



DUNGEONS & LAIRS #32: ONI PALACE

O*ni Palace* is a Fifth Edition plug-in adventure for **four characters with an average party level (APL) of 5, 8, 11, or 14**. This document offers details for the **5th-level version**. For the full adjustments for all level ranges, sign up for the [DMDave Patreon](#). The characters infiltrate a martial arts sect to confront its leader only to realize that this leader has been replaced by a dangerous oni.

BACKGROUND

An oni with a taste for powerful mortals has taken control of the Zandougong sect, a prestigious martial arts group located deep within a secluded mountain range. Safe within his heavily guarded palace, he only interacts with other members of the sect, each a powerful warrior who has proven themselves through trials and combat. None of the members of the sect know that their leader was replaced by an oni a few years ago and are fanatically loyal to him.

PLUG-IN ADVENTURE

As a plug-in adventure, the adventure content serves as drop-in material for game masters who wish to add a dungeon to a preexisting campaign or need a side quest. If you need a hook for this adventure, the full adventure contains eight possible goals for your party.

Gold Rewards. To further incentivize the party to join the Zandougong sect and confront its leader, the party's faction will pay 200 gp per level of the adventure immediately to cover expenses and another 500 gp per level of the adventure upon completion of the mission.

OMERIA PLACEMENT

From the wintery Tathdarian monks of the Syhros Peninsula to the silent halfling monks of Hushridge, monks can be found in all regions of Omeria. This particular sect may be encountered in Maear of Vaskil Valley just as easily as in Presson's Enclave or Dorithell.

RUNNING THE ADVENTURE

To run the adventure, you need the three Fifth Edition core rulebooks. If you don't have a copy, you can access a free basic ruleset from the official source.

Text that appears in a box like this is meant to be read aloud or paraphrased for the players when their characters first arrive at a location or under specific circumstances, as described in the text.

When a creature's name appears in **bold** type, that's a visual cue pointing you to its stat block as a way of saying, "Hey, game master, make sure you get this creature's stat block ready—there's going to be an encounter!" If the stat block appears in the Appendix of this adventure, the text tells you so; otherwise, you can find the stat block in the core rulebook.

Spells and non-magical equipment mentioned in the adventure are described in the core manual for players. *Magic items* are described in the core manual for game masters unless the adventure's text directs you to an item's description in the Appendix.

PART 1: THE ZANDOUGONG SECT

Entering the Zandougong sect is simple enough for anyone who can pay the steep weekly fee of 40 gp to pay for their training, room, and board. New recruits are accepted on the first of each month and must pay each week's training fee on the first day of the week or immediately be expelled from the sect.

After the characters pay their first week of dues, First Disciple Ren Zihao welcomes them to the sect.

"Welcome to the Zandougong sect. I am First Disciple Ren Zihao, the man in charge of your training. Right now, you are a recruit, hardly worthy to stand on the floor of this sect. To become a disciple and earn the privilege to meet Master Guo you will need to train constantly and prove yourself worthy in the tournament held at the end of the month.

If you do not take your training seriously, you will leave. If you cause trouble or fight outside of sparring matches, you will leave. If you attempt to intrude on Master Guo without first earning the privilege, you will leave. Whether you leave of your own volition or in a burial shroud is up to you. Do I make myself clear?"

After waiting for affirmation from each of the characters, the First Disciple gestures towards the small, utilitarian rooms the recruits are permitted to use. Their training in the Zandougong sect has begun.



NPCs OF THE ZANDOUGONG SECT

Master Guo Cheng is regarded as one of the most talented martial artists on the continent and is the current leader of the Zandougong sect. He spends most of his time in his palace, which outsiders are not permitted to visit. Unknown to the rest of the sect, Master Guo was eaten and replaced by an oni who is using the position as sect leader to find powerful warriors to consume.

