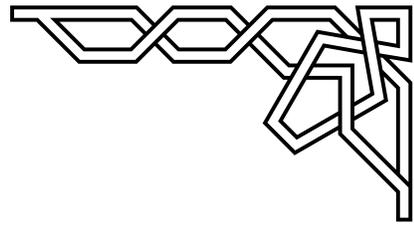


THE NINJA CRUSADE SECOND EDITION





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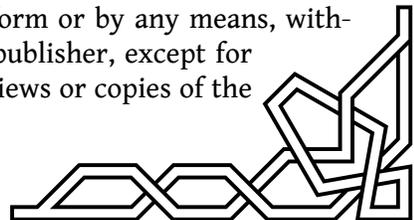
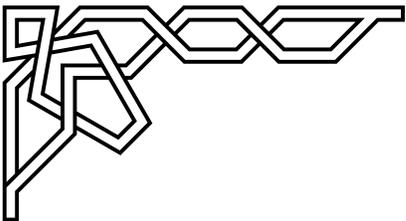


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INTRODUCTION TO THE GAME

WHAT IS THE NINJA CRUSADE 2ND EDITION?

Ninja are the greatest warriors the world has ever seen, combining expert martial arts with the magical expressions of their ki energy called jutsu. For millennia, the ninja tradition has seen the rise and fall of many an empire or dynasty, as the various clans battle in the shadows for supremacy. It wasn't until the ninja who crossed the latest emperor of the Izou Empire enraged him enough to call the Ninja Crusade that the ninja's power waned. Izou soldiers from across the empire were commanded to end the ninja tradition, and thus the war began. The ninja put aside centuries-long rivalries to gather and found the Lotus Coalition, the ultimate ninja force to combat the imperial army. Together they fight an ongoing war for the survival of their friends, family and very way of life.

The war has taken a number of epic twists, from the supposed death and resurrection of the Emperor, the founding of a new ninja village called Danketsu, the use of magical beasts to turn the tide of the battle, involvement from demons and even a year of unending floods that devastated both sides of the war. The world has felt every moment of this war, but the ninja must continue the fight or all is lost.

The world is very much like that of ancient Japan, but differs in a few major ways. Samurai did not exist in this fictional world, so ninja handled

every function of a serving warrior class at their pinnacle. At the center of the world is the Izou Empire, encompassing ten provinces where each of the major ninja clans rules in secret. Five other kingdoms, each with its own ninja traditions and contributions to the ongoing Ninja Crusade, also surround it.

The Ninja Crusade 2nd Edition (NC2E) is the latest update to this amazing setting of warring ninja clans battling for survival. It gives players the tools they need to create their own ninja characters and craft dramatic, engaging stories. One story may bring them to the front line of the war to scout out an Izou encampment, while another may revolve around challenging a legendary swordsman to a duel. These are just a few dangers that ninja face every day of their existence.

STORIES TO TELL

There are many ways to play *The Ninja Crusade 2nd Edition*. Some may pick this book up and become engaged in the ongoing war, bringing their characters into the forefront to become heroes who the Izou people will speak of for generations. Others may wish to recreate some of their favorite ninja from anime like *Naruto* or *Ninja Scroll*, using the rules and concepts in this book. Ninja wars are still prevalent within the setting, each jutsu battle entered being a deadly encounter the ninja may not survive. The rules presented also allow for a variety of awesome martial arts battles with flair and excitement built in!

More than just the fighting and the war, players can

INTRODUCTION TO THE GAME

tell stories of exploration, mystery and even romance as they proceed through NC2E. Every ninja in the game has their talents and their flaws, each of which makes for interesting twists to any interaction with friends or enemies. There is never a moment of boredom to be had in a game of bloodshed, excitement and drama.

NINJA CLANS

Players take on the role of ninja hailing from different clans who work together under the banner of the Lotus Coalition, fighting a war against the Izou Empire, which hopes to destroy them. Ten clans have proved to be the most powerful and influential within the empire.

- ◆ **Bamboo Herbalists:** Genius doctors and thrill-seekers, they are masters of medicinal jutsu
- ◆ **Blazing Dancers:** Entertainers, well known for their acrobatic acts and fiery performances
- ◆ **Grasping Shadows:** Traditionalists, spies and assassins, they wield power over shadows and stealth
- ◆ **Hidden Strands of Fate:** Master manipulators, adept at pulling strings (both literal and political)
- ◆ **Living Chronicle:** Historians, keeping knowledge alive in their minds and on their bodies
- ◆ **Pack of the Black Moon:** Ranchers and farmers, they are experts on animals, particularly their specially-bred ninja dogs
- ◆ **Recoiling Serpents:** Fallen lords, masters of poison and survival in dangerous lands
- ◆ **Virtuous Body Gardeners:** Feisty warriors and artists who specialize in tattoo manipulation as their newest art form
- ◆ **Wardens of Equilibrium:** Merchant ninja who seek to balance the world and turn a profit at the same time
- ◆ **Will of Iron:** Wandering, lone magistrates who believe in invoking justice wherever they go
- ◆ **Ronin:** Clanless ninja, composed of exiles from other clans or self-taught ninja

WHAT IS ROLEPLAYING?

The Ninja Crusade 2nd Edition is a tabletop roleplaying game (RPG) following the lives and adventures of ninja as they make their way in a dangerous world. In this book are all instructions, systems and concepts for players to craft engaging characters, immersive stories and exciting adventures in this unique setting. Some readers may have

picked up *The Ninja Crusade 2nd Edition* for the amazing artwork in these pages or a love of martial arts and ninja anime, like *Naruto: Shippuden* or *Journey to the West*. Whatever the reason for your purchase, we thank you for checking out our game and hope you thoroughly enjoy your read.

For those unfamiliar, a tabletop RPG is a chance for a player to take control of a character of their own design. Have you ever read a comic book, manga or a novel, following along as the protagonist goes in a direction you may disagree with? What if you could take control and make him or her do whatever you wanted? Fight in a different style? Look a different way or consort with much different associates? Maybe insert some magical knowledge or a dark past? As a player, you get to directly interact with the story and change its course whenever you see fit. This type of game provides boundless entertainment; the only limitation is your imagination.

Tabletop RPGs are played verbally, similar to old radio shows where ideas run wild as you listen (or the players tell the story while the others engage). It becomes even more fun as the players' characters all interact with each other too. Likewise, tabletop RPGs are very similar to a video game RPG in the mind, but with more flexibility than a static world. There is no programming telling you who says what, and talking to an Extra more than once probably won't get you the same line of repeated text. It'll just annoy them.

WHAT YOU NEED TO PLAY

Here's what you need to get started with *The Ninja Crusade 2nd Edition*:

- ◆ A group of two or more friends ready to have fun
- ◆ The rules in this book, which guide you through creating and playing a character
- ◆ A copy of the character sheet at the back of this book
- ◆ A pencil and scratch paper for note-taking or passing secret messages
- ◆ Anywhere from 10 to 20 ten-sided dice (d10s). These can even be shared with the group.
- ◆ Optional poker chips or glass beads to denote Karma (if low on dice)
- ◆ A great imagination and willingness to get into character

GAME MASTERS

One person in the gaming group takes the role of the Game Master (GM), the player who tells the story instead of taking on a character themselves. First off, it's a big job, but it is very satisfying and rewarding in the end. The GM has the opportunity to build a framework of amazing plots, interesting concepts, exciting mysteries and challenging adventures for the other players. They are the storyteller, giving vivid descriptions of the world through which the players take their characters. The GM also speaks for all the other people in the world who aren't the players' characters, from the cabbage merchant who asks them if they're hungry to the leader of a bandit gang they need to negotiate with to the assassin waiting at the inn to kill them. If disputes arise within the game the group can't resolve with a simple die roll or by group consensus, the GM is the final arbiter of the outcome. While this seems like a lot of control for one player, roleplaying is more about collective storytelling by the whole group.

Many groups take turns with who is the GM, giving everyone the chance to take on this prestigious privilege. GMs should read the entirety of this book to ensure they have enough information to run the game accordingly. *The Ninja Crusade 2nd Edition* is only one setting, and the

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Chakra System is only one system. Tabletop roleplaying is a glorious pastime, full of imagination and hours of fun times socializing with your friends. If you like this game, check out our other tabletop RPGs, and be sure to support the hobby.

PLAYERS

The other players in the game have a huge task of their own. Even if they don't have the entire world to build from the ground up like the GM, they instead construct a unique, complete and deep character. Using the rules in this book, players get to piece together the powers and abilities of their characters, as well as their characters' specific disposition, personality and background.

During the game, the player is responsible for all their character's actions as they proceed through a scene and for all their words when conversing with people in this awesome world. Roleplaying becomes so much fun as soon as you are playing a role that you enjoy.



INTRODUCTION TO THE GAME

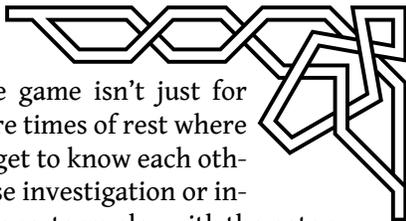
HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

The Ninja Crusade 2nd Edition is separated into distinct chapters to help with the ease of accessing information quickly. Here is what to expect from each chapter:

- ◆ **Chapter One - We Are Ninja:** This chapter gives readers a look at what it's like to be a ninja, the past ninja wars that have led to the Ninja Crusade and what it's like to be a member of the Lotus Coalition.
- ◆ **Chapter Two - Clans of the Empire:** Gives detailed information on the ten major clans that exist within the Izou Empire, as well as information on playing as a clanless Ronin.
- ◆ **Chapter Three - The Long Road:** This is the character creation chapter, giving you everything you need to lead your character along their path to greatness.
- ◆ **Chapter Four - Expressions of Ki:** Provides the rules for using jutsu, the magical powers only achievable by the ninja.
- ◆ **Chapter Five - Dice Mastery:** This chapter gives an in-depth review of all the important rules needed to run a game of NC2E, including how Battles work.
- ◆ **Chapter Six - On All Fronts:** No game is complete without antagonists to oppose the players and their characters. This chapter contains all these amazing foes and rules for running them.
- ◆ **Chapter Seven - Life in the Empire:** This chapter provides information on the Emperor's schemes and the history from the empire's point of view, as well as a deeper look at the Izou provinces and Five Kingdoms.
- ◆ **Chapter Eight - Ninja Stories:** If you are curious about exactly how to run a game like *The Ninja Crusade 2nd Edition*, look no further than this chapter.

