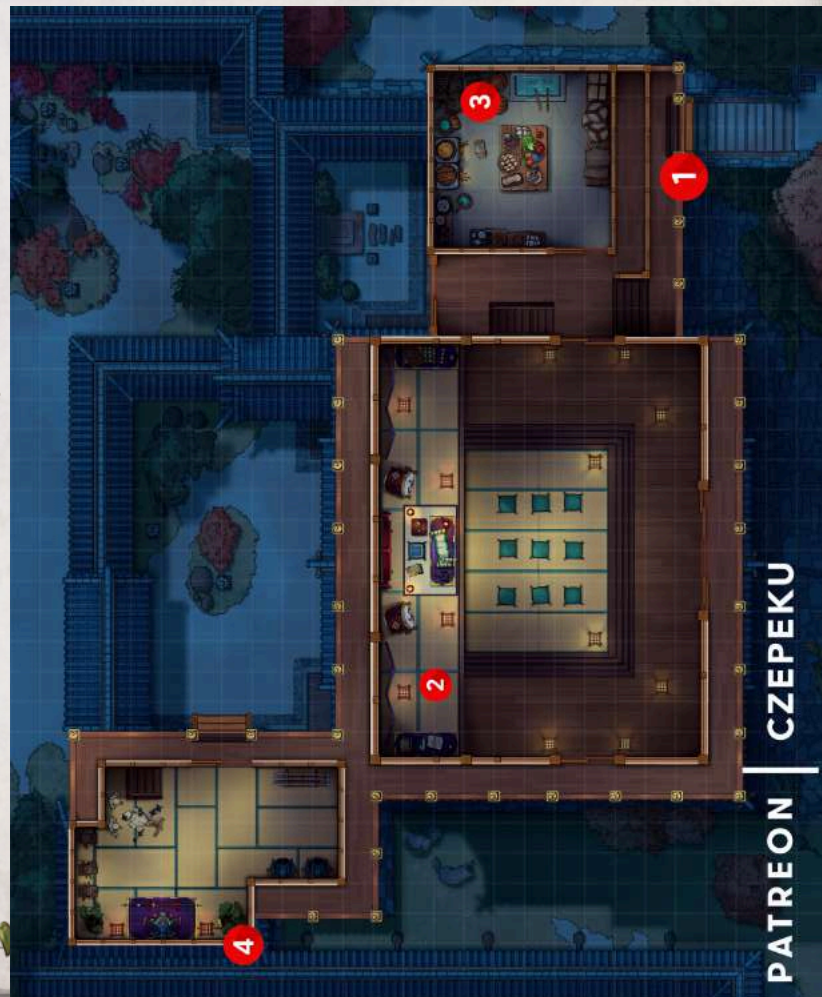
Show the party map 2. Maps 3, 4 and 5 are all connected as separate floors of the same building. They begin at area 1 and will be guided by a guard to Ryu (area 2), but not before leaving all their weapons at the door. They can attempt to smuggle weapons with a **DC 20 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check**. Then, on the way to area 2, they can break away to the kitchen (area 3) with a **DC 18 Dexterity (Stealth) check**.

*GM NOTE: Upon entering the house, it is highly likely the party will wish to sneak through, and investigate the surroundings. While there aren't exact checks or every action a party member wishes to perform, allow them to get creative. If they wish to look through a keyhole, they can do so with a Wisdom (Perception) check. If they want to distract people with noises or plant devices, they can do that with Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) checks and so on.*

Upon the party finishing their meal or starting the siege, proceed to the next chapter.

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MAP 2





## KEYED LOCATIONS OF THE KEEP

### 1 - ENTRANCE (BASE FLOOR)

The party arrives here. It is the same area as map 1 area 5.

### 2 - COMMON ROOM (BASE FLOOR)

As the party arrives at area 2, read this:

"As you step into the grand chamber of the keep, your eyes are immediately drawn to a figure standing with a solemn grace at the far end. Ryu Ashina, the ruler of the castle, presents an imposing yet dignified presence. Clad in resplendent armor that gleams silver in the dim light of the chamber, he embodies both the strength and burden of leadership. His gaze, heavy with the weight of rulership, meets yours with an unspoken understanding of the gravity of the moment. The air around him is thick with a palpable sense of history and power, and his posture, upright and unwavering, speaks of a life dedicated to the service of his people and the defense of his realm."

The party now meets Ryu Ashina (see Ryu Ashina sidebar). He is permanently guarded by two **magics** (unless he is bathing).