First Disciple Ren Zihao (lawful neutral male human) is a tall man who wears his long dark hair pulled back into a tidy braid. His face appears to be frozen in a look of permanent disapproval and his hand compulsively brushes the katana strapped to his side when he is annoyed. He is in charge of the day-to-day operation of the Zandougong sect but has little patience for recruits.

Second Disciple Yang Meiling (neutral female human) is the stoic but friendly second-in-command of the Zandougong sect. She is strong but slender with short black hair and piercing brown eyes. She is far more likely to talk to new recruits than the First Disciple but equally unwilling to tolerate disrespect.

Ye Liu (lawful good male human) is a disciple of the Zandougong sect and the primary cook. His meals are simple but filling, and although he is shy, there is rarely a piece of gossip Ye is not aware of.

Eoda Quickheart (chaotic good female halfling) is an exuberant recruit with mischievous green eyes who hopes to join the sect to prove that her size is no barrier to success. She came to the sect last month and is happy to show the characters around if they need a guide.

Xie Wei (lawful evil male human) is a jaded middle-aged recruit who has been training in the Zandougong sect for years but is not talented enough to be offered membership. He is egotistical and quick to turn the smallest slight into a lasting grudge.

DOWNTIME ACTIVITIES

The following downtime activities are available for characters spending time in the Zandougong set. At the GM's discretion, other activities such as sowing rumors or gaining renown may also be possible while staying at the Zandougong sect.

TRAINING IN UNARMED COMBAT

At its core, the Zandougong sect exists to train people in the art of unarmed combat. The cost of training is included in the weekly fee. Becoming proficient in unarmed strikes typically takes ten workweeks, but this time is reduced by a number of workweeks equal to the character's Dexterity modifier.

At the GM's discretion, a character may be able to find a teacher willing to instruct them in the use of another monk weapon. This training is not included in the Zandougong sect tuition and costs an additional 25 gp per week.

INVESTIGATING THE SECT

The character spends at least one week investigating the sect, spending at least 50 gp on bribes, gifts, and other expenses. At the end of their investigation, the character

makes a Charisma check to determine how much others in the Zandougong sect are willing to tell them. The character gains a +1 bonus on the check for every workweek beyond the first that is spent investigating the sect and a +1 bonus for every additional 50 gp spent on the investigation, up to a maximum of +6.

INVESTIGATING THE SECT OUTCOMES

Check Total Outcome

1-5	You learn nothing new about the sect.
6-10	You learn one rumor about the sect.
11-20	You learn two rumors about the sect.
21+	You learn three rumors about the sect.

To determine which rumors the character hears about the sect, either roll or choose a rumor from the following table.

ZANDOUGONG SECT RUMORS

d8 Rumor

- 1 Many of the sect's disciples spend years in seclusion, mastering their control over their bodies and minds. This practice has become incredibly popular recently.
- 2 Master Guo has gained a taste for powerful beasts in the past few years. Ye Liu confides that he believes he gains a portion of their strength when he eats them.
- 3 The sect used to be highly exclusive: people had to receive an invitation to even become recruits. Now, anyone who can pay can enter the sect, a practice that many of the older disciples disapprove of.
- 4 It is said that Master Guo went on a soul-changing journey a few years ago and has spent most of his time since in meditation.
- 5 In the past, Master Guo individually trained his disciples. Sadly this practice has waned over the years and they must rely on training each other.
- 6 A year ago, there was a big stir when a disciple left the sect after an argument with Master Guo. She disappeared shortly after her very public break with the sect.
- 7 Master Guo used to eat with the disciples but has been cooking his own meals for the past few years. Ye Liu says it's for the best since he prefers rarer meat than Ye serves.
- 8 First Disciple Ren Zihao only eats the meat of predators. It is believed that he learned this practice from Master Guo.



ZANDOUGONG SECT DOWNTIME COMPLICATIONS

Each week of downtime in the Zandougong sect brings a 10 percent chance of a complication, examples of which are on the Downtime Complications table. The recruits and sect members mentioned in these complications may be NPCs outlined in the NPCs of the Zandougong Sect above or another created by the GM.