PLAYING THE GAME

In *The Ninja Crusade 2nd Edition*, the Game Master (GM) and players (you and your friends) get together for an evening of telling stories and collectively experiencing adventures. A single evening is called a Session, where the gaming group gets together to play through what are called Stories. NC2E is full of action, lots of opportunities for epic battles, winding mysteries and piercing drama as the characters find out what awaits them while they attempt to survive in a war torn land. Sessions take a form similar to a TV series or acts in a movie. A single Story may play out over a series of Sessions or even just one (called one-shots). Sessions last as long as the players are all having fun.



Just like a TV show, the game isn't just for fighting the enemy. There are times of rest where the characters interact and get to know each other, and even others of intense investigation or intrigue. NC2E is designed for long-term play with the potential for long-spanning immersion. The assumption is you'll play the characters you create more than once, continuing along with the story and finding out what else happens to them as they continue to learn and grow. Most groups get together once weekly or bi-weekly to play, often switching the role of players and Game Masters at agreed-upon times (usually at the end of an important story).

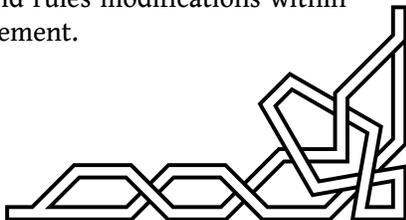
Tabletop RPGs give players many options for their characters, limited only by their imaginations and the constraints of the Scene presented by the GM. In any given Scene, a character might want to:

- ◆ Overhear sensitive info through a door
- ◆ Take down a soldier
- ◆ Traverse the city by leaping rooftop to rooftop
- ◆ Repair a damaged suit of armor
- ◆ See through someone's deception
- ◆ Infiltrate a military compound
- ◆ Shatter a door with your fist
- ◆ Drink until you're blind
- ◆ Dissect the scene of a crime
- ◆ Ask a friend for a favor

ROLLING THE DICE

Once a player has decided on an action for their character to take, they look to the dice to say whether they were successful or not. Using the Chakra System, players roll a pool of ten-sided dice (d10s) against a Difficulty (number of successful dice needed) set by the GM. If successful, they accomplish their task, while a failure means the character has made some sort of misstep and their plan didn't work.

Most checks are made by combining the total levels of two different Skills and grabbing that many dice to roll. Each die that results in a 7-9 counts as 1 success, while a 10 counts as 2 successes. Rolling equal to or more than the needed successes means the character completed their task. Rolling fewer successes means they failed. Results of 1s at the same time as no successes, means they have suffered a critical failure. Once players understand this basic system, all the variations and rules modifications within these pages are easy to implement.



Ai stared at the cow, and the cow stared back.

Ai's bloodline was extensive and proud, filled with illustrious heroes and legendary warriors. From the cradle, she dreamed of being Michiko, who held the Gates of the Still Lotus with thirty ninja against a horde of barbarians. Or General Aki, six generations back, the master tactician victorious at the Battle of the Crane Road. Their fire was in her veins. She was destined for great things, just like them.

Somehow, she doubted any of them started their careers with a lost cow.

The cow lowed, flicked an ear and turned away in search of tender grass shoots. Ai scowled and hunched further into the cattails. She was dirty, smelly, tired and at least three days from home.

Not for the first time, she wished she hadn't jumped at the chance for her first solo mission.

Abruptly she stood, dragging fistfuls of wispy seeds that blew away when she opened her hands. "Alright, you stupid cow," she grumbled. "Let's get this over with."

- - -

Ai gritted her teeth, dug deep and created a fourth shadow-dog. It barked and nipped at the cow's legs, trying to herd the animal. But the cow didn't startle and bolt, like with the first dog. It didn't grudgingly trot on, or even give an irritated kick, as with the second and third. It just ignored the dog, ignored Ai and grazed placidly on.

The dog paled, faded and thinned into oblivion, and Ai fell over. "Stupid cow," she groaned, sprawling in the dust. Sweat soaked her face, her head swirled and her chest thumped with a weird hollowness; sure signs of ki exhaustion.

She lay there for a while, watching clouds scud across the sky and listening to the cow nose through the grass. When she felt like she could, she sat up, grimacing at the sticky-sweaty-dirty pull of her skin. She drew her knees up to her chest and rested her chin on top of them, glaring at the cow.

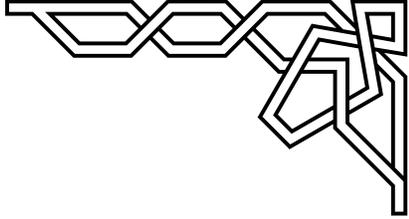
If only she'd thought to bring some rope. The cow had a nose ring, it would be easy to lead if she had something to lead it with. She closed her eyes, swaying with fatigue. Maybe she could fashion a rope from the grass?

She hauled herself to her feet and trudged into the reeds. She yanked grass until her arms burned and her fingers were green. Her first two attempts were lopsided things. Tears burned her eyes, but she swiped them away, gathered more grass, and started again.

Ai took a breath and closed her eyes. She remembered how Mama Rai's fingers wove baskets (even as she remembered asking what good weaving was to a ninja). She remembered Aki's texts on botany, far less exciting than his works on war and tactics, but read nonetheless. She remembered Michiko's last recorded words, standing at the Gates with the barbarians bearing down: it is better to persevere than to be covered in glory.

Her mind calmed. Her fingers grew nimble. The braid lengthened.

Ai opened her eyes. The hollow thump of her chest was gone. She was dirty, tired, smelly and at least three days from home. But now, she had a rope, a cow and a victory.



CHAPTER ONE

WE ARE NINJA

WHAT IS A NINJA?

A ninja is an assassin, stealthily moving from rooftop to rooftop, stalking their next victim. A ninja is a mercenary, taking coin in exchange for missions and battles. A ninja is a spy, infiltrating and studying their enemies to learn of plans and weaknesses. A ninja is a mystic, harnessing and manipulating ki in order to perform superhuman feats. A ninja is a freedom fighter, defending the weak and fighting against an oppressive regime that seeks to exterminate them.

All of these paint parts of the picture, but even together, they do not show the whole image.

In truth, there are as many definitions for ninja as there are stars in the sky. Ninja play many roles during their lifetimes, in service to themselves, their clans and their villages. They rarely develop skills with only a single purpose. Stealth and weapons training translate easily to hunting and gathering skills, for instance. Attention to detail and patience serve a ninja equally as a spy or scout. A ninja may also use their formidable combat prowess to attack their enemy, or defend their family.

In the end, a ninja is simply a person. They may come from any walk of life, subject to the same range of social classes, relationships, economic standings and family backgrounds as their peers. Each ninja has their own history, motivations and goals; and this is what truly defines them. Who they are determines how they train their body, hone their mind, strengthen their ki and develop their jutsu.

The life of a ninja is certain to end with a violent death.

This is a fact every ninja must face. A few survive to die of old age in bed, but they are the exceptions. The long, violent and bloody ninja history plays an important role in directing the evolution of their way of life.

HISTORY LESSONS: THE ANCIENT FAMILIES

Even before there were ninja clans, when ki manipulators were mystics trained in bloodline-specific secret arts, families warred with one another. These families adhered to strict rules of self-discipline and honorable combat, but were arrogant and often fell into squabbling. Conflicts frequently spiraled into blood feuds, with individuals swearing generational enmity upon their rivals, until a more hated rival of both houses forced peace between them.

None of these perceived enemies was more influential in the formation of the ninja clans than the Orime Dynasty was.

Ruling the realm centuries before the rise of the Izou Empire, the Orime Dynasty's legacy is one of brutal, tyrannical rule. Under their rule, the divide between rich and poor grew to extreme levels, and corrupt nobles grew fat and wealthy by taxing their vassals into starvation. As taxes and corruption grew, so did unrest. Several rebellions died in their infancy during this time; the Orime's armies had plenty of supplies and superior training; they easily put down a few famers armed with pitchforks.



Then, the Ensen Volcano, dormant for centuries, erupted.

THE FIRST WAR: THE ORIME REBELLION

For days following the first blast of lava, stone and gas, molten death rained down on the villages nestled into the fertile valleys around the volcano's base. Outlying towns, safe from the deadly lava and choking clouds, became flooded with refugees fleeing the devastation. Riders went as fast as their mounts could carry them to the Orime capital, begging the shogun for disaster relief and aid for the refugees. The shogun reminded his citizens that displaced farmers were hardly his concern, so long as they paid their taxes when demanded.

It was the turning point for the mystic families, many of whom were unaffected by the harsh taxes and corruption rampant through the noble ranks, the cruel inaction taken by the shogun and his nobles rankled at their strict code of honor. Several family heads met in secret to discuss their response. While the words spoken during this meeting have been lost to history, one thing is certain: when they emerged, their world had fundamentally changed. The families, having held themselves apart for so long, led a rebellion against the oppressive dynasty and met the enemy on equal ground without the strictures of honorable behavior that had guided them for generations.

Not every family followed the path of rebellion. Some found their code of honor impossible to abandon, and withdrew to neutral territory, retreating to the security of their estates to ride the rebellion out. A rare few actually benefitted from the crushing taxes on the working class and sided with the Orime Dynasty.

It was not an easy transition to make. Some discarded ritual robes in favor of camouflage garb suitable for night assaults and ambush attacks. Dedicated experimentation revealed new, weaponized purposes for common farming implements. The secret bloodline arts cherished and hoarded like precious gems for generations, evolved, gradually reworked into the more familiar modern-day jutsu. The earliest ninja were pioneers, discovering new uses for old magics, and were just as likely to fail as to succeed.

High-ranking Orime officers were assassinated as quickly as they were promoted, disrupting the discipline and morale of the rank-and-file foot soldiers. Without the protection of the troops, the corrupt nobles suddenly found themselves vulnerable.