#### **RYU ASHINA** (lawful good adult silver dragon).

**Information:** Driven by loyalty to his family and his people, Ryu is an honorable yet overly confident man, who believes he alone can save the world through his healing powers and influence. To not become too big of a target, he hides his true silver dragon nature behind the shape of a hobgoblin, which has allowed him to become the head of government.

**Roleplaying as Ryu:** When portraying Ryu, focus on his dignified and solemn nature. He should speak with authority and wisdom, reflecting his experience and the burdens he carries. Ryu is a character who measures his words carefully, always considering the impact of his decisions on his people and his legacy. His interactions should convey a sense of deep responsibility and a commitment to justice and fairness.

Ryu will inquire about the party and how they arrived at the castle. They must deceive him with a **DC 16 Charisma (Deception) check**. On a failure, Ryu will acknowledge to his guards that he does not believe the party to be entirely truthful, but he will host them still, as a show of good faith. Then, he'll tell the party it is time to serve dinner and ask them to join him upstairs.

If the party agree, Ryu will take them up with him to the second floor (area 6, map 3)

*GM NOTE: The pacing and atmosphere of this interaction should differ greatly on whether the party has a successful or failed deception check. On a failed check, Ryu is testing them, openly inviting them to dinner so he can get a better understanding of their motives and kill them if they try to fight. On a successful check, Ryu is openly friendly and talkative, hanging out with the party.*

### 3 - THE KITCHEN (BASE FLOOR)

Inside the kitchen there are **three commoners**. If a party member enters the room, they'll be confused, but won't say anything. Any party member here can make a **DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation) check** or a **DC 14 Intelligence (Nature) check** to find any herbs that could possibly be used. On a successful check, they find a nightbloom root, a popular sedative.





## 4 - TRAINING ROOM (BASE FLOOR)

Ryu's personal training room. Inside it, the party can find a +2 longsword, +1 plate armor and three +1 spears. They can use these weapons during the siege.

## 5 - STAIRS (SECOND FLOOR)

While in this area, any party member with a **passive Perception of 13 or higher** can hear laughing from within another room on the same level. Then, they'll be taken to area 6 to have dinner with Ashina. Any party member can also go up the stairs, reaching map 4 at the stairs.

*GM NOTE: While map 4 is accessible right now, the party can only do so while unaccompanied or sneaking away. If anyone sees them sneaking up, they will be asked to return down.*

## 6 - TEA ROOM (SECOND FLOOR)

In this area, the party will have tea with Ryu Ashina. During this discussion, keep track of the following:

- Set a timer for 10 minutes. Once the 10 minutes are up, Ryu will have finished his dinner and head to sleep, asking the party members to return to where they initially met him, where beds have been set up for them to sleep in. Then, proceed to the next chapter.
- At any time the party is asked to give out information, they must convince Ashina of it with either a **DC 18 Charisma (Deception) check** or a **DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check**. If the party ever reaches 3 failed checks, Ashina will alert the guards to escort the party.
- If any party member lost to the trainees inside the inner courtyard, one of the trainees will walk inside the tea room and sheepishly ask the party member to join them for dinner as a way of showing camaraderie. If the party member agrees, they will be taken to area 3. On the way there, they can break away from the guard with a **DC 21 Dexterity (Stealth) check** and investigate the floor, potentially accessing area 4.
- At any point, if the discussion begins to drag, ask the party whether they'd like to begin the siege or not. If they do, proceed to the next chapter early.

## 7 - GUARDS DINING ROOM (SECOND FLOOR)

Any party member can either sneak into this room or be guided here by a guard if they had interacted with them earlier.