DOWNTIME COMPLICATIONS

d6 Complication

- 1 A member of the sect believes that the character is spying on them to benefit a rival sect.
- 2 Another recruit declares the character as their rival and goes out of their way to make life difficult for them.
- 3 First Disciple Ren Zihao believes the character isn't taking their training seriously and threatens to kick them out if they don't shape up.
- 4 One of the sect members takes it upon themselves to train the character personally using incredibly harsh "teaching" methods.
- 5 The character learns that another recruit is also investigating the sect. The recruit is being paid by a different organization (see Adventure Hooks) and may either try to join the characters or remove the competition.
- 6 Another recruit decides that the character is their mentor and begins to stalk them incessantly.



PART 2: THE TOURNAMENT

On the last day of each month, the Zandougong sect runs a tournament to rank its members and recruits. Only the best of the best are given formal membership: to receive an invitation to join the sect, the party must win three successive fights.

TOURNAMENT RULES

Limited Item Use. Consumable items such as potions (including *potions of healing*) are not permitted during the fights or between rounds. Any items that boost a character's ability scores, such as the *gauntlets of ogre power* are likewise prohibited. Other magical items are officially permitted but frowned upon as unsportsmanlike.

No Spying. For the sake of fairness, recruits are not permitted to view the matches of their competitors. If one of the characters is able to get around this restriction by casting *clairvoyance*, *arcane eye*, or using another similar effect, they learn the primary attack action of their next competitors.

Non-Lethal Damage. Killing other competitors is strictly forbidden. All of the party's opponents will forfeit the match if they are reduced to 15 or fewer hit points.

Tournament Area. The tournament takes place in an old shrine. If a competitor voluntarily steps off of the stones onto the grass, they are out of the fight.

Time Between Matches. Competitors get at least 1 hour between each fight to recover. They are monitored during this time to ensure that they are following the rules of the tournament.

TOURNAMENT FIGHTS BY LEVEL

Adventure	Level	Round 1	Round 2	Round 3
	5th	2 bandit captains and 1 cult fanatic	2 veterans and 3 martial arts initiates*	1 gladiator and 1 martial arts master*
	8th	see the full adventure	see the full adventure	see the full adventure
	11th	see the full adventure	see the full adventure	see the full adventure
	14th	see the full adventure	see the full adventure	see the full adventure

*Stat blocks for these creatures can be found in the Appendix

If the party successfully defeats all of its competitors, they are formally invited to join the Zandougong sect. First Disciple Ren Zihao suggests that they spend the evening recuperating rather than partying. "You have earned the opportunity to meet Master Guo, but your trials are not over just yet," he warns.

If the party is unsuccessful, they will have to try again at the end of the next month.

PART 3: THE PATH OF THE DISCIPLE

The Path of the Disciple is a long, narrow obstacle course winding up the side of a cliff that is used to test the skill and resolve of the sect's disciples. First Disciple Ren Zihao explains that if they survive the path, they will be welcomed as disciples of the Zandougong sect.

As the characters enter the Path of the Disciple, have them each roll initiative and treat the entire obstacle course as a single encounter.

GENERAL FEATURES

Unless otherwise stated in an obstacle description, the Path of the Disciple has the following general features:

Enchanted Objects. The objects within the Path of the Disciple are enchanted to be immune to all damage. They are also immune to any effect that would change their shape or composition, such as through transmutation magic.

Long Fall. Unless otherwise stated in an obstacle, a creature that falls from the Path of the Disciple falls 10 feet per each level of the adventure, taking 1d6 bludgeoning damage for every 10 feet of falling.

Magical Protections. The area is warded to restrict a number of magical effects. Spells or other magical effects conferring the following benefits fail within the Path of the Disciple: magical flight, teleportation, and access to other planes of existence (including the Ethereal Plane).

