

MY LORD TIGER



A SHORT SAGA® SYSTEM ADVENTURE

by Gregory Detwiler

Preface

The party is a group of mercenary freelancers who have been hired by the local ruler, the Maharajah of Shapur, to deal with a man-eating tiger that has killed more than 40 local people. (Because of the tense situation on Shapur's frontiers, the Maharajah cannot send any of his troops into the poor, stricken Maiwand district to deal with the beast.) The locals have named this cat Jambha Khan, meaning "King of Jaws."

The only reinforcement the Maharajah will give the party consists of a local guide, Shudra Dasya, a cringing coward who seems to fear the tiger more than the Maharajah. Before the adventure is over, the heroes may share his opinion.

Characters

Shudra Dasya: Human, male, groveling and afraid demeanor, Thief. Co 4, Ph 4, In 6, Es 5, Dmg +3 (bludgeon) Def 0.

A thief who got caught plying his trade, Shubra was punished with the task of guiding the party to and from the tiger's plateau. The fact that he'll be beheaded if he returns alone is all that keeps him from deserting the party. He is a sniveling mouse of a man, who shivers despite the heat, referring to the tiger as "Jambha Khan" or "my lord tiger."

Jambha Khan: Tiger: Co 6, Ph 20, In 2, Es 2, Dmg +10, Def -2, rake.

An enormous mass of muscle and stripes, the tiger is capable of carrying a hero in its jaws and can still outrun humans in the jungle. It hunts with sharp cunning, and has become a man-eater due to the loss of game on the jungle plateau where it makes its home.

Setting

The plateau has sheer cliffs on all sides. A single trail provides access between the plateau and the lowlands, running through the jungle on the way up. This



provides a consistent place to find the tiger, but being near the path also lets the tiger know exactly where the party is.

Opening Salvo

As soon as the heroes near the summit at the start of the adventure, the tiger ambushes them. The path borders the steep cliffs at this point, with scrub brush along the edge.

Suddenly, a loud coughing roar seems to shake the rocks around the heroes, terrifying the horses. Unless the heroes make *Desperate (20) Willpower* actions to calm them, the horses and pack mules will stampede over the cliff. This causes the loss of almost all of their equipment, except what they're wearing.

Any mounted heroes must make a *Challenging (12) Agility* action to keep from being tossed off the side of the cliff. After the initial assault, Jambha Khan attacks the hero in the lead with its powerful bite. However, he quickly turns tail when he sees other party members coming to deal with him. This should be the party's first taste of the tactics of a professional man-hunter: attack from ambush, strike hard and fast at a lone target, and swiftly retreat before reinforcements can aid the victim.

Somehow, Shudra Dasya has survived, even though his horse fell off the cliff. He speaks fearfully of "my lord tiger" in an attempt to get the heroes to abandon their task.

At the bottom of the cliff, salvage attempts prove futile. Everything is broken, lost, or otherwise spoiled. The heroes have lost their mounts, pack horses, and any gear not securely on their own persons. They must brave it on their own.

Recovery and Survival

Now, the heroes must live off the land and kill Jambha Khan before he wipes out the entire party with his guerrilla warfare.

Unfortunately, there is no game remaining on the plateau due to the tiger's hunting and a recent blight. Virtually the only food left is wild fruit, and that is not easy to find. Finding edible fruit is a *Challenging (12) Perception* action. Each success will gather one day's food for the whole party.

Otherwise, the jungle is a minor nightmare; emphasize its alien nature as you describe it. The trees are several hundred feet tall, their tangled roots are often piled twenty feet high. The dangling vines are as thick as a man's wrist and the flowers—violets and daisies for the most part—grow as large as saplings.

Let the party decide where to pitch camp at night. As stated above, the path is the only means of reaching the plateau from the lowlands. Since the tiger has been raiding the lowlands, he uses it all the time. Mention a clearing beside the path as an obvious choice to keep an eye on the tiger's comings and goings.

Of course this means the party will undergo a series of hit-and-run attacks from the moment they make camp to the moment either they or Jambha Khan are slain (see below), but at least they'll be doing their job. Camping elsewhere will be safer, but the tiger will just elude them and resume raiding. Let the heroes see the tiger return once with a dead peasant in his jaws to get the picture. Shubra Dasya knows this, but will not volunteer the information, since he doesn't particularly want to be in the tiger's way.