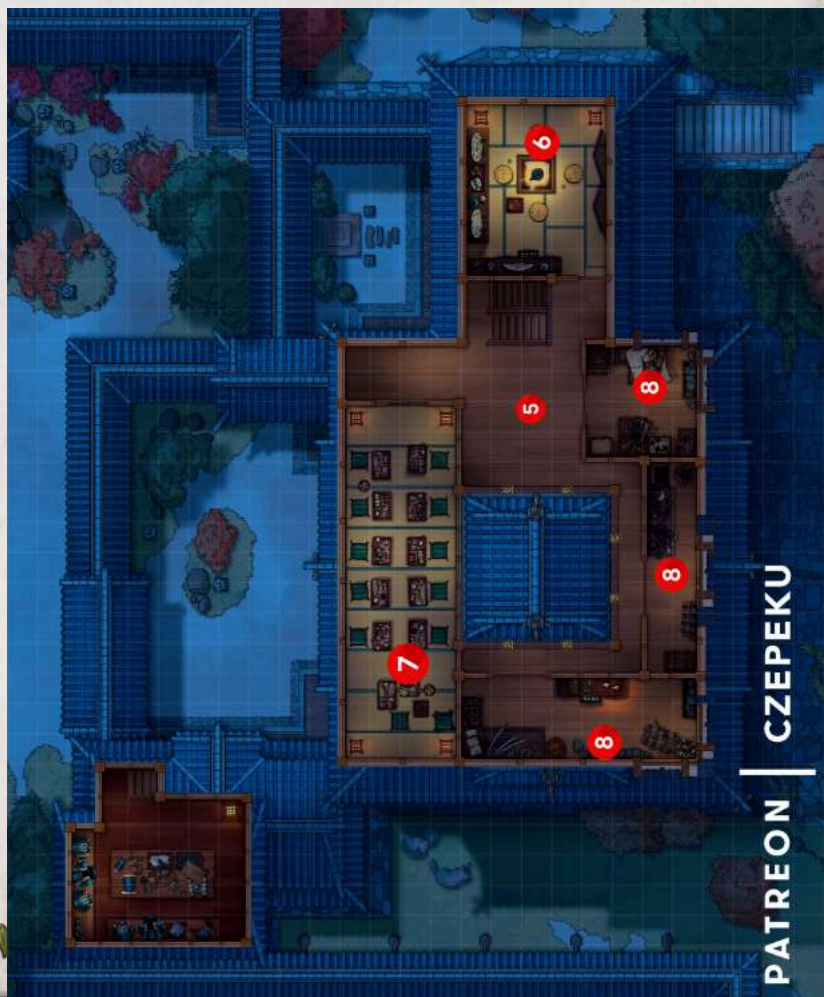
Read this:

"As you enter the dining hall where the guards take their meals, the lively atmosphere of camaraderie greets you. The room is filled with small wooden tables, each decked with food. The air is rich with the aroma of hearty meals, a comforting respite from the rigors of guard duty. Laughter and conversation echo off the stone walls, as groups of guards, still in parts of their armor, share stories and jests over their food."

The room is inhabited by **8 guards** and **1 mage**. While in this room, the party can speak with them, poison their food with appropriate **Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) checks** or make **DC 15 Intelligence (Medicine) checks** to see them begin to fall asleep as a result of them poisoning the water earlier (if they have done so).

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MAP 2





Alternatively, while in this room, the party can fight them, misguide them, lock them inside, or interact with them in any way they see fit.

## 8 - WEAPON ROOMS (SECOND FLOOR)

All three rooms on this level of the keep are filled to the brim with weapons. They are all locked, requiring a **DC 15 Thieves' Tools check** to open. Any party member within one such room can make an **Intelligence (Investigation) check**. On a 12 or higher, they find regular weapons one can use in battle. On a 16 or higher, they find the weapons that were taken from them upon entering the keep.

## 9 - RYU'S ROOM (THIRD FLOOR)

Ryu's room is permanently guarded by **two veterans**. After dinner is finished, when Ryu arrives, both **veterans** will go and eat while Ryu takes a bath in area 10. On the clothing rack is Ryu's *robe of stars*.

## 10 - BATH (THIRD FLOOR)

After finishing his meal, Ryu will take a bath within this room for 10 minutes. Feel free to start a timer, only giving the party minimal time to catch him alone!

## 11 - STAIRS (THIRD FLOOR)

These stairs lead to the fourth floor (and Ryu's war plans).

## 12 - WAR ROOM (FOURTH FLOOR)

Any party member who makes a successful **DC 17 Intelligence (Investigation) check** can find Ryu's war plans among the many parchments and maps. The first creature who touches the plans or the map must succeed on a **DC 18 Constitution saving throw** or become petrified.