Strong Winds. Wind howls throughout the obstacle course, extinguishing open flames and dispersing fog. Ranged weapon attacks and Perception checks relying on hearing are made with disadvantage. A flying creature must land at the end of its turn or fall prone and each foot of flight costs 2 feet of movement.

1 - CUTTING WINDS

The first 20 feet of the narrow path up the side of the mountain is covered in deep gouges. The wind howls so loudly that any creature in this area is deafened. A character that succeeds on a DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check can see faint distortions in the air, as if the wind is condensed into long, slashing blades.

Hazard: Wind Blades. Each creature that enters the cutting winds for the first time on its turn or starts its turn there must succeed on a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw or take 11 (2d10) slashing damage in this version.

2 - BLIND MAN'S BRIDGE

A rickety bridge with no handrails spans a 30-foot gap in the path forward. The entire area is under the effect of a permanent *darkness* spell.

Hazard: Rickety Bridge. A blind creature must treat the bridge as difficult terrain or risk falling. A creature that is

blinded and moves more than half its movement speed on the bridge must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check or make a misstep. A creature who has made a misstep must succeed on a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw or fall off of the bridge. With a successful saving throw, the creature does not fall but may not move any farther on its current turn.

Trap: Darts From the Darkness. On initiative count 10, poisoned darts shoot from the walls of the cliff at any creature in the area. The darts have +6 to hit. On a hit, they deal 11 (2d10) piercing damage, and the creature must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned for 1 hour and take poison damage depending on the level of the adventure.

POISON DART DAMAGE

Adventure Level	Poison Damage
5th	4 (1d8)
8th	see the full adventure
11th	see the full adventure
14th	see the full adventure

3 - PLATFORM BATTLE

An ornate circular platform with a 15-foot radius juts out from the side of the cliff upon which a handful of sect members wait.

Encounter: Ring Match. The identity of these sect members depends on the level of the adventure, as shown below. They fight any character in their area and try to prevent the party from moving forward, but don't follow into other obstacles.

PLATFORM BATTLE ENCOUNTER

Adventure Level	Encounter
5th	3 veterans
8th	see the full adventure
11th	see the full adventure
14th	see the full adventure

*Stat blocks for these creatures can be found in the Appendix

4 - PANEL MAZE

Beyond the battle platform, the mountain path re-emerges and widens to 20 feet, but the way forward is blocked by 15-foot-tall wooden panels that rotate quickly as the wind blows through them.

Hazard: Rotating Panels. The panels make navigating the path forward incredibly difficult. To reach the far side of the panel maze, a creature must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check. A creature that fails this check by 5 or more takes 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage from the panels.

5 - BAMBOO POLES

Long poles jut out from a 20-foot section of sheer cliff face, swaying alarmingly in the strong wind.

Hazard: Step Lightly. The first time a creature moves along the bamboo poles on each of its turns, it must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to proceed. If it fails this check by 5 or more, it falls (see General Features).

A creature can instead decide to scale the cliff face. To do so, they must succeed on a DC 18 Strength (Athletics) check. If they fail this check by 8 or more, they fall (see General Features).

6 - BAMBOO FOREST

The final 30-foot stretch of the Path of the Disciple is shrouded by a dense bamboo forest. The 15-foot-tall foliage blocks the wind. The entire area is difficult terrain and creatures 10 feet apart or more gain three-quarters cover from each other.

Encounter: Forest Guardian. A guardian hides in the bamboo forest, waiting to attack any creature that enters. It will not leave the bamboo forest. The identity of the guardian depends on the level of the adventure.

BAMBOO FOREST GUARDIAN

Adventure Level	Guardian
5th	1 air elemental
8th	see the full adventure
11th	see the full adventure
14th	see the full adventure



PART 4: MASTER GUO'S PALACE

Master Guo resides in a small but beautiful palace. Historical artwork and finely crafted weapons are displayed on tables around the room. There is a small training rink in its middle, and stairs lead up to Master Guo's bedroom, which holds nothing more interesting than some bedding and a washing bowl.