The dynasty slowly unraveled, and the citizens found new hope and resolve. With each new

CHAPTER ONE - WE ARE NINJA

kill, rebels flocked to the banner of the ninja. Entire villages gave aid and respite, healing the wounded and hiding the fugitives from Orime soldiers. Some non-mystics even dedicated their minds and bodies to the ways of the ninja, training to their physical limits and participating in stealth and assassination missions.

The ninja's efforts paid off as the decadent elite died one by one, destabilizing the government and usurping control of resources. Only when the last noble dropped dead of poisoned tea did the ninja turn to breaching the royal palace.

Ironically, the final battle of the rebellion was not an assassination at all, but a one-on-one fight guided by the very rules of honorable combat the ninja had abandoned. In a breathtaking show of jutsu mastery versus incredible physical prowess, a single ninja fought the shogun in a battle that lasted three days and three nights, and ended with the shogun's decapitation.

The war was over. The land was free from tyranny.

AFTERMATH: RECONSTRUCTION

Unrest plagued the land for decades after the fall of the shogun, as petty warlords and would-be successors to the Orime Dynasty rose up only to eventually fall. Though the citizenry initially looked to the ninja families to assist them, the long war had depleted the number of ninja. Most families had lost entire generations. Some families had been wiped out completely, taking their bloodlines' secret arts to the grave. As the ninja's attention turned inward toward repopulating their families and securing their territories, mundane citizens also staked their claim on the former provinces of the Orime Dynasty and began to rebuild.

The reconstruction after the devastation of the Orime Rebellion took years, an immense effort both enabled and hampered by the ninja clans. Without a single enemy to unify them, the ninja slowly fell back into their ancestors' habits of holding grudges and declaring blood feuds. The last remnants of the ancient families disappeared during this time, as clans split and merged with one another. Mostly by luck, each clan's territory fell loosely within the bounds of one or more of a hundred autonomous regions rising from the fractured ashes of the expansive Orime Dynasty. Those national borders became clan borders, and the clans defended them rigorously.

The newly-fledged governments were quick to take advantage of the infighting between ninja, and hired entire clans as secret police, border patrol and mercenary fighters. As one nation hired a clan, another had to do the same to defend its territory. Soon, every government, noble

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family and well-off merchant wanted a ninja on the payroll. The clans, still recovering from their heavy losses in the rebellions, grabbed at the opportunity for security, alliance and much-needed funds into almost-empty coffers.

Thus began the Mercenary Wars.

THE SECOND WAR: THE MERCENARY WARS

The Mercenary Wars were not a single conflict, but a collection of conflicts. As word spread of the ninja clans' willingness to trade their unique skills for coin, potential clients flooded their villages and estates with requests for everything from finding lost animals to assassinating rival nations' leaders.

The different types of jutsu were a lucrative venture for the ninja, and several of the oldest extant clans grew from humble, coin-starved practitioners of ancient, secret arts into open members of courts and households. It became a mark of prestige for the wealthy to employ ninja, and it wasn't long before every noble could boast of his fire-spinning courtesans or ki-divining advisor. Personal armies were all but abolished, and disagreements were settled by selected ninja champions meeting for single combat.

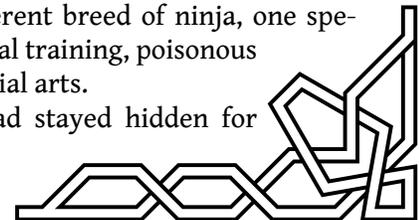
Within a single generation, ninja without wealthy patrons struggled to survive. As the power and influence of the main clans grew, lesser clans found themselves forced to become ronin, turning to banditry and lawlessness to feed their families. Some clans starved into extinction for not conforming to society's demands, and those that left grew only stronger and more powerful.

It was a system doomed to failure, as the biggest and best-equipped clans canceled each other's advantages on the fields of battle and spycraft. Still, this system might have lasted indefinitely, stagnant and stalled, if not for one clan: the Slithering Gods.

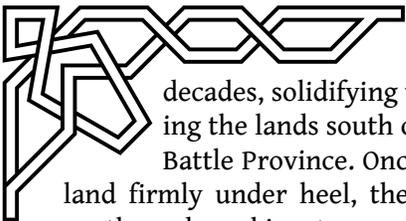
THE THIRD WAR: WAR OF WITHERED FANGS

The Mercenary Wars did not truly end, but bled directly into the Third Ninja War: the War of Withered Fangs. As the northern clans focused on personal advancement and fought for their noble patrons, the southern jungles were home to a very different breed of ninja, one specializing in physical survival training, poisonous jutsu and snake-style martial arts.

The Slithering Gods had stayed hidden for



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decades, solidifying their strength and conquering the lands south of what is now the Bridge to Battle Province. Once they brought their homeland firmly under heel, the Slithering Gods expanded northward, seeking to conquer the whole of the Five Kingdoms.

The northern ronin clans, underpowered and destitute, were easy prey for the Slithering Gods. They offered each clan an ultimatum: kneel before the Slithering Gods, or face annihilation. While some fought to the last to stay free, others saw the opportunity for survival and surrendered immediately. Those who fought were destroyed without mercy, and those who capitulated were annexed into the Slithering Gods as foot soldiers.

The larger clans had grown complacent with their system of ritualized patronage, and were ill prepared for the battles that followed. The Slithering Gods continued north, conquering territory, and either exterminating or recruiting smaller clans before they began a secret war against the complacent, larger clans.

At first, it was a shadow war. The Slithering Gods were an unknown element, striking from the shadows and never revealing their true strength. When possible, they used recruited ronin and decoys to mask their presence. Eventually, a series of guerrilla strikes and tactical retreats lured the overconfident northern ninja south, toward the stronghold of the Slithering Gods. Only when they had been drawn into the sweltering jungles did the Slithering Gods reveal themselves and attack in force.

A third of the northern ninja died in the first hour, victims of the Slithering Gods' jutsu and mastery of the brutal terrain. A further third died in the frantic retreat back to their hidden villages, falling to jungle fevers and infected wounds. The Slithering Gods harried them nearly the whole way, picking off the weakened stragglers, and were positioned to issue the same demand of the northern clans as they had the ronin clans: submit or die.

As they had when faced with the tyranny of the Orime Dynasty, the clan heads declared neutral ground. They put aside grudges and feuds, and met to discuss their response to the threat of superior numbers and unique jutsu. Some clans were in favor of capitulation to the Gods' demands, while others wondered if they could use their wealth to buy off the aggressors.

The heads of the Hidden Strands of Fate and the Grasping Shadows had other ideas. They proposed using their influence in their nations' ruling classes to raise armies to nullify the advantage of the Slithering Gods' numbers. The other clans immediately protested, fearful that any show of weakness would

spell the end of their comfortable, lucrative patronage.

With no clear consensus between clan heads, the Hidden Strands and Grasping Shadows formed a separate alliance, and sent their best diplomats to pull every string they could in the governments they supported. Gradually, word spread of their efforts, and the more reluctant clans followed suit. Though standing forces were a tradition of the past, innovations in archery enabled even the greenest peasant to shoot with deadly accuracy, clearing the way for effective soldiers conscripted en masse.

When the northern clans met the Slithering Gods in combat again, it was with the full might of a dozen nations' armies behind them.

The Slithering Gods, driven back into the jungles, knew their plans were defeated and their power broken. Faced with the same ultimatum they had so often delivered — submit, or die — they surrendered to the northern alliance. The terms of their surrender were harsh and restrictive, but allowed for the clan's survival. The Slithering Gods abandoned the northern territories they had conquered and retreated into the jungles, changing their name to the Recoiling Serpents to remind themselves of the consequences of failure.

Though the War of Withered Fangs had concluded, the world was in shambles. Pockets of Slithering God loyalists still remained in the far-flung corners of the land, and had to be rooted out. In addition, the fears of the clan heads came to pass: the nations, now reminded of their own strength and shown the clans' vulnerabilities, relied less and less on the system of patronage. Though individual ninja could always negotiate contracts with those willing to pay for services, the era of government-sponsored clans was over.

INTERLUDE: WARRING STATES AND THE RISE OF THE IZOU EMPIRE

Following the war with the Slithering Gods, the remaining ninja clans once more turned their focus to survival. Without the wealthy filling their coffers, the clans were forced to find new models of sustainability. Out of necessity, the clans withdrew from active participation in the alliance they had helped found to concentrate on rebuilding their estates and restoring their numbers.

Within a year of the war's end, the northern alliance dissolved. Each state had its own religion, system of writing and style of government. Without an external threat to hold them together, old hostilities boiled to the surface. Nearly two centuries of warfare followed.

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The ninja clans remained largely uninvolved with these conflicts, commonly known as the Warring States period. By then, the clans had separated into their own territories, founding the earliest versions of hidden villages in foothills, plains and forests.

The Warring States period ended shortly after the birth of Izou Zurui. Though he had been trained since childhood in self-defense techniques, Zurui was a simple fisherman, content to wrestle his neighbors and sell fish in the village's small market. When the war between his nation and another spilled over into his village, it destroyed his family and his livelihood. Zurui gathered the surviving men and began a campaign against the Warring States that, he vowed, would end either with his death or with their complete subjugation.

Remembering the legends of the ninja still told around campfires and taproom tables, Zurui sought out and made an alliance with the Grasping Shadows clan. The Shades, seeing an opportunity for power they had not had in two hundred years, agreed to train Zurui and his men. Under their guidance, he became a formidable warrior, skilled with blade, bow and fist.

Zurui was a highly effective warlord, possessing a nigh-supernatural aptitude for battlefield tactics. With each village he annexed, the armies marching under his banner grew larger. Zurui swiftly conquered his home state, reorganized his troops, conscripted new recruits from farmers and fishers, and invaded the neighboring state. Within twenty years, Zurui's forces had occupied the disparate nations, and the Warring States became an empire.

The bloody and violent birth of the Izou Empire was also a time of expansion for the ninja clans. The Hidden Strands, Grasping Shadows and Recoiling Serpents were the strongest of the remaining established Izou clans, but the chaos and turmoil fomented in the wake of the conquering armies led to the formation of new clans, notably the Pack of the Black Moon and the Wardens of Equilibrium. In addition, the Living Chronicle from the Land of Crashing Waves sent a delegation of members to form a cadet branch, in order to record the Empire's founding.