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MAP 2

# CHAPTER 3: A HOUSE OF CARDS

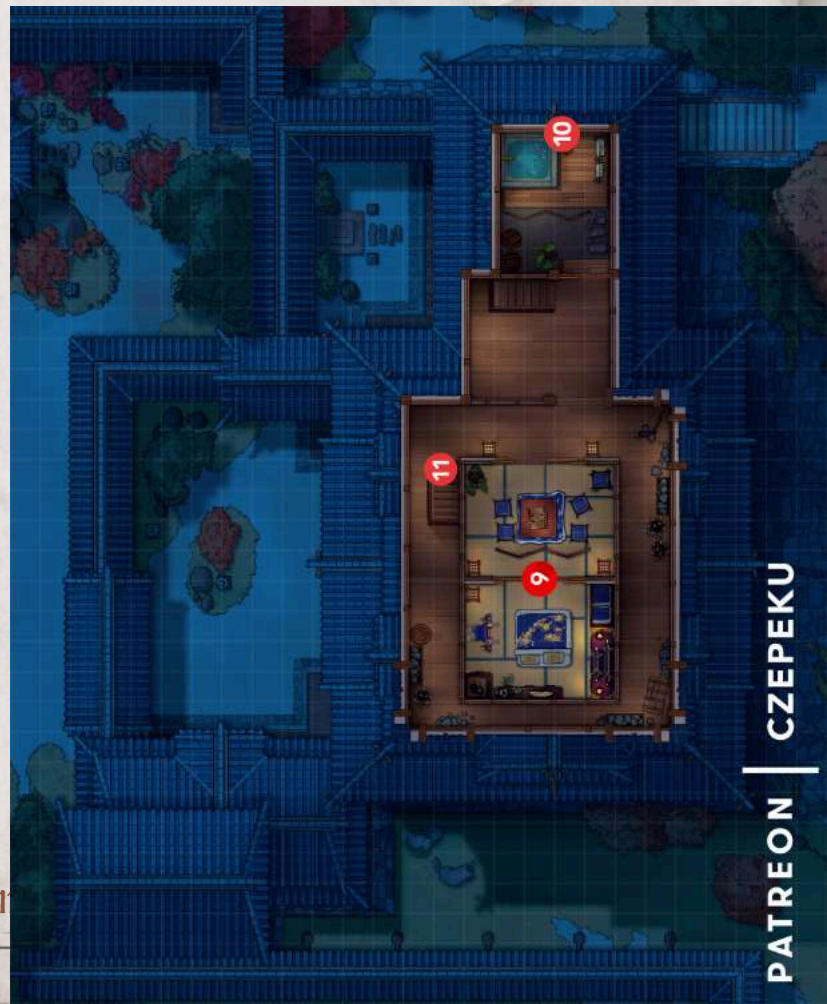
In which the party performs a hit job.

## SETUP

*GM NOTE: Before beginning the action of this chapter, take into account the party's location and the time of day. Have they waited until after dinner, when all members of the house have fallen asleep? All of these might influence their location and the siege itself.*

The siege begins, with **20 hobgoblins** assaulting the castle. Additionally, **10 hobgoblins** serving the Ashina will emerge into the courtyard to fight them.

*GM NOTE: For the sake of keeping the adventure brief, use these fighters as props, peppering them throughout the map, but not having them outwardly target the party unless targeted. The only creatures who'll attack the party are the knights found on the map or the guards and veterans still left alive in the second courtyard.*





As you set up the siege, make the following changes based on the party's actions:

- If the guards in the training grounds were alerted, **four knights** will storm the keep looking for the party.
- If a charge was placed next to the gunpowder barrels, only **three knights** will remain within the first courtyard.
- If the well is poisoned with nightbloom, all of the **guards** within the second courtyard have been put to sleep.
- If a charge was placed next to the end of the wall, **four bugbears** arrive there and attempt to help the party escape.

Read this:

"The silence of the night shattered by the sudden, thunderous roar of explosions. The siege of the Ashina Keep has begun. From your vantage point, you watch as the castle walls, once thought impenetrable, tremble and shake under the assault. Smoke and debris billow into the sky, painting a scene of chaos and destruction. The sounds of battle cries and clashing steel rise in a frenzied chorus as the castle's defenders scramble to their posts. Amidst the turmoil, the once unassailable stronghold now feels vulnerable, its fate hanging in the balance as the siege unfolds with relentless fury. Your time to strike has come."

Once the siege has begun, roll for initiative. The party's main goal becomes to assault Ryu, who, upon seeing his people attacked and outnumbered, will rush outside in an attempt to shift into his dragon form and take to the skies. The party must attack him (following him through the many levels of the building and even in the courtyard and necessary.

***GM NOTE:** The only way to make a siege truly memorable is through imagery. At initiative 25 of each round, provide a vivid description of the tides of battle. If the party has planned accordingly and has set up charges in the right places, describe the death of the Ashina forces. If Ryu has managed to take to the skies in his true form, try to get across the shift in morale. The more you describe the surrounding chaos, the better.*

When the party enter direct combat with Ryu in his true form, the final encounter begins. For the purpose of this combat, Ryu (**adult silver dragon**) is considered within his lair.