PALACE PROTECTIONS

Architecture. The palace is built out of stone and has 15-foot-high ceilings. The entire building is enchanted to be immune to all damage. The structure is also immune to any effect that would change its shape or composition, such as through transmutation magic.

Private Sanctum. The palace and the surrounding grounds are protected by the *private sanctum* spell, which confers the following benefits:

- Sensors created by divination spells can't appear within the palace grounds or pass into it.
- Creatures in the palace can't be targeted by divination spells.
- Nothing can teleport into or out of the palace.
- Planar travel is blocked within the palace grounds.

Wind Blade Barrier. Should the characters make it to the palace without winning the tournament and traversing the Path of the Disciple, the area around the palace is protected by a 30-foot-thick sphere of wind blades that overlap with an antimagic zone with the effects of an *antimagic field*. Far more powerful than those in the Path of the Disciple, these blades deal 11 (2d10) slashing damage for every 5 feet a creature moves through them. If any creature makes it through the barrier, Master Guo immediately attacks them. He disables the barrier before the characters reach the palace, provided they arrive as intended by the sect.

MASTER GUO

Master Guo can be found inside the palace. He sits at the center of the room on a 10-foot-high platform in meditation, waiting for his newest disciples to arrive. He plays his role as the austere sect leader and attempts to gain the character's trust.

"Welcome, my newest disciples," Master Guo says with a polite nod. "You have done well to cross the Path of the Disciples. I see great potential in you. Now, I suggest you spend some time in meditation to recuperate. Please, explore the palace grounds and find a spot that resonates with you."

Master Guo's goal is to separate the characters and attack the strongest physical fighter to kill and eat. If he is successful, he informs the rest of the party that the deceased character had

a breakthrough and immediately decided to enter seclusion to train.

Encounter: Master Imposter. Ultimately, the party should realize that Master Guo is not who he says he is and attack him. The nature of this fight depends on the level of the adventure, as shown in the table below.

PALACE ENCOUNTER

Adventure Level	Encounter
5	1 oni with lair actions
8	see the full adventure
11	see the full adventure
14	see the full adventure

While the oni is in his palace, he has access to lair actions. On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), the oni can take a lair action to cause one of the following effects, but can't use the same effect two rounds in a row:

- Nearly invisible blades of wind slice through the air in a 30-foot-radius sphere centered on the oni until the next initiative count 20. This area is difficult terrain and any hostile creature that enters the area for the first time on its turn or starts its turn there must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or take 11 (2d10) slashing damage.
- A powerful aura fills the palace. Each enemy of the oni must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened of him until the next initiative count 20.
- The oni casts *darkness* or *invisibility*.

The oni cares far more about his life than the sect. If he is reduced to 40 hit points or fewer, he attempts to flee.



ADVENTURE CONCLUSION

If the characters fail to make it to the oni's palace, he continues to pose at Master Guo, dining on the strongest disciples to join the sect for years to come. If they reach the palace but the oni escapes, he will soon find a way to get the meat he craves once more. Without proof that "Master Guo" was an oni in disguise, the party will have to make a convincing case for why they attacked the sect leader, or the Zandougong sect will swear vengeance on them and become a recurring obstacle.

If the characters successfully kill the oni, the other members of the Zandougong sect are horrified to learn that they have been unwittingly serving such an evil creature. In thanks, they give the party a reward based on the level of the adventure.

TREASURE BY ADVENTURE LEVEL

Adventure Level	Treasure
5	2,000 gp, <i>oil of slipperiness</i> , and a <i>+1 longsword</i>
8	see the full adventure
11	see the full adventure
14	see the full adventure

In addition, the characters may complete their training at the Zandougong sect without needing to pay the weekly fee, if they so desire. First Disciple Ren Zihao becomes Master Ren and works tirelessly to restore the reputation of the Zandougong sect. He may ask the party to help him with this task, leading to further adventures. Ω

CREDITS

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APPENDIX : NEW CREATURES

MARTIAL ARTS INITIATE

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

Armor Class 16
Hit Points 26 (4d8 + 8)
Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)

Saving Throws Str +2, Dex +5
Senses passive Perception 13
Languages any one language (usually Common)
Challenge 1 (200 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

Unarmored Defense. The initiate gains a bonus to its AC equal to its Wisdom modifier (included).

