

OA 4 - Tunnelfighting

The Setting

The PCs come to the Nezumi Network, an underground city attacked from below by bizzare insectoid creatures of unknown origin. Many human and other mercenaries have come to the aid of the rich Nezumi in return for their gold which is slowly running out.

Missions

Each day there are several missions available. The mercenary bands profess their interests and then perform their duty. Each unit has a possible success ratio (on a d20, passing with a roll greater or equal to the given value) for each mission as shown in the table below. Successful missions affect the outcome of the war. You as DM decide which missions are offered each day but they usually make sense (i.e. before a major attack there are plenty of minor charges).

Unit	1	2	3	4	5
Spears	18	8	10	11	13
Bing	15	8	8	8	10
White	15	8	10	4	15
Tigers	10	8	10	10	10
Masters	3	12	12	10	8

The Tides of War

Roll each week for each frontline sector on the side of the Nezumi (1d20):

8 or less: the sector was conquered by the insects.

9-14: the sector was attacked but the enemies were repelled

15-20: no attack on this sector

Roll each day for each frontline sector on the insects' side (1d20):

6 or less: the sector was conquered by the Nezumi

7 or more: the sector remains in the hands of the insects.

Successful missions improve the roll as stated in their description.

Events

The following events might occur with Nezumi, mercs, or travelling merchants.

Initial Acceptance Problems

The PCs probably do not have a major reputation yet. Therefore possible employers will be reluctant to give them important missions. This leaves the PCs with the simpler ones - which is probably quite frustrating.

There are several ways to gain the trust of these people, however. First, the PCs might try to gain connections to either employers or other mercs by doing them favours, blackmailing them etc. Second, they might try to impress people by either achieving goals without employment or challenging other veteran mercenaries to duells.

Celebrations

Major victories will lead to celebrations, with each unit bragging about their exploits. There will be plenty of food, drink, and music.

These opportunities can lead to new friendships when the PCs have helped some merc unit in need or new enmities when the PCs failed a critical mission which might have caused the death of another fighter. Employers might want to talk to the PCs if they performed well. Drink might lead to brawls.

Conflicts

If the PCs perform badly, some other merc might insult them or blame them for the death of a comrade. If they do really well and brag about it, jealous fighters might ask for a duell. Underbidding is also a major reason for



conflict. These conflicts range from insults to sabotage to outright attack.

Cultural Misunderstandings

While shopping in the city the PCs might offend some Nezumi by laughing at his ridiculous-looking brotherhood hat. Declining an offer of food might also cause disappointment.

Finding out the Truth

The PCs will slowly find out the truth about the attackers by capturing some, uncovering clues, or by tales from other mercenaries.

The masterminds behind the attacks are Mind Flayers from the Southern Sea. These vile creatures have created a water-filled tunnel network under most of the South which allows them to freely deploy their agents. The Nezumi stumbled upon a small outpost of these invaders who decided to retaliate with maximum force.

In order to keep their involvement secret they did not directly attack but used bio-constructs from their axolotl tanks as well as various servitors that keep in the background to keep their masters involvement hidden.

Sample Employers

Green Claw

Green Claw (lv 6 sorcerer) is the head of a major trading house and also a Chosen One. She is incredibly obese, has impossibly long green claws, and unkempt greasy fur. Due to her shrewd business sense and political power plays, however, she is very influential and has many important friends. Green Claw usually stays in her tent on the surface, wanting to stay closer to the mercs. She is usually surrounded by 2-4 handsome young male Nezumi.



Green Claw is honest but somewhat stingy. She has a good reputation among the mercs though.

Goals: Green Claw wants to free her hometown of the insectoid invasion. She knows that the humans will not continue to fight once her money has run out and therefore she only offers minimal rewards.

Weaknesses: Green Claw made a powerful enemy in Clouded Thought when she criticised his lifestyle during this stage of crisis as 'irresponsible'. She is afraid of him after he nearly stabbed her with a sacrificial knife.

Clouded Thought

This Chosen One is a shaman of a highly chaotic spirit and known for his absent-minded hiring interviews. He is poorly dressed and highly eccentric. He is usually carried in a palanquin and often smokes opium from a man-sized pipe carried by another slave.

Clouded Thought is unpredictable. Sometimes he will pay superb wages and grant salvage rights, at other times he will offer ridiculous rewards. His missions are always quite dangerous, however.

Goals: Clouded Thought is as nuts as he appears but that does not mean he lacks a clear goal. The shaman sees this war as a test by the spirits that is meant to purge the weak from his race. His goal is to test other Nezumi in special missions and gather the best around him for the day when the war is over to take power from the weakling council. He also wants to win Iron Fist for his cause.

Weaknesses: Clouded Thought is insane and prone to alienate people. If his plans were to be uncovered, his live would be quite short.