Starting a fire in the wet jungle is a *Daunting (16) Reason* action. Without the light of a fire, the party will be sitting ducks in the dark; Jambha Khan will have an immeasurable advantage. It may take several tries, and Dasya may be of some assistance if anyone can put up with his simpering long enough to get him to help.

Hunting the Man-eater

Jamba Khan has a natural camouflage, and knows the terrain very well. He cannot be spotted (without magic) through the trees and dim light until he is ten feet away. Even if they know he's there, the tree trunks and tangled roots provide cover, making it nearly impossible to get a clear shot.

Unless the party can catch Jambha Khan in the clearing by the mountain path, returning from a raid or raiding them, they will never be able to tackle him in the open.

If the heroes want to set a trap for the tiger by digging a pit or setting snares, let them. Their human scent will remain in the area, warning the tiger. Unless they are experienced trappers, they won't know enough to wash themselves and their gear thoroughly to hide their scent.

When fighting the party, Jambha Khan will never stand and battle to the death. He generally flees after taking one or two good hits. A single wound might not stop him if he's about to finish off an enemy, but he always flees upon losing at least half of his Physique points. After that, he stays hidden until his wounds have healed.

Hunting the Party

Jambha Khan hunts the party with cunning, ambushing from the surrounding jungle at every opportunity. Remember that the enemy is in his natural habitat, and his stripes are made to blend in with the surrounding jungle. Therefore, the heroes must make a *Desperate (20) Perception (Agility)* action to detect his approach in most instances. With the abundant cover, Jambha Khan can attack from any point without being seen beforehand. Given his ability to climb trees, even an assault from above is likely.

Before he gets into close combat however, Jamba Khan will generally watch from a distance and pick off stragglers.

If the heroes stay together like smart adventurers, he'll do the next best thing: launch a surprise attack, grab a victim in his jaws, and take off. The initial attack *only* grabs the victim. Because of this, ignore the defense rating of any hero seized; the tiger can grab and haul off without bothering to penetrate armor.



When the tiger has moved a safe distance from the rest of the party, he proceeds to tear up his lone victim in a one-on-one contest. Since the hero will be lying on the ground (and in pain) rather than standing, the tiger has the initial advantage.

The first time the tiger attacks the party at night, make Shudra Dasya the victim. The experience will demonstrate just what the tiger is capable of, and give the players a little warning about its tactics, strength, and ferocity.

When Jamba Khan grabs a hero, other heroes may wish to pull their comrade from his mouth. This is a *Daunting (16) Strength (Strength)* action, and is more likely to succeed if several party members work together. Anyone who loses a tug of war with Jambha Khan will see a comrade dragged off into the jungle. Giving chase is highly recommended if they want to see that hero alive again.

Once the heroes are alerted to watch for ambushes from the undergrowth, Jambha Khan will modify his tactics by pouncing on them from the trees above. After a snatch-and-grab attack on a hero, he promptly leaps back into the trees, bearing his victim with him. The tiger will drape his prey over one of the lower branches and tearing him or her apart

unless the remaining heroes interfere.

Keep the fear and tension high in the heroes' alien surrounding. You don't want the players to get frustrated, but tracking down a powerful opponent who refuses to stand and fight can be a drawn out process. A plan to hold the tiger still would be ideal, be it with magic, or pit traps near enough to the camp to cover their scent sufficiently. Of course, digging a pit next to camp can have its own drawbacks, if heroes are clumsy or thoughtless during the night....

Eventually through luck, numbers, or sheer stubbornness, the party will wear down the tiger. They'll need to carry proof that they slayed the beast back to the Maharajah. He will then pay the heroes the agreed upon sum, and reimburse reasonable equipment losses.

The residents of the Maiwand district will be grateful, and though poor, can provide shelter and information in future adventures.

Changing Settings

In Krynn, this adventure could easily take place in the elven forests of Ergoth, using a White Spawn: Co 6, Ph 9, In4, Es 6, Dmg +7, Def-3. A White Spawn's breath attack is a blast of frigid air doing 9 points of damage. It has access to the cryomancy sorcery. More details can be found in the *DRAGONLANCE®* Bestiary on sale in September.