Actions

Multiattack. The initiate makes two fist attacks.

Fist. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

Dart. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage.

MARTIAL ARTS MASTER

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

Armor Class 18
Hit Points 90 (12d8 + 36)
Speed 55 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	18 (+4)	10 (+0)

Saving Throws Str +3, Dex +7
Senses passive Perception 14
Languages any one language (usually Common)
Challenge 5 (1,800 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +3

Magic Weapons. The martial arts master's fist attacks are considered magical for the purpose of overcoming resistance and immunity to nonmagical attacks and damage.

Unarmored Defense. The martial arts master gains a bonus to its AC equal to its Wisdom modifier (included).

Actions

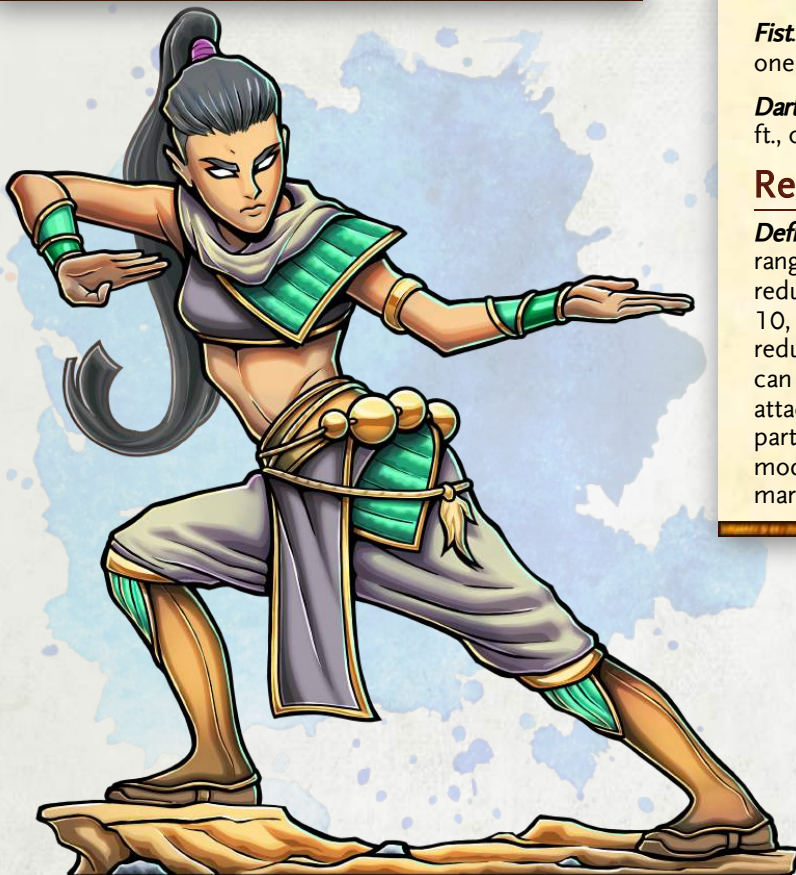
Multiattack. The martial arts master makes four fist attacks or three dart attacks.

Fist. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

Dart. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage.

Reactions

Deflect Missiles. In response to getting hit by a ranged weapon attack, the martial arts master reduces the damage it would take from the attack by 10, to a minimum of 0. If the martial arts master reduces the damage to 0, the martial arts master can catch the missile and make a ranged weapon attack with the weapon or piece of ammunition as part of the same reaction. This attack uses the same modifier to hit and deals the same damage as the martial arts master's dart attack.



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