Four decades of peace followed the founding of the Izou Empire, until Emperor Izou Junshinichi, Zurui's nephew, turned his eye to the lands he did not rule and sought to expand his territory.

THE FOURTH WAR: EXPANSION WARS

Though his uncle had conquered a vast territory, Junshinichi was not content with the borders of his kingdom. He coveted the rich mines in the mountains of the Land of Five Blades, the abundant crops and medicines of the Land of Seed and Blossom, the mystical secrets of the Land of Exalted Flames and the pearls and corals of the Land of Crashing Waves. He spent the majority of his reign with his campaign to rule all of the Five Kingdoms.

Perhaps the smartest of Junshinichi's ideas was to offer full citizenship and Imperial patronage to any foreign ninja clan willing to join with him. The centuries following the War of Withered Fangs had not been kind to many of the surviving ninja clans, and those in remote locales of the Five Kingdoms suffered the most.

The first to accept was the Will of Iron clan, who smoothed the way for the Emperor's assault on their homeland, the Land of Five Blades. Though the iron and gold mines claimed from the mountains enriched the Empire, Emperor Junshinichi could not lay claim to more than a fraction of the land's territory. Perhaps the members of the Will of Iron clan were double agents, working to minimize the impact of his invasion on their lands. Perhaps Junshinichi invaded the Land of Seed and Blossom too quickly, stretching his resources too thin by attempting to hold the two Lands at once. Though the Izou Empire was able to conquer the Land of Seed and Blossom, demolishing the temples and shrines of the region to enforce the state religion, they lost all but a few of their holdings in the Land of Five Blades.

It was not a complete loss for the Empire, however. With their temples destroyed and no other recourse for survival, the Bamboo Herbalists joined the Izou, bringing their advanced healing skills and medical jutsu into the Imperial fold.

News of the devastation of the Land of Seed and Blossom spread, reaching the ears of the clans of the Land of Exalted Flames. Knowing the Emperor had turned his eyes to their homeland and concerned for its well-being, the Exalted Flame ninja used their most powerful secret arts to create a set of natural barriers between the Izou Empire and the Land of Exalted Flames: the burning-hot, inhospitable Great Desert, and the equally dangerous Arashi Sea.

Despite the threat, they also understood the Emperor's lust for power presented them with an opportunity to rid themselves of their rivals, the Blazing

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Dancers. They drove the young clan from the Land of Exalted Flames and into the Great Desert. Given no other options but death, the Blazing Dancers chose to cross the wastes to perform for the Emperor's court, bringing another clan under Imperial control.

Here, the Emperor's reign of conquest ended. The Land of Mountains and Valleys was intractable to assault, protected by its unforgiving cliffs and treacherous mountain passes. Likewise, the Land of Crashing Waves proved difficult to master. As soon as they had claimed one island, another would throw off the chains of subjugation, backed by an impressive navy. A succession of Emperors attempted to finish what their ancestor started, but the Empire had finally overreached its grasp.

INTERLUDE: IMPERIAL STABILITY AND THE DECLINE OF THE CLANS

The century following the end of Imperial expansion was the most prosperous time to be a ninja since the Mercenary Wars. Though Imperial coin did not fully fund the ninja as it had in the past, contracts were plentiful and paid well. The final major ninja clan — the Virtuous

Body Gardeners — broke away from the monasteries of the Living Chronicle and carved out their own territories. Though some of the old feuds are as old as the ninja tradition, most of the modern-day grudges took root during the time of peace.

Unfortunately, the age of the ninja would soon enter its twilight. As the centuries rolled on, Emperor after increasingly paranoid Emperor pulled the realm away from the clans. Though the ninja had enjoyed a period of open existence, by the time Izou Mamoru took the throne, they found themselves driven back into the shadows, relegated once more to old legends and whispered rumors.

In the end, the clans were the architects of their own demise. The Emperor's heir, Yesui, had been caught in the crossfire of a shadow war between two rival ninja clans, and his death witnessed by his brother, Kano. With the death of the Emperor's heir, it became a high crime to practice any sort of ki manipulation or ninja techniques. The single exception to this was the Golden Lions, awarded Imperial writ to serve the Emperor and practice their jutsu.

Ninja who continued to operate illegally amongst the nobles were rooted out first, tried for the crime of ki use and sentenced to convict camps to work off their judgment in years of hard labor. Ninja who swore an oath to never practice jutsu again left their homes, now evicted,



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but permitted to leave in peace. Some ninja of the various clans fought back, but against the might of the Empire, they were simply outclassed and wiped out.

The spate of resistance to the Emperor's anti-ninja decrees exacerbated the war when an unknown ninja assassinated the Emperor's beloved consort, Izou Hana, and left her head on a pike. The Emperor's daughter, Megumi, was the only survivor of the bloody assault, but had been afflicted with a strange and mysterious wasting disease that ate her health and left her a weak, shaking wreck doomed to a slow, painful death.

No clan came forward to claim credit, and even the ninja themselves had no idea if the massacre of the Empress' convoy had been the work of a clan, disaffected individuals or ronin clans shunned from ninja society. Enraged and grieving, the Emperor became determined to wipe the ninja off the face of the earth for good. He declared the Ninja Crusade, placing a blood price on the head of every ninja from every clan.

THE FIFTH WAR: THE NINJA CRUSADE

In the aftermath of the massacre, the Emperor had all ninja still working off their sentences in the labor camps summarily executed. The Emperor did not tolerate even the handful of Bamboo Herbalists who traveled to the capital in order to offer their assistance with the Princess' illness. He sent their headless corpses back to their home villages via catapults, and then razed those villages to the ground. He commissioned special units of elite soldiers, tasking these Executioners to track and slay ki users. Ninja among mundane citizens became a liability most townships could no longer afford, and neighbors turned on each other as they reported the presence of ninja to the Izou forces.

The clans scrambled for safe haven. With each passing year, the clans were forced further and further from the settled lands of the Empire, forced solely into their hidden villages where they trained in secret and kept vigilant watch for the forces of the vengeful Empire. Eventually, the clans, in the interest of mutual survival, had no choice but to put aside their destructive quarrels and banded together. Under this new, reluctant philosophy, the clans assembled the Lotus Coalition and operated as a united front. Their ability to defend themselves and actively resist the Empire improved dramatically.

Within two years, the ninja located a weakness in the Emperor's defenses. A strike force of the best the clans had to offer assaulted the palace, fighting through thou-

sands of formidable soldiers. Many ninja died trying to reach the throne room, each slaying a dozen soldiers before succumbing to their wounds. Only a single ninja reached the Emperor; with his last breath, that ninja struck the Emperor dead.

The Ninja Crusade, it seemed, was finally over.

INTERLUDE: IMPERIAL RETALIATION, SUMMONER SKIRMISHES AND THE YEAR OF FLOODS

Following the death of the Emperor, the clans solidified the Lotus Coalition in their newest, largest village. Named after the rebel who gave his life to slay the Emperor, Danketsu would be neutral territory where any ninja from any clan could live and work in harmony. Initially slow going, the Lotus Coalition gained ground when two of the clan leaders put aside their lifelong enmity in a public ceremony and swore to work together for the good of all ninja.

The clans had barely a year of respite before a force of ten thousand soldiers swept through the Empire, ruthlessly annihilating the hidden villages. Rumors quickly reached the leadership of the Lotus Coalition: the Emperor himself rode at the head of the army, a shock to the ninja. Soon after, they confirmed the Emperor's survival, and the clans knew their celebrations had been premature: the Ninja Crusade was not over after all.

The renewed war devastated the land. The Emperor proclaimed law after law designed to root out and exterminate the ninja clans once and for all. Any village even suspected of harboring a single ninja would be taken wholesale in chains to labor camps. Hidden villages fell to the torch, and the earth beneath them salted. Seeking the ultimate weapon to win the war, the Empire commissioned summoners to unleash massive celestial beasts in combat, forcing the ninja to forge their own pacts with spirit animals for protection.

Perhaps as a consequence of these Summoner Skirmishes, the first day of the following year opened with howling storms and raging flash floods that continued for months. The fury of the elements reached across the breadth of the Empire, destroying crops, washing away towns and killing thousands of people in the initial onslaught. After the storms subsided, starvation, mass displacement and rampant disease killed thousands more.



THE PRESENT

An entire generation has grown up knowing nothing but war. Exhaustion wracks all corners of the Empire. Rebuilding efforts from the floods and storms are slow, resulting in shortages of goods and services in every province. Banditry is rampant as displaced citizens are forced to commit robbery and murder to feed their families. Disease plagues the land. Those lucky enough to still have homes grumble with each season's increased taxes. Voluntary recruitment for the Empire's armies is at a historic low, and mandatory service at an all-time high. The ninja clans raise their children knowing, tomorrow, that child may give their life to protect their village.

Most people pray for the war to end, but there is still no end in sight. There is, however, the beginning of a third side to the Ninja Crusade: the average, mundane citizens, trapped between Empire and ninja for far too long, have begun to whisper of open rebellion against both.

A NINJA'S PATH

Life is hard for ninja. Outlawed in every corner of the Empire, with each season, the Emperor's trained forces get closer to wiping the clans out of existence entirely. The Year of Floods left devastation, disease and death that further reduces the resources the clans may draw from. Even some of their civilian allies, tired of the long conflicts that have left them trapped between the desperate clan and vengeful Empire, have begun to withdraw their support.

Yet not all hope is lost. New ninja graduate from their long training, quickly replaced by their masters with brand new apprentices. For every hidden village razed and burned, another springs up in a different part of the Empire. The clans recruit from ancient blood and peasant stock alike, replenishing their dwindling numbers. Refugees from every province travel to Danketsu, and the citizens and ninja alike know there is one safe haven left, well defended and self-sufficient.

Throughout their lives, ninja follow the sacred and ancient tradition of the Life Path, a series of seven milestones that represent transition and maturation. No matter what clan a ninja calls home, their lives can be divided into these stages of progress.

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OCEAN:

THE TIME BEFORE

All ninja know life is birthed in the ocean, given limitless potential in the primordial waters and washed ashore onto the land. In the earliest stages of a ninja's life, the ocean surrounds them, prying them out of mud and coral before thrusting them, raw and barely formed, into the village.