## LAIR ACTIONS

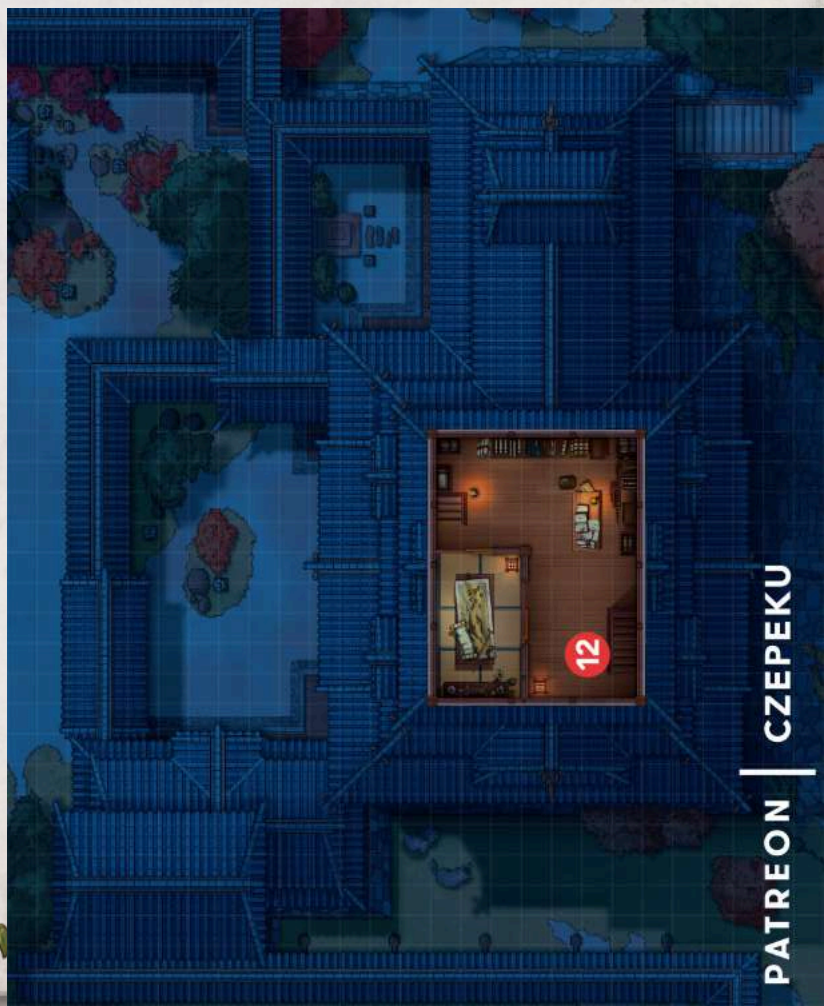
On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), the dragon takes a lair action to cause one of the following effects:

- The dragon creates fog as if it had cast the *fog cloud* spell. The fog lasts until initiative count 20 on the next round.
- A blisteringly cold wind blows through the lair near the dragon. Each creature within 120 feet of the dragon must succeed on a **DC 15 Constitution saving throw** or take 5 (1d10) cold damage. Gases and vapors are dispersed by the wind, and unprotected flames are extinguished. Protected flames, such as lanterns, have a 50 percent chance of being extinguished.

Once the party has either defeated Ryu or retreated all the way to map 1 area 1, proceed to the next subchapter.

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MAP 2







## THE END



If the party has defeated Ryu, read this:

"With a deafening thud that shakes the very foundations of the castle, the mighty dragon, Ryu Ashina, crashes to the ground. Its colossal form lies sprawled, wings tattered and breaths coming in labored gasps. The transformation from the noble leader to this majestic beast now ends in a tragic demise. As you watch, the dragon's eyes, once alight with a fierce intelligence and power, slowly dim, the fire within them extinguishing. The air is thick with a poignant mix of awe and sorrow. The Grand General is dead."

If the party has instead retreated without defeating Ryu, read this:

"Above, silhouetted against the darkening sky, the formidable dragon form of Ryu Ashina soars, an awe-inspiring spectacle of power and majesty. His fiery gaze follows your every move, a silent guardian watching over his domain. Despite the chaos, there's a palpable sense of respect in his watchful vigil, acknowledging your bravery even as adversaries. As you move further away from the castle, Ryu's figure becomes a distant silhouette against the backdrop of the fading light, a poignant reminder of the might and nobility of the ruler you chose to challenge. There's an unspoken understanding that the story of Ryu Ashina, the man and the dragon, is far from over."

Based on the party's performance during the mission, reward them with the appropriate amount of gold:

**1. Clean Kill.** Ryu is dead. The party is awarded the rest of their gold and can live their lives in peace.

**2. Perfect Plan.** Ryu is dead and the party has reclaimed his battle plans. They receive the gold, plus an additional 1,000 gp bounty.

**3. Retreat.** Ryu survives, but the siege is somewhat successful. The party receives half of the gold they are owed.

**4. Complete Failure.** The party is captured and interrogated, then released into disgrace.

The End.



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