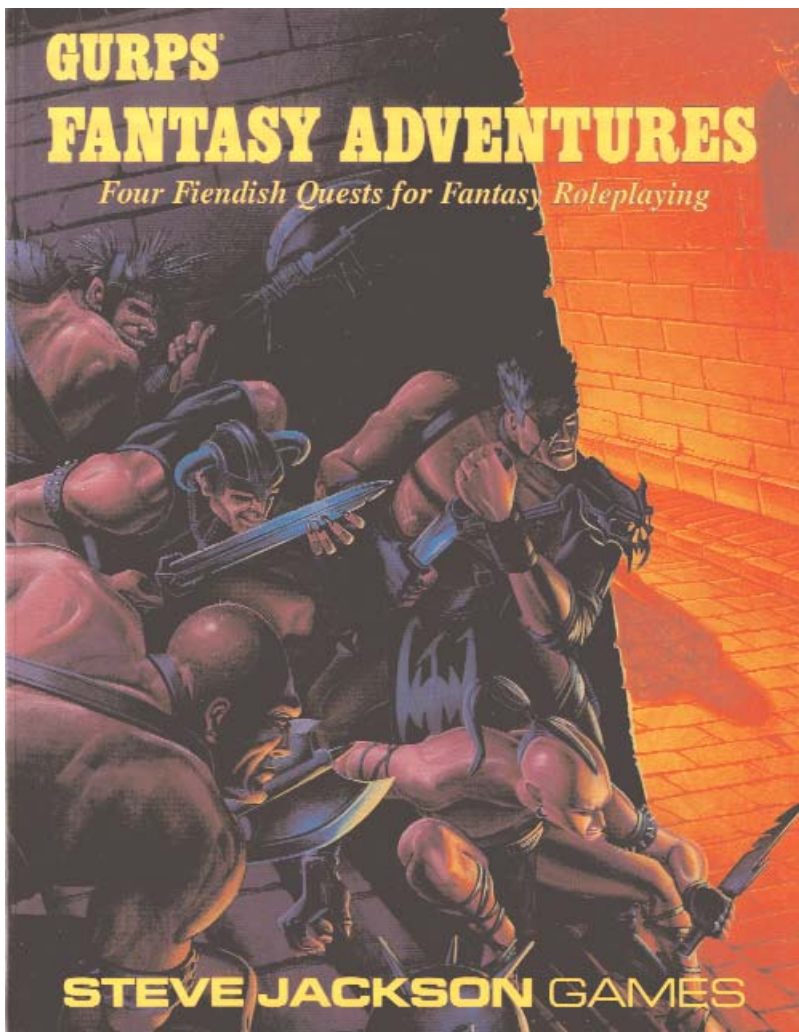


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This PDF is a scanned copy of an adventure from the last printed edition of *GURPS Fantasy Adventures*. No changes or updates from that edition were made, but we have appended all known errata to the end of the document.

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SAHUDESE FIRE DRILL

By Walter Milliken

Sahudese Fire Drill demonstrates that adventure can be found in one's own backyard, even in jobs that might at first appear to be straightforward and perhaps a little dull.

Great quests, epic deeds, and the vanquishing of mighty foes are not the only challenges to be found. Sometimes you can find adventure just showing a few visitors around town . . .

This is the adventure that dares to ask, "Just what good is a hero, anyway?"



Introduction

This scenario is designed as a change-of-pace adventure for those who are finding life a little bit too easy. It can be used with just about any party, whether they are green adventurers just getting started, or an experienced and well-coordinated group.

When the players are beginning to say, “Ho-hum, another dragon/evil wizard/Orc army” — it’s time to spring this one on them.

Setting Up the Scenario

The adventure takes place in Megalos (the city), although it could be run in any city on Yrth, or for that matter any large city in a medieval-type world. For best effect, though, there should be a large number of people about, including some of high status whom it would be better not to annoy . . .

Since the scenario depends on surprising the party with the behavior of the Sahudese, it’s best if the PCs have had no previous contact with inhabitants of that nation, and have little idea what to expect. Likewise, they should not know the Sahudese language to any useful extent. Characters from Sahud would spoil the effect, and should not be permitted.

Additionally, it is helpful if the party is unfamiliar with the city of Megalos, so they will be uncertain of the reactions of the city-dwellers, guardsmen, and officials to some of the events which occur. This isn’t necessary, but will help maintain an atmosphere of tension — the basic theme of this adventure is treading the fine line between displeasing one’s guests and incurring the wrath of the local powers.

Running the Adventure

The whole point of this plot is to run the characters around in circles until they either give up or the GM takes pity on them and lets things end. It’s not *quite* a no-win situation, but PCs should regret ever getting involved. On the other hand, the *players* should be having a good time. If they aren’t, the Game Master should end things quickly and go on to something else.

This scenario will require a lot of improvisation on the part of the GM. To get in the proper mood, a steady diet of Monty Python, Abbott and Costello, or *The Hitch-Hiker’s Guide to the Galaxy* will prove inspirational. *Paranoia* adventures may also be helpful, but can leave the GM with a taste for blood . . .

Summary

This section is a basic outline of *Sahudese Fire Drill*, covering the important information the GM needs to understand while reading the rest of the adventure. The GM should read the rest of the sections carefully before running the adventure, of course. The most important information about the plot and characters is summarized in the chart on p. 79.

The Cast

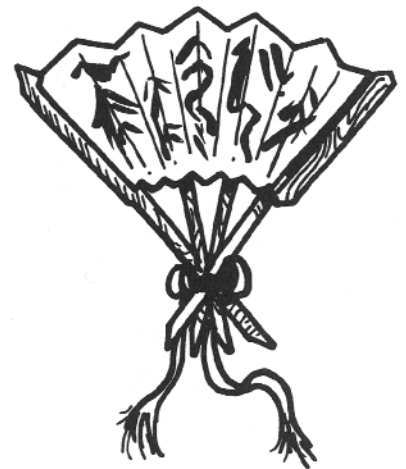
To make the following sections clearer, the major characters in this adventure are summarized here. More detail on each can be found in the sidebars on the following pages. So without further ado, let us meet . . .

Marcus Aurifactus, a Megalan merchant with, if not a heart of gold, at least a lot of it stashed away elsewhere. He hires the characters to escort . . .

Yarohito Shimota, the head of the Yarohito clan in Sahud, who wishes to arrange a silk trade with Marcus. Along with Shimota comes an army of servants and his son . . .

About the Author

Walter Milliken has lived most of his life in southern New Hampshire, with brief interruptions for schooling in St. Louis, Missouri and Palo Alto, California. He makes his living as a senior computer scientist at a large high-tech company in Cambridge, Mass., and is still somewhat confused about how he wound up writing a fantasy adventure. It seems to have started when he ran “Sahudese Fire Drill” at the local gaming convention, Dovercon IV, in 1988. Combined with the fact that he often playtests for Steve Jackson Games, and occasionally writes articles for *Roleplayer*, it probably all makes sense, somehow. Walter is currently planning to have his sense of humor repaired after completing this adventure.



A Word of Warning

This adventure is — to put it bluntly — a hose job. While the PCs’ lives won’t be at stake (probably), the same cannot be said for their sanity . . .

Wise GMs will divest their players of potential weapons before running this scenario, or should at least invest in a good Missile Shield spell to ward off thrown dice and the like.

Yarohito Najimatsu, a 12-year-old boy with all the finesse of Godzilla, the intelligence of Professor Moriarty, and the morals of Jack the Ripper. But this juvenile disaster area is only a minor threat compared to . . .

Ah Manchu, the worst enemy of the Yarohito clan. He works through his henchman . . .

The Master of Spring Mud, the head of the Sahudese ninja in Megalos, and the man with the best fried squid in the city. His plans often run at cross purposes to those of . . .

Master Trader Kroveth, a somewhat paranoid competitor of Marcus'.

Adapting This Adventure

As written, this adventure is intended for use with the magical world of Yrth, described in *GURPS Fantasy*. With a bit of work, the situation can be adapted to other fantasy worlds, or even other genres.

If the GM doesn't wish to introduce the rather warped Sahudese culture intact into his game world, he can still have a group of important travelers from mysterious, far-off lands. They may not even be human, which will help explain their customs.

Specific details of Sahudese society will have to be changed, if the foreign culture isn't derived from Oriental origins. The Sahudese concept of honor and the existence of ninja as martial artists may need to be scrapped. The silly accent should also be changed, and the GM should select some suitable animal to replace the stigmatic fox (see p. 89).

The PCs as Walk-Ons

Another way this adventure can be used is to have the characters participate in a few of the events, from the outside. Kroveth hires them to kidnap Najimatsu, or they find themselves in the path of the Sahudese New Year parade. Or Marcus approaches them to handle one of the Sahudese requests.

The events here can also serve as part of the background of the campaign, occasionally interfering with the party as they pursue their own goals.

Playing It Straight

This scenario can be played without the gags, in which case the ninja will be either assassins or thieves after some Yarohito clan treasure. The ninja will have to be toned down in power, since they won't be trying to avoid killing. The ninja resolution scene (p. 95) will need to be rewritten to get rid of the *seppuku* scene. One way is to have Shimota resist the impulse to suicide, attack the Master, and get wounded.

The Plot, Such As It Is

The adventurers are in the city of Megalos, and are approached, individually or as a group, to perform a little job for an up-and-coming trading concern, the House of Marcus. Marcus is trying to establish a trading connection with a family of Sahudese silk merchants, and has invited the clan head to visit Megalos to close the deal. He hires the adventurers to escort the Sahudese: to keep them out of trouble, keep them happy and guard them from harm. (Marcus fears that both Megalan and Sahudese silk interests will attempt to interfere with the deal.)

There are three plot threads that weave through this adventure. In addition to these threads, a number of individual mini-scenarios are provided. These are self-contained events that don't advance any of the plot lines, but serve merely to highlight the odd behavior of the Sahudese, and sometimes to give the PCs an outlet for their mounting frustrations.

Two of the major plot lines are directly related to Marcus' well-founded fear that interests in both Sahud and Megalos will try to interfere with his deal. The other plot thread concerns the Sahudese merchant's son, and should come as a total surprise to nearly everyone.

The Competitor

Among Marcus' major competitors is Master Trader Kroveth. Although he is not in the silk business himself, he fears Marcus' growing fortunes will soon enable the House of Marcus to squeeze Kroveth Trading out of business. While Marcus is aware of this rival, he does not feel Kroveth worth mentioning to the PCs, since his own goals are leading him away from the markets that Kroveth Trading services, and the Sahudese deal should be of no concern to this competitor.

The party's employer is much more concerned about those merchants already involved with the silk trade. If asked about his competition, Marcus will mention the two major silk merchants in Megalos: Imperial Traders (actually part of the Emperor's own personal holdings), and the Northwinds Company, which trades primarily with the Nomad Lands and Sahud. Kroveth Trading will not come up in conversation with Marcus unless the PCs specifically ask about it.

Throughout this adventure, the paranoid Kroveth will attempt to disrupt the deal between Marcus and the Yarohito clan through whatever means possible.

The Ninja

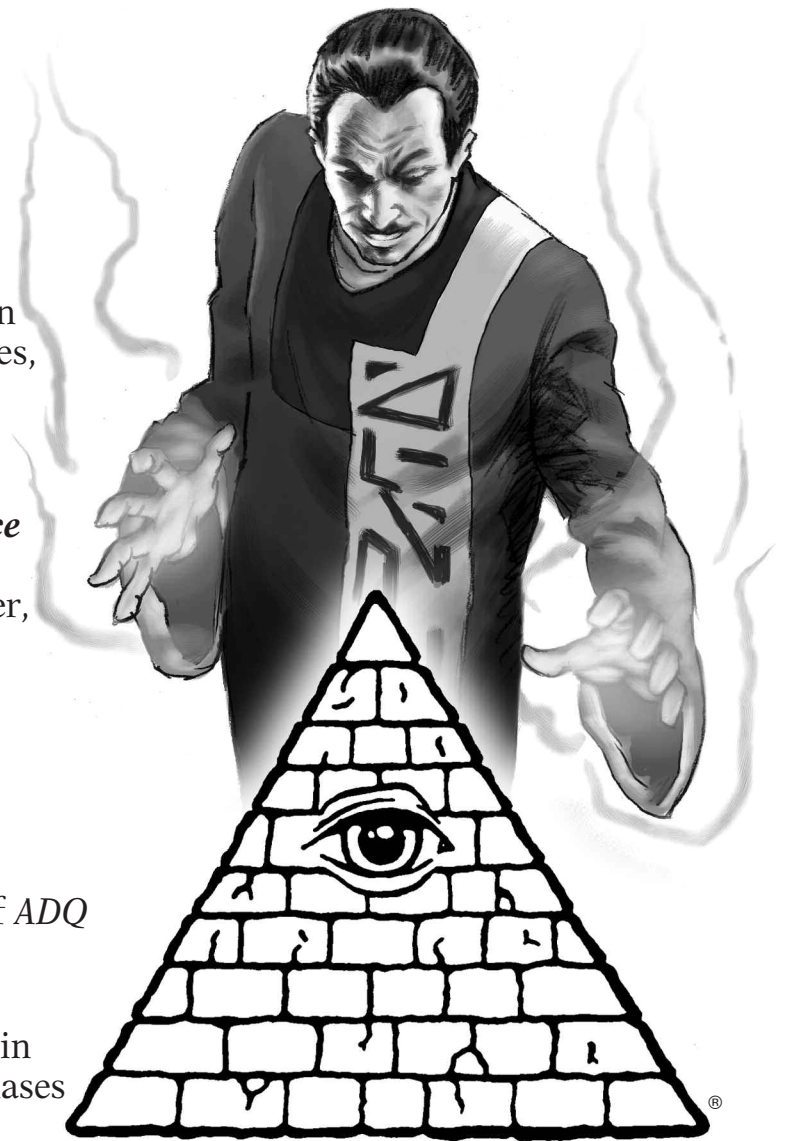
Like the House of Marcus, the Yarohito clan has rivals and enemies. Chief among these is the powerful Ah clan, which currently has a virtual monopoly on the silk trade in Sahud. Leading this enemy clan is the heartless Ah Manchu, a master of devious plots and reputedly a wizard of great power.

Naturally, the evil Ah Manchu doesn't do his own dirty work. For that, he has henchmen — in Megalos, these are the Master of Spring Mud and his nearly-deadly practical-joking ninja. Their attempts to harass Shimota should at first puzzle, and then annoy his "escorts."

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