Most ninja are discovered early, their skill at ki manipulation manifesting shortly after their third or fourth birthday. These ninja typically come from bloodlines proven to produce ninja, are born in hidden villages or to known ki-rich families, and many have illustrious heroes in their lineage. Other ninja are not discovered until later in life, perhaps late childhood or early teenage years; some were not born in or do not live in one of the hidden villages. Some are simply late bloomers, coming into their gifts later in life. A rare few go undiscovered until well into their twenties, and may have developed unconscious, crude skill at using their natural ki prior to coming to the attention of the clans.

Though some in the clans claim that the younger a ninja displays ki manipulation, the more powerful they will be, there is only anecdotal evidence to support this. One of the most successful, powerful ninja of the last century, Tsutara Shishiro, a luminary of the Hidden Strands of Fate clan, did not discover his abilities until he was nearly thirty, but went on to distinguish himself in several battles and eventually lead his clan early in the Ninja Crusade.

VILLAGE:

APPRENTICESHIP

Some hidden villages have built schools to teach the basics of history, economics, field craft and combat, but the most common method of tutelage amongst the ninja clans is the master-apprentice relationship.

A tradition hailing back thousands of years to the time of the ancient families, this relationship forges a bond between teacher and student that may last a lifetime. A master is responsible for every aspect of their apprentice's life, from training their bodies and teaching their minds, to making sure they have proper food and clothing.

The relationship is so personal and intimate that a master rarely has more than two or three students at a time. Some prefer to take their apprentices from the village children, while others will teach those only of their bloodline. Very few masters in larger hidden vil-

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lages host up to a dozen children at different stages of apprenticeship, replacing each with a new apprentice as they graduate into adulthood. The apprentice, in return, is expected to obey their master in all things, adhere to the rules of master, clan and village, and make honest effort to learn the lessons taught to them.

Many apprenticeships finish in mutual respect and admiration, evolving into a mutually beneficial relationship. The great deeds of the master can ease the way for their student, while the deeds of the student serve to bolster the master's reputation.

Others are not so fortunate. Whether their time in apprenticeship was one of hardship, harsh lessons and impatient teachers, or whether a master with a less-than-noble reputation chose them, some apprentices distance themselves from their masters entirely once acknowledged as a full ninja. In this act, the ninja must weigh the potential shame and dishonor with the possible benefits gained from severing all ties with their master.

RIVER AND FORGE:

INDEPENDENCE AND HONOR

The village is a time of trial and error, of learning and making mistakes, of accepting guidance from those older and wiser. The village does not last forever. Eventually the river comes for all. It sweeps the ninja away from their safe, comfortable environment and pulls them into tragedy and triumph, dragging them through the forge again and again.

Once a ninja leaves the tutelage of their master, they are essentially recognized as full members of their clan. If they are young when their master deems them ready, they may also be granted adult status. While this means they are fully capable of choosing their own missions, jobs and training paths, it also means they are, for the first time, completely responsible for their behavior and deeds within their society. Each of these lessons forges the ninja into the great warrior, scholar or traveler they will one day become.

The concept of personal honor is deep and intimate. Though their history has its share of assassinations, thievery and espionage, most ninja have a code of conduct from which they rarely break. Clan ninja must respect their liege lords, show subservience to their elders and defend their villages as needed. Only Ronin can truly escape the expectations of clan society, but even they tend to adhere to personal codes of conduct, if not societal ones.



MOUNTAIN AND TEMPLE: EXPERIENCE AND WISDOM

Should a ninja survive into middle age and beyond, new opportunities open to them. Once the wanderlust of youth is behind them, seasoned ninja often settle back into their hidden villages. Many start families, if they have not already, and assist with the day-to-day management of the villages' populations, economics and politics.

The loss of many secret arts over the centuries has firmed the clans' resolve to preserve as much as they can through personal education. Therefore, passing on their accumulated skills and wisdom is one of the most sacred trusts a ninja holds. All ninja, no matter their clan or personal preference, are expected to take on at least one apprentice (and preferably more) before they die, in order to ensure unique jutsu and ki manipulation techniques remain in current knowledge.

SKY: MASTERY AND THE TIME AFTER

The aged and wise are revered in ninja society, and if a ninja survives into old age, they have a responsibility to step into leadership roles. Even if they do not become the master of their clan, ninja expect all who return to serve in any function that will bring honor.

Sooner or later, everyone passes on to the next life. The sky is always overhead, stretching from one infinity to the other, and the spirits of the dead travel on the wind. Ninja understand this and, though some rail against the inevitability of time, generally accept when the end of a long, full life approaches. Some ninja are content to pass peacefully in their beds, surrounded by family, friends and students. Others discover a renewed thirst for the adventures of their youth, gearing up for perhaps the first time in decades to undertake one final mission from which there will be no return.

In death, the honor of a ninja is locked, and even their bitterest, nonspiritual rival fears to desecrate their memory. Few are willing to risk the social dishonor that comes from holding public grudges against the deceased.



CLAN POLITICS

Surviving in the clan structures can sometimes be as tricky and dangerous as battles with Imperial forces. Each clan has their own hierarchy of roles and responsibilities, a complex system that defines the places of its members by their power, experience and popularity. This system dictates many aspects of life for a ninja, including what missions they may accept, when they may lead a squad or take an apprentice, and the type and severity of punishment they can expect for mistakes and sins against the clan laws. The system becomes even more complicated in villages, such as Danketsu, where multiple clans live side by side.

RANK, ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Most clans follow a basic framework of ranking, which in turn influences how a ninja is perceived within their village, their clan, and the greater society.

The Master of the clan is the highest rank a ninja may achieve. Though many, through decades of experience, develop the skills the head of a clan requires, very few are able to obtain this level of ultimate mastery. This rank is often awarded to the most powerful, wise or accomplished, but in some clans is hereditary, adding an insurmountable challenge to those not of the proper bloodline. The Master is responsible for the safety and well-being of all within their care and as such is the ultimate authority for all their ninja. Even civilian family or allies who live within the clan territory must adhere to the Master's commands and policies. The Master is the final authority on whether a ninja has earned rank advancement, and who may enter or leave a clan's territory.

Below the Master of the clan are the titled ninja, each given a moniker to display their honor, such as the Grey Hawk, Osamu the Artificer or The Hand of Seven Claws. Typically older members of the clan, these ninja have a proven history of leadership, tactical decision-making and a willingness to risk life and limb in vital, high-risk missions. The Master usually relies on titled ninja as advisors and ambassadors to assist them in their duties. This council of advisors may consist of just one or two ninja, or may include a variety of ninja from different backgrounds and life experiences in order to offer balanced advice.

Below the titled ninja are the rest of the ninja, whose ranks are much closer to each other than

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to the Master or the titled. Ninja are accorded responsibility and respect according to their age, accomplishments and levels of ki mastery. Ninja in the upper echelons of rank have responsibilities that include overseeing mission assignments and leading squads of less-experienced or lower-ranked ninja when required. The lowest ranked ninja must obey those above them, to fulfill their assignments to the best of their abilities and to behave as though they carry the honor of the entire clan when dealing with outsiders.

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

While no formal system of justice exists in most clans, every clan has codes of behavior to which their members must adhere to, and dictate many of the punishments a ninja might suffer for violating the edicts of their elders and traditions of their clan. Appropriate punishments for sins are complex and subjective, tied innately to the severity of the offense, the ninja's rank, history of disciplinary issues and any mitigating circumstances and any explanation the offending ninja can offer for their behavior.

Punishments range from mild to moderate to severe, and are usually determined by an elder or tribunal of elders who consider a variety of factors before handing down their decision. The higher a ninja's rank, the less leeway they are given in matters of discipline; they are simply expected to know better. Apprentices are more-or-less exempt from many of the traditional clan-wide punishments, as they are still learning their places and responsibilities. Punishments for minor and moderate transgressions fall to their master, and are a vital part of the instructional process. However, an apprentice who does not learn their lesson and continues to violate clan policies and traditions may find themselves before the elders to account for their behavior.

Punishments can include:

- ◆ **Verbal rebuke.** The mildest of punishments, the ninja simply receives a warning from their elders that their behavior is unacceptable, but does not warrant a record of the event or more severe punishment.
- ◆ **Censure.** A more formal version of the rebuke, the ninja's transgression is officially noted in clan records, and can be used against them if they transgress again in the future.
- ◆ **Loss of Rank.** A loss of rank may be temporary, assigned for a set duration of time and after which the ninja's true rank and privileges are restored to them. For more severe circumstances, this loss of rank may become permanent, forever freezing a ninja's social



and political progression. A ninja at the lowest ranks punished this way is often considered unready for the full privileges of being ninja and is given back into the care of a master for another season or two of apprenticeship. **Note:** This does not remove their Rank granted from XP (pg. 93), but may remove any social bonuses they would have received from said Rank.

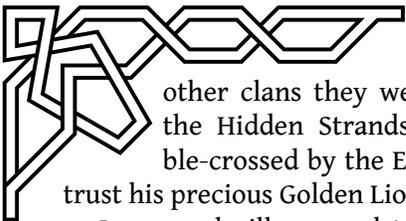
- ◆ **Ostracism.** The elders instruct the entire village to ignore the ninja as if they do not exist. The ninja may remain in the village, but is not permitted to take missions, purchase goods or services from their neighbors, or participate in the village's social activities. Ostracism is a severe punishment, but is usually temporary. Ninja who suffer ostracism are often unnerved by the experience, and few are willing to risk it again.
- ◆ **Exile.** A ninja's sins may be so severe that the elder casts them out from the village and forbids them to return. Exile, like ostracism, is often temporary, invoked for a week, a month or a season. In severe cases, the ninja may be exiled for up to a year. Rarely, in extreme cases, the ninja suffers permanent exile.
- ◆ **Death.** In the most extreme circumstances, only death can cleanse a ninja's honor. The ninja sentenced to die is often given the option of ritual suicide, undertaking a suicide mission or fighting to the death in an honor duel against a village champion.