Iron Fist

The Iron Fist is the leader of a soldier brotherhood and a no-nonsense military man. He wears the red scarf of his secret

society and appears really tidy for Nezumi standards. He offers fair wages but is rumoured to downplay dangers occasionally, especially when he needs people for distractions.

Goals: Kill every single insectoid, preferably in close combat. Iron Fist is often involved in military action at the frontline. He has little use for non-Nezumi in general and is prone to use them as distraction for his own operations. Once a warrior has proven his worth though, he is quite willing to accept them as equals and will give them full information on the operation they are involved in.

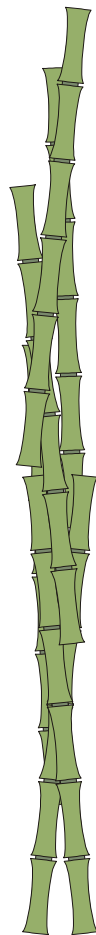
Weaknesses: In the past Iron Fist was forced to obtain illegal magic from Green Claw to keep his beloved son alive. The son - Furry Palms - is now a flesh golem hidden in the family compound. Fist is deadly afraid of this secret coming out and is thus completely unaware of the fact that Green Claw practically worships him.

Other Important Nezumis

Golden Whisker

Golden Whisker (Exp5, LE) is a small fat merchant with beady eyes and a greedy look on his face. He sells supplies to merchants that he buys in the coastal areas. Golden Whisker has the contempt of most other Nezumi since he makes a lot of money because of the invasion. His prizes are absurd but more often than not he is the only one to have certain goods. Also, he loves to buy used equipment for a pittance. Since his main competitor - Yellow Fang - is often short on money, Whisker is able to make quite a few good deals this way.

Practically all goods can be bought at 150% of the normal price with a good chance of even exotic things being available.



Goods that are in good shape are bought at 30% of the market price.

Whisker often has trouble with customers who threaten him but he is well guarded by 4 Nezumi thugs with their war rats. Also, Constable Crow reluctantly protects his store from trouble makers.

Yellow Fang

Yellow Fang (Exp 2, N) is a nervous Nezumi with sparse fur and sick-looking skin that has a tendency to flake off. He tends to mumble to himself and lives in a small shop that is stuffed with trash. A single war rat guards his things as well as the troops of Constable Crow.

Yellow Fang sells equipment at half price due to the war condition but has practically nothing in his shop that is of use other than non-combat equipment that looks well-worn. There is a 10% chance that he will have any of the standard weapons and 5% for human sized armour.

Also, he will rarely buy things from customers unless offered a really good deal or able to barter.

Constable Crow

Constable Crow is a stout Nezumi with tidy fur, a silk robe, and a fan depicting the battle against the humans before the city was founded. Also, he wears a round rimless hat with rich embroidery. Crow is detailed in the *NPCs of the Shattered Empire*. He commands 10 Nezumi soldiers and 4 war rats (see *Monster of the Empire*)

Sample Mercenary Bands

The mercenaries below are the ones most likely to be involved in special operations. the rest is usually only hired for defensive missions.

The Spears of the Khan

These hobgoblins (30 in total) are all specialists in tunnel fighting, using pole arms to keep their enemies at bay. They enjoy fighting so much that they will take every mission short of suicide charges.

Personalities:

- **Agilai:** this young hobgoblin warrior is infamous for the chip on his shoulder. He constantly challenges others to wrestling matches and becomes their mortal enemy once they beat him (easy, since he is only lv 1). His comrades are quite angry about this lack of discipline but will help him if he is seriously threatened. Agilai has managed to annoy Iron Fist but luckily for him the Khan of the Spears is unaware of this.
- **Khan Moogai:** Khan Moogai (war 2, fr 2) is a cruel and bloodthirsty hobgoblin but he is also highly lawful. Since he never breaks his word and rarely uses loopholes, he is considered a reliable mercenary - at least if the mission does not involve anything but utter destruction of the target.

Swordmaster Bing

Bing is a skilled swordsman who is known for slaying a dragon that was tainted by shadow magics. He has a warband of 40 halbardiers and enjoys the support of a bamboo spirit folk wu jen called Lotos Queen.

Bing and the Lotos Queen are detailed in the *NPCs of the Shattered Empire* sourcebook.

White Banner Warband

This warband is run by a mysterious but handsome noble named Chung the Black who almost never leaves his tent (he is actually a mummy with illusion magic). The band itself consists of about 30

skeletons of various creatures and usually increases its ranks after a won battle. The White Banner does not forget when people underbid them during hiring.

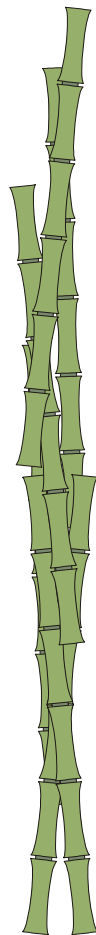
The Tigers of Pan Lang

The Tigers are flamboyant axe men wearing tiger furs and hailing from the West. Most of them are of Hind descent. Their leader - Ara Rupa - has a tiger-like pattern tattooed all over his body and is a known weretiger. Rupa and his warband are detailed in the *NPCs of the Shattered Empire*.

The Masters of the Unseen

These 12 ninja-like scouts all belong to the black order and nobody knows why they have chosen to act on this battlefield. They largely stick to themselves and have little contact with anybody else. They seem to have a particular dislike for the white banner however.

Real Agenda: The Masters of the Unseen fight in this battle to gain allies in the lawless lands. A stable city such as this one used to be, would be somewhat useful. The Masters currently support Green Claw and oppose the schemes of Clouded Thought who would be detrimental to their plans. Clouded Thought does not know of this yet. The hatred towards the White Banner stems from a run-in in the past, a fact the Banner is unaware of.



Sample Missions

1 Supply Outpost (Only once)

Briefing: An outpost deep in enemy territory has been cut off from the regions still held by the Nezumi. It has yet to fall and is a thorn in the side of the insectoids. Since they thought it was abandoned, they are not paying

particular attention to this region far behind the frontlines.

The PCs are ordered to go behind enemy lines through a secret tunnel and supply the outpost with food and supplies. Enemy patrols are to be avoided at all costs - thus fighting should be minimal.

Supplies: 4 mules with food and other non-combat supplies as well as 200 crossbow bolts.

Reward: ca. 600 gp

Encounters: roll 1d6

1-2. Everything as planned. The PCs will likely encounter several patrols of *regular units*. If these are engaged, one of them will retreat to raise an alarm. The others will fight defensively.

3-5. The outpost has been discovered by the insects and the 6 Nezumi tunnel fighters are under siege. The supplies are irrelevant now and the PCs should try to kill the attackers (a *shock assault team* and a *regular unit* which attack from different sides). If any of the attackers get away, it will take about a minute for 1d6 *regular units* to arrive and two minutes for 1d3 *assault teams*.

6. The outpost has already been stormed and is currently held by a team of *skirmishers*. When the PCs fail to see the hints of an invasion (Spot DC 20 since the team dug in from below) they might be surprised by the insects that currently feed on the dead bodies.

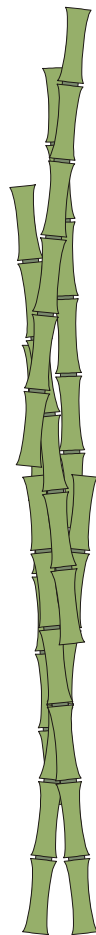
2 Support Minor Charge

Briefing: The PCs are to charge a defensive position of the enemy as part of a major assault in order to liberate a sector. They have to hold the position until the regular troops have reinforced it (1d6 * 10 minutes) and then scout the vicinity (if possible) and report on enemy activity.

Supplies: mundane ammunition and a healing potion.

Reward: 6 gp per person

Encounters: roll 1d6



1-3. The other side is held by a *shock assault team*, waiting for reinforcements in order to counterattack. The new position will come under attack by an *assault team* after 1d20 rounds and the PCs have to protect the advancing tunnel fighters and engineers who need 15 rounds to set up new barricades.

4. Same as above but defended by an *assault team* from the beginning.

5-6. Same as 1-3 but this is actually a trap. When the PCs attack, the enemies fall back to allow the concealed *poison gas thrower* to do its work. The *shock assault team* will overrun the PCs in order to kill the Nezumi while the Pestilites take care of the PCs.

During the scouting or the defence the PCs may encounter creatures based on their remaining strength.

3 Retake Vital Position

Briefing: The frontlines have shifted to recover one of the major sites. It seems to be abandoned but the PCs are sent in to scout the situation.

Supplies: ammo, 3 healing potions, and a single potion of *invisibility*.

Reward: 25 gp per person

Encounters: *depends on site*

The Armoury; these rooms are filled with arms that were abandoned in the initial onslaught. It is close to the stairs to level one of the network. The site is of no use to the insectoids but they have decided to destroy it before abandoning it. A *rust monster team* is busy eating up all the weapons, while two vermen break all wooden items. Another two vermen guard the entry.

Noble Quarters; the former noble quarters are now barracks for the vermin cultists. When the frontline comes close, however, it is abandoned. There are no more troops here but 1d4+2 entrances are rigged with poison needle traps. Needless to say the Nezumi will be very angry if they are not warned about this.

Poison Needle Trap: CR 2, +8 ranged (1 plus poison (1 Con, 1d2 Con, DC:13)), search 22, disable 20.

Library of Forbidden Fire Knowledge; this place has been devastated and only a few scrolls are left. The insects know that this place is important to the Nezumi and have left a sabotage squad, hoping that the vermin host will be taken to the upper levels where it will try to assassinate a major mercenary leader in order to cause unrest. The tunnel terror has been ordered to attack the vermin host to make the story more authentic. The vermin host looks like a korobokuru and claims to be a merc that was abducted by the insects to feed their young.

4 Rear Guard

Briefing: The Nezumi feel that there will be trouble behind the front and thus ask the PCs to protect the rear from possible skirmishers. The PCs should make up their own patrol pattern and will be disgraced if anything gets through. This might also lead to the death of other mercs who rely on them and cause trouble in the camp.

Supplies: none

Reward: 3 gp per person

Encounters: roll 1d6

1-4 none

5 A *skirmisher team* has dug its way in behind enemy lines, planning to do as much damage as possible. The plan to go on a rampage until they are slain. Hearing the sounds 4 rounds before they break through is a listen DC of 15.

6 As above but the team is to attack the front line from behind. They are to kill everybody who saw them before the regular troops are informed that they can pour through.

5 Sabotage / Scouting

Briefing: Through a secret tunnel the PCs can go behind enemy lines. They are to scout a specific area or destroy an

enemy installation. Examples are egg stores, fungi patches which are used for food etc.

Supplies: 6 alchemist's fire flasks, mundane ammo

Reward: 15 gp per person

Encounters: On the way to the site the PCs will encounter 1d3 *regular units*, which they might avoid by hiding. The site they have to scout might be better guarded, pick any enemy unit that you find suitable for that specific mission. Note that the way back will also mean 1d3 *regulars*, so flight might actually cause problems.

Typical Enemy Squads

Shock Assault Team

Shock teams are cheap throw-away units that are sent towards the enemy in literal waves. While a dreadful threat to most warriors they are easily dispatched by elite units.

EL: 4

Unit Members:

- 3 Tunnel Terrors

Typical Missions: Wear down enemy defenses, distract enemies

Assault Team

Assault teams are stronger than shock assault teams and are used to obtain critical mission objectives. These are the elite units of the insectoid invasion. When on the offensive, the Vermin Cultist will have cast Shield of Faith and Protection from Good on either himself or the lead enemy.

EL: 6

Unit Members:

- 3 Tunnel Terrors
- 1 Vermin Cultist (*see NPCs of the Shattered Empire*) as commander

Typical Missions: key assaults, elimination of central enemy units



Skirmishers

These units have a burrowing insect with them that allows them to sneak into enemy fortifications. Nezumi tunnel fighter tell terrible tales of sudden attacks by these deadly units. When attacking the monster is usually affected by *magic fang* and the Pestilite tries to stay away from close combat action as long as possible, preferring flight to death.

EL: 5 or 6

Unit Members:

- 1 Ankheg or 1 Horror Slug that burrows into the enemy fortification
- 1 Pestilite animal handler

Typical Missions: eliminate enemy strongpoints.

Sabotage Squad

These sneaky units are often found way beyond the frontlines, poisoning food supplies or attacking key enemy leaders.

EL: 4

Unit Members:

- 1 Vermin Host, Cockroach
- 1 Tunnel Terror of unusual restraint that is used to scout for the Assassin

Typical Missions: Destroy enemy supplies, assassinate enemy key personnel

Poison Gas Thrower

The Pestilites are reknown for their affinity for disease and poison. Gas thrower units employ a foul weapon to kill well-entrenched enemy units.

EL: 4

Unit Members:

- Pestilite with gas thrower
- Pestilite with gas tank
- **Gas Thrower:** This bizarre weapon needs two people to operate it. The thrower can fire 5 cones of gas clouds (3 ft.) before it is empty. The gas is poisonous (DC: 12, initial damage: unconsciousness for 1d3 hours, secondary damage: 1d3 Con).

People wearing a vinegar stained cloth in front of their face get +4 to their saves. There is a 10% chance for each attack that the crew will be affected as well - this is why they always wear face masks themselves.

Typical Missions: Close quarter combat

Regular Unit

These are the second line squads of the insect army. They are used to defend position that are not immediately threathend

EL: 2

Unit Members:

- 4 Vermen

Typical Missions: Rear guard

Tank Guard

These troops guard the area near the axolotl tanks. They are directly controlled by the illithid who operates the tanks.

EL: 7

Unit Members:

- 3 Tought Eaters (*Psionic Handbook*)
- 3 Ethereal Mauraunders

Typical Missions: last line of defense

Rust Monster Team

Rust monsters are not part of the hive but they are used extensively by its members to neutralise vital enemy weapons.

EL: 5

Unit Members:

- 1 Pestilite animal handler
- 1 Rust Monster

Typical Missions: Special missions