THE LOTUS COALITION

The history of ninja has proven to be forever cyclical, with their numbers being drawn together and split apart again and again throughout the centuries. Some argue that togetherness is where ninja are most comfortable, and others are convinced that war is the only way. The Ninja Crusade has once again brought them together, but some hope that the worst of circumstances can bring the very best out of ninja.

EFFECTS OF WAR

To understand why the ninja banded together, one must fully comprehend the terrible conditions the Ninja Crusade created in the empire. It is believed that leadership within the Hidden Strands of Fate were responsible for relaying the locations of several key ninja villages during the beginning of the Ninja Crusade, those of their enemies naturally. This led to the utter destruction of the Still Ponds and Suicide Kings clans. Though powerful, the Imperial Army used their devastating power to obliterate these two powerful clans. Shortly after these victories, the army turned their attention to the Recoiling Serpents and Grasping Shadows, two



other clans they were familiar with. Likewise, the Hidden Strands came under attack, double-crossed by the Emperor, as he came only to trust his precious Golden Lions.

In normal villages and towns, wanted posters were hung on every corner, urging the citizenry to turn in their neighbors, friends or family if they even suspected they may be ninja. Even those who didn't identify as ninja, but practiced their own unique forms of jutsu manipulation found themselves caught in the middle. Those ninja who lived in these cities were dragged from their homes to be hanged in the middle of town or burned on a pile of their comrades who had been slaughtered beforehand. Those who refused to turn in known ninja were often imprisoned without trial for indefinite periods of time. It was common for cities close to the Izou capitol of Daiwa to share these sentiments.

FOUNDING

In the face of loss the ninja tradition was suffering at the hands of the Emperor and the Crown Prince, it became clear that all of the major clans would have been picked off one by one if they did nothing. They had their hidden villages, but nothing stays hidden forever.

At this time, a member of the Wardens of Equilibrium clan named Sakamoto Hanzo famously penned urgent messages to the heads of each of the major Izou ninja clans. In it, he reminded them of the true roots of ninja in the Orime Rebellion and again in the War of Withered Fangs. He wrote of how their fates were always to come together in times of need. Without complete cooperation, their traditions were doomed to end once and for all with the Emperor's costly war.

It took months of continued attacks and death, of the army's enhanced weapons of war tearing down everything the ninja had built, before the Warden's pleas were truly heard. The youngest clans like the Blazing Dancers, Bamboo Herbalists and Virtuous Body Gardeners joined the collective first, seeking refuge together to protect their smaller numbers. It took the destruction of the Jade Kama clan, however, for the more xenophobic and stubborn of the major clans to join as well.

One cannot forget centuries of aggression or slights in a day, proved by the continued tensions within this new group as ninja from rival clans arrived. Their start was unstable, but eventually leveled out as their leadership, mostly comprised of Wardens, got a handle on which groups worked well together and which ninja needed special assignments. Once settled, the group decided

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on a name for their new organization: the Lotus Coalition, a reflection of the group's coming together with pure intentions. It was a place that any ninja, even Ronin who had previously been shunned, could call home as long as they helped in the fight against the Empire.

THE GOOD AND BAD

No partnership is without its stumbles, but working together can get a lot more done than working alone. Members were allowed access to safe havens within the many ninja-friendly villages, monasteries where the war could not reach or compounds the Lotus Coalition had under its control. This was in addition to their several roaming villages that popped up and disappeared constantly throughout the empire.

In exchange for this sense of togetherness and safety, every ninja served their function to fight in the war. Some were better on the front line, like the Will of Iron, while others worked best as commanders or communications specialists.

The mixing of clans was a godsend in this regard, giving the Lotus Coalition many tools to unitize against the Ninja Crusade. For as long as ninja had existed, each clan possessed secrets they dared not share with their rivals. Putting these different types of jutsu together into ninja squads helped to emphasize the power of the Lotus Coalition to complete missions and hopefully win the war. Instead of battling each other, a Grasping Shadow could provide cover for a Blazing Dancer leaping into battle against a battalion of soldiers previously showered with poisoned arrows from a Recoiling Serpent, all healed afterward by a Bamboo Herbalist. Nothing like it had ever been seen before.

Of course, while the ninja all worked well together in the midst of battle, their loyalties were tested during times of peace. Ninja are creatures of habit and tradition, which made it hard to forget the eye-roll the Virtuous Body Gardener just gave or the insolence of the Pack of the Black Moon's members. While strict rules were put in place to keep bloodshed to a minimum, this union of clans also gave enemies a look into each other's hearts to see only hatred. It would take a monumental event to change this fact.

DANKETSU: THE UNIFIED VILLAGE

The ninja, together as a true force of nature, planned the most gruesome assault on Daiwa. It was an arduous battle that ended with the assumed death of the Emperor at the hands of a Ronin named Danketsu. The Lotus Coali-

CHAPTER ONE - WE ARE NINJA

tion celebrated this historical achievement of inter-clan dealings having a positive effect. The group's leaders took the opportunity to establish a brand new hidden village named Danketsu, after that brave warrior.

The idea was simple; within the confines of Danketsu, all ninja would be treated equally. It was also a neutral ground, where violence between the clans was strictly prohibited and a sense of harmony was prominent. The village itself was set in the Oak Leaf Province, far from the eyes of the Imperial forces and rife with potential.

Its placement far from the main battlefield of the Ninja Crusade also allowed the village to prosper even during the Summoner Skirmishes. Danketsu was affected just as much by the Year of Floods, except they had help from the Living Chronicle and Grasping Shadow ninja, who were known for specializing in water-styled jutsu.

Allies from all over the Empire were invited to Danketsu. This included fishermen and hunters who helped to provide food for all residents, as well as teachers and even defectors from the Izou army, seeing the error in their past ways. In fact, the vast majority of villagers came from non-ninja backgrounds and depended on the ninja to defend them in case of danger. Together, the ninja have learned, they can take on any battle.

Non-ninja citizens can leave whenever they wish, as most people who currently live in Danketsu are known to have family in other Provinces. However, there are strict security measures taken to keep the location of their hidden village secret, and citizens know releasing its location is a sure way to meet the afterlife.

The question becomes whether this peace will continue once the Ninja Crusade has ended. Many clan leaders, who remember the old days of hating other ninja and xenophobic views of the world, often long for that day to return. Or, to take the opportunity to destroy their once-enemies as soon as the Empire is dealt with.

CLAN CONTRIBUTIONS

Within Danketsu, there are a number of roles that require attention. While there are several villagers to aid with them, the ninja are often put on the front line of handling things in the village.

BAMBOO HERBALISTS

Danketsu lies in the territory of the Bamboo Herbalists, and this clan has accepted this new village as their home. They are small in number, due to their practices that allow them to be longer-lived, but Herbalists hold a deep history of working with other clans, in one way or

another. They have established several schools of medicine and alchemy, taking on students who wish to learn and serving as doctors for those in need, from either the war or a simple accident.

BLAZING DANCERS

In many ways, it is perfect for the Blazing Dancers to be in charge of organizing celebrations and keeping the town entertained. They've moved a number of their performance troupes from the Wu Ji Theater to Danketsu to deliver their unique brand of fun. Likewise, Dancer elders often sing during funerals for the fallen during the Ninja Crusade.

GRASPING SHADOWS

One of the first clans to exist in the Izou Empire, the Grasping Shadows are masters of darkness. They are infamous for their skill at killing and feared by enemies all over, but equally known for their adherence to ancient ninja tradition. Many Shadows have taken up the mantle as teachers of young ninja, whipping apprentices into shape as only they can. Veterans take on specialized assassination requests needed by the Lotus Coalition.

HIDDEN STRANDS OF FATE

The Strands are no stranger to the inner workings of politics, whether in the Izou courts or in Danketsu. They are masters of deception and wield terrifying justice unlike any other clan. While their internal clan hierarchies are often in conflict and full of betrayal, their members have volunteered as advisors and ambassadors when reaching out to outside forces. They are also the only clan to infiltrate the Izou courts to try to promote change through political means.

LIVING CHRONICLES

Obviously, the clan who holds vast amounts of knowledge, the Living Chronicles, have become the premiere teachers in Danketsu. They do not hold their knowledge for only ninja either; the Codices volunteer in schools for all children, hoping to prosper by a more intelligent generation to come. Due to this choice, Danketsu has the highest literacy rate of any village, including even Daiwa.

PACK OF THE BLACK MOON

Hounds have lived off the land for years, keeping simple lives with the aid of their ninja dogs. This relationship is the most important to any member of the Pack of the Black Moon. Being put in

charge of keeping Danketsu self-sustaining was a wise move, and now the clan heads up the majority of the agriculture and animal husbandry in the village. They even have a kennel where others can come to play with ninja puppies.

RECOILING SERPENTS

Probably the clan with the fewest numbers in Danketsu, the Recoiling Serpents will forever be a prideful clan. Many have put aside their previous angst and serve where needed in Danketsu, not having any special job. A shadow of the past hangs over all Serpents, however, and they can hear the whispers from villagers as they pass. Their focus is still on the war, and they have not been convinced of the village's sustainability. Many hope this will change with time.

VIRTUOUS BODY GARDENERS

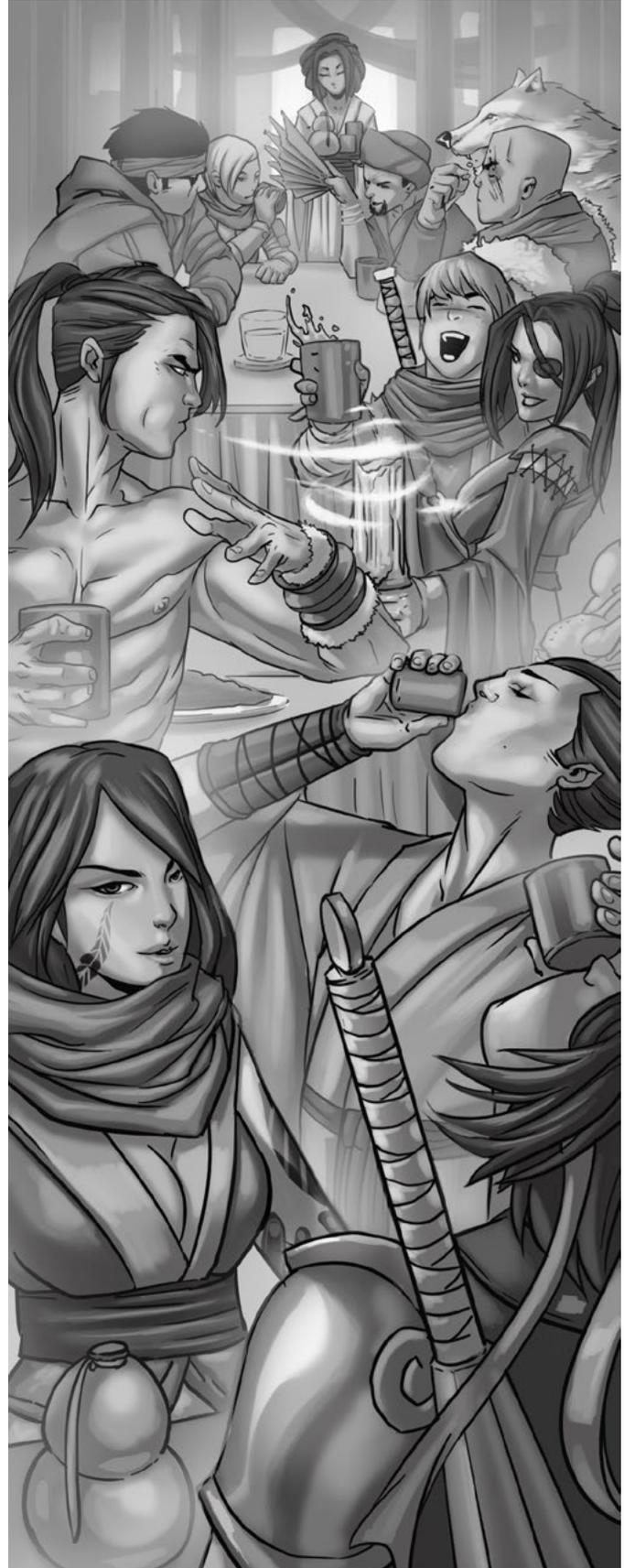
It is hard to keep this clan of tattoo manipulating warriors in one place. Many of their members have moved to Danketsu, but their practices leave them wandering the countryside in search of someone to battle. Inks without this need to wander have taken the role as enforcers and peacekeepers in the village, much to the Will of Iron's chagrin. They are fair in their actions and perform a vital function with just the right amount of nuance.

WARDENS OF EQUILIBRIUM

This merchant clan made Danketsu the perfect village. Many Wardens have their own shops throughout the village, but the clan's major task is to keep the village's finances intact. This includes negotiating with nearby villages for goods/services and acting as treasurer when decisions need to be made in emergencies. It all involves money, which the Wardens seem to enjoy.

WILLOF IRON

While they stepped forward to serve as the justice Danketsu so sorely needed (in their words), the Tribunal decided to also utilize the Will of Iron's expertise in craftsmanship to help build up the infrastructure of the village. This involves raising walls and guard towers and keeping up with shops and homes to ensure they are comfortable and livable. They still work with the Inks at times, if a crime is too big for one clan to handle.



CHAPTER ONE - WE ARE NINJA RONIN

Since Danketsu was founded in honor of a Ronin who defeated the emperor, the status of this marginalized group was raised for a short time. When the Emperor returned from the grave suddenly, this did nothing to sustain the reputation of Ronin. They are still around, as they are a necessary part of the ongoing war, but they are tolerated by more clan ninja and are given no collective responsibilities within the village. Every Ronin is responsible for themselves and their contributions.

THE TRIBUNAL

Some believed the Wardens of Equilibrium were up for a power grab, using the Ninja Crusade and the Lotus Coalition to attain this. However, when it came time to create a governing body for Danketsu, the clan offered the idea of establishing a tribunal instead. The majority of the ninja agreed, and this system has worked for years to keep the peace.

Each of the major clans within Danketsu chooses three members, elected each year, to represent their clan in the Tribunal. Likewise, the non-ninja villagers and Ronin each pick their own representatives. This creates a total of 36 members of the Tribunal, which is treated very democratically. Every representative has a single vote, and the majority rules when choosing the outcome. If at any time the Tribunal comes to a tie, which has only happened twice in the village's history, Sakamoto Hanzo himself is the tiebreaker. He remains respected for his wisdom and was voted into this position almost unanimously.

The Tribunal meets monthly to take on concerns from the village and vote on them. They also convene during emergencies to choose which ninja squads to send for specific missions. To many, it feels strange to have such a bastion of democracy within a province of a vast and expanding Empire, but many hope this is what the future holds when the Ninja Crusade has finally come to an end.

YOUNG VS. ELDERS

Now that Danketsu has stood for over seven years and the Ninja Crusade having lasted over a decade, there are several children who have grown up only knowing war. Anyone 20 years old and younger has known a majority of togetherness for ninja, and anyone living in Danketsu has seen it with their own eyes.

This has created a strange air of contention between young, optimistic ninja and elders of almost all clans. The elders teach the young to fear the Recoiling Serpents for what happened in the War of Withered Fangs or to hate the Grasping Shadows for their allegiance to the Izou Empire before the Expansion Wars. The young ninja, however, see the nice Serpent lady who healed them when they were sick or the Shadow who showed them how to hold a sword correctly.

Many elders have found it a fruitless battle to push their young against whom they see as friends and neighbors, but know it may be necessary when the Ninja Crusade is over. They may have to battle their once-teachers and slay their childhood friends as the world returns to the old ways, and elders can do nothing but try to prepare their children for this inevitability.

Young ninja, however, see the world as much better under the new world order. Many have made secret pledges to defy their clan leaders if ever asked to betray their friends, no matter what clan they hail from originally. If this happens, Danketsu will have a very destructive culture war on their hands; one that may leave the village in rubble.

The future is full of possibilities and either of these outcomes could occur. Only time will tell.

Chuushin Naomi was used to behaving as stoic as a member of a clan named Will of Iron could be, but as she beheld Kumori Kunio, it took every fiber of her being to keep from lashing out. The Grasping Shadow leaned calmly against the cherry tree, twirling a small kunai in his hands as they awaited their arbiter. Naomi's agitation showed only in her slow pacing.

The arbiter, Asaito Eba, entered the glade with the help of one of his nephews who led the blind ninja. Though he lost his eyes to one of the Empire's black powder grenades, he had turned his talents towards becoming a voice of reason among the clans.

Naomi could not wait on ceremony and approached Eba. "What is your answer? You have made us wait on the council's judgment for two days. That's two days longer than it should have been. Has the council decided on whether Kunio will be charged with murder?"

"You presume much if you think you know the council's mind before asking them," the elder of Danketsu's Tribunal answered.

"And you presume that justice will be stayed simply because of the slow pace of politics!" Naomi readied her tetsubo in her hands, and for a moment Kunio showed worry. Eba clapped his hands, and the sound of thunder echoed behind him.

"The council's judgment will be heard, and you will respect that judgment as it has the blessings of both of your clans!"

The glade grew quiet, and Eba straightened his blue kimono before continuing.

"The council has found Kunio's method of killing and replacing the governor's servant was appropriate and considered a good means to accomplish his mission."

"But killing the governor's servant isn't the crime!" Naomi pointed her finger at Kunio. "It was the execution of the servant's wife and friend in cold blood!"

"They had uncovered my true identity, and would have foiled the mission." Kunio's eyes blinked slowly.

"It was murder, and must be answered for! You had other options! You chose to kill."

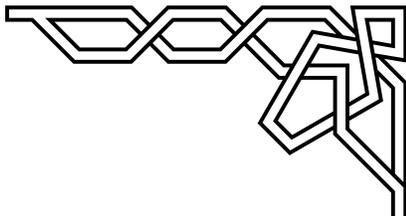
Eba raised his hand, and Naomi fell quiet again.

"With due respect, the Will of Iron requested that Kunio be punished for his crime, and their scholars have decided upon a suitable punishment."

Kunio's blood ran cold. "And that punishment is?"

"To repent for your crime, you have been assigned a mission of urgent importance. The Lotus Coalition needs you to seek out an Executioner by the name of Mitsaka. You, Naomi, will be sent to observe Kunio as he serves his sentence and help him in this important mission."

"What?" both ninja shouted at once. Eba did his best to hide his smile, but he knew both would do as requested. Therefore, the Lotus Coalition's endless dance of politics glides into its next step.



CHAPTER TWO

CLANS OF THE EMPIRE

Hundreds of clans have risen and fallen throughout history, and even still dozens exist within the Izou Empire alone, each vying for power, territory and honor. There are ten clans, however, that have achieved a special level of influence within the Empire, affording them a certain level of prestige and a place at the table within the Lotus Coalition. Some of them are older than even the Empire, built strong upon centuries of tradition, while others are upstarts who have grown in power quickly, despite their relative youth.

Each clan has taken on its own territory, usually at the heart of one of the two provinces. Their numbers battle for supremacy, spilling blood in the night while the Ninja Crusade continues in the light of day. The victors take one step toward becoming the most powerful and influential, while the losers are either wiped out or flee to retaliate another day.

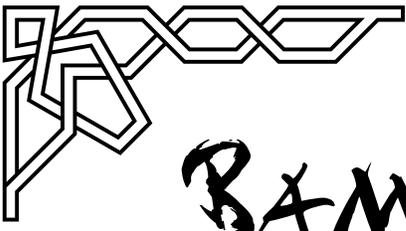
The Ninja Crusade has reduced the number of these shadow wars, however, as the survival of the ninja tradition cannot occur if they are attacked from within and without. Many centuries-long rivalries and wars have been put aside for this reason alone, but a few still linger on and make missions difficult to fulfill. New ninja are largely raised within the clan's traditional structure, but also told that cooperation with other clans is of the utmost importance until the war ends. When that happens, all bets are off and ninja wars are likely to start once more.

NINJA SQUADS

Just because the ninja come from different backgrounds, it doesn't mean they can't get along. Some clans get along better than others, of course, but sticking together is often necessary for a number of reasons. Squads are usually composed of ninja who balance each other's abilities. Likewise, stating unhappiness with one's squad is an affront to the elders and masters who create them, and could bring shame to the ninja, their sensei or even their whole clan. Few nin-

ja speak up too much when grouped together, content that there is a reason to be surrounded with these specific characters. When players begin to assemble their squad of characters, it is important to think of the type of squad they want to create and about their general relationships.

- ◆ **Assassination Squads:** Battles often take place in the shadows as well, leading to the assassination of specific targets for the betterment of the movement. Ninja from the Grasping Shadows and Recoiling Serpents are perfect for such a group.
- ◆ **Battle Squads:** These squads are usually collections of the best graduating warriors, each one sporting an especially excellent martial prowess that compliments the others in the group. It is odd to have a battle squad without at least one member of the Virtuous Body Gardeners or Will of Iron.
- ◆ **Civilian Squads:** Civilian squads are composed specifically to deal with the people. The best suited for such a squad are: Hidden Strands of Fate, who deal directly with the higher classes; the Wardens of Equilibrium, who deal with merchants; and the Blazing Dancers, who perform for the lower classes.
- ◆ **Scout Squads:** Some ninja are sent out before others to scout an area, hunt down a lead or find a missing person. They are experts at seeking things. Ninja from the Pack of the Black Moon, Living Chronicle and Bamboo Herbalists are common in scout squads.
- ◆ **Misfit Squads:** This kind of squad is often composed of the degenerates from various clans. The students who don't take orders, the untouchables or even Ronin fill these groups, who are then sent on the most dangerous missions imaginable. Their return is helpful, but often not necessary for the mission to be successful.



BAMBOO HERBALISTS

- ◆ **Other Names:** Ika Clan, Brewers, Caretakers
- ◆ **Stereotypes:** Curious, Meticulous, Border-Crossers
- ◆ **Fighting Styles:** Bear, Dragon
- ◆ **Favored Jutsu:** Way of Caring Hands (pg. 119)
- ◆ **Skills:** Athletics +1, Empathy +1, Holistics +1, Travel +1
- ◆ **Ki Balance:** +1 Yang

HISTORY

The history of the Ika Clan would be nothing without the Land of Seed and Blossom. Their ninja were masters of medicinal jutsu, far surpassing anything mundane healers from anywhere else in the world could manage. During the Expansion Wars, the Ika clan split down the middle between those who saw the greatness of the Izou Empire and those who chose to remain in the Land of Seed and Blossom. The Bamboo Herbalists were born that day, bringing their wisdom to the Empire to make it even greater. Throughout their time, they have become among the most welcome and most hated clans.

Their holistic expertise and medicinal jutsu made them a great advantage to the Imperial army, being able to heal soldiers on the front line in the heat of battle without fear. Even today, during the Ninja Crusade, their aid is a necessary part of any strategy the Lotus Coalition may dream up. There is no doubt that the Ika clan is the best at what they do.

Other clans also revile the Brewers at times, because the clan often refuses to obey territorial boundaries. Ninja take pride in the borders they possess, but the Ika clan sees only the valuable resources (herbs, venoms, berries, etc.) territories besides theirs hold. Mixed with the clan's propensity for thrill-seeking or invading lands to take ingredients they don't actually need, it is easy to understand why other ninja are slow to call them allies. Good fences make good neighbors, after all.

The Lotus Coalition looked to the Bamboo Herbalists first for clans to join, and the Ika clan accepted their invitation promptly. For too long, they had been isolated, but this gave the clan a pur-

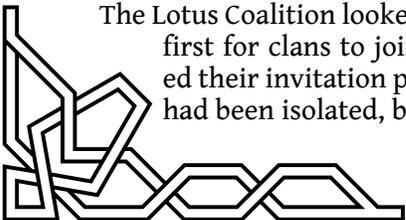
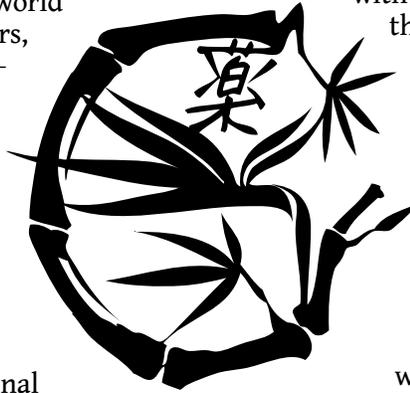
pose once more. Not only that, but it also showed the other clans that survival without the Caretakers would be impossible. The past decade of patching up soldiers and keeping villages safe is nothing to a clan who has been doing this for centuries. Their dealings with other clans have even allowed them to set up several diplomatic routes to get the medicinal ingredients they need, even if the thrill of gathering them personally still resonates with every Brewer.

LIFESTYLE

As would be expected, Bamboo Herbalist territory is filled with various forests and jungles and teeming with rare and exotic plants. Their ninja spend their days venturing into the wilderness to gather new ingredients to test not only their ability to locate and identify herbs and berries, but also as a physical trial against the elements, wild animals and other ninja. While they may travel safely in their own lands, when others place foot into their territory, they'll find the forests are foggy and confusing, and only the most poisonous plants appear to entice the wanderer to partake.

Each Ika ninja has a natural vibrancy to their being, making them passionate and full of energy. While many claim this to be a natural occurrence, it is more accurately due to the secret initiation concoction they drink upon their full acceptance into the clan. This brew extends their lifespan, allowing even elders to appear young and beautiful. Being longer-lived than others means they are seldom in a hurry. Masters rarely take on more than three students at a time, and the clan keeps their numbers lower since the ingredients to their secret clan potions are finite.

Unlike other clans who have chosen to split their numbers between their own hidden villages and Danketsu, which lies within Bamboo Herbalist territory, the Ika have jumped in feet first to the new established city. Their entire clan now calls Danketsu home, making them the most stalwart defenders of its people and borders. That said, they have a number of secret laboratories outside of the village where they still conduct their (often controversial) experiments and intense brewing sessions.



CHAPTER TWO - CLANS OF THE EMPIRE

AGENDAS

The Bamboo Herbalists have been able to turn the Ninja Crusade to their advantage in a number of ways. Danketsu has become the center of ninja activity, bringing commerce and vital trade agreements to their lands. The arrival of hundreds of ninja from other clans means protection for their lands for years to come. Time spent serving beside other clans has improved general clan relations, as well, so except for the war itself, it is entirely a winning situation for the Ika clan. Their major agenda now is ensuring the survival of Danketsu even after the Ninja Crusade ends and the other ninja choose to be rid of it. Anyone who has read their history knows that the ninja gather in times of war, and then go back to killing each other when it is over. The Ika clan hope to avoid the latter.

CLAN GIFT AND TRIGGER

◆ **Gift - Long Lived:** The Ika, whether born into it or adopted, go through extreme physical transformations, infusing their body with Yang to increase their life energy. They gain +2 Fortitude against poisons and sickness, and can go without food, water or sleep for up to (Fortitude) days. In addition, for every two years that pass, they age only one year, making them appear youthful even in old age.

◆ **Trigger - Dare Accepted:** Their long-lived mentality is often a liability, as they may be impulsive and leap at the chance to take on danger. Going into the most hazardous locations or taking on challenges well beyond their capabilities is a normal occurrence. Gain 1 Karma when they accept a dare (even if only implied) to do something dangerous.

CONTACTS

Choose one Ally and one Rival.

- ◆ **Nomura Jotaro (Empathy)** - An expert counselor, able to help people fix a wrecked life or accomplish just the opposite.
- ◆ **Akanishi Jin (Holistics)** - A know-it-all when it comes to herbs and their applications, but he doesn't help anyone for free.
- ◆ **Domoto Toshinobu (Discipline)** - A simple farmer, but also a master of meditative practices who often takes on worthy students.
- ◆ **Ibuka Sakura (Fighting)** - A drinker and a brawler, she is never one to turn down a good fight.
- ◆ **Unto Aya (Perception)** - When one needs a spy, calling on Aya is never a bad call. She's probably snooping already anyway.
- ◆ **Ika Tsuyoshi (Intimidation)** - A local daimyo, he rules his domain with an iron fist.

BONDS

- ◆ Choose one ninja who you know has your back if your thrill seeking gets the better of you.
- ◆ Choose one ninja who you have an unrequited crush on, making it harder to say no to them.
- ◆ Choose one ninja who distrusts the use of herbs to solve problems, very much at odds with a Bamboo Herbalist.



BLAZING DANCERS

- ◆ **Other Names:** Odoriko Clan, Dancers, Flame-Spitters
- ◆ **Stereotypes:** Fashionable, Entertainers, Clowns
- ◆ **Fighting Styles:** Eagle, Monkey
- ◆ **Favored Jutsu:** Way of the Immaculate Show (pg. 125)
- ◆ **Skills:** Fortitude +1, Marksman +1, Perform +1, Speed +1
- ◆ **Ki Balance:** +1 Yang

HISTORY

The Odoriko Clan began as a single family who danced in their homes in secret. In the land from which they originally hail, dancing, smiling and celebration are strictly forbidden. In the Land of Exalted Flame, citizens simply observe a philosophy known as The Way, which criminalizes outward displays of happiness or jubilation. Human nature has a way of breaking free, however, as their single family turned into several collectives holding hidden gatherings by the light of the moon, until they were hunted down and many were killed. Those remaining had only one recourse, escape via the Great Desert. The stretch of desert separating the Izou Empire and the Land of Exalted Flame had never been survived, a big reason why land invasions are impossible. The Odoriko held special jutsu that allowed them to traverse the Great Desert with only a few casualties.

With their homeland far behind them, the clan set out to conquer the Empire with their unique brand of performance. Building ornate caravans and traveling from town to town and eventually to the great cities of the Empire, the ninja put on countless shows until they drew the attention of the Emperor himself. Their signature display, the Destroyer's Dance, was beloved and garnered the support of their ruler, the official seal of approval and lots of money. With this money, they settled in the north, constructing the Wu Ji theater/school at the base of the Ensen Volcano. Here, they began training performers, some ninja and others regular folk, but all of them going on to become

stars. Their theater and the surrounding area became their territory, which they defend from other ninja who always underestimate their abilities.

The progression of the Ninja Crusade has changed little about the Odoriko and their performing nature. As all assumed their membership harbored ninja, the Emperor pulled his official support and spread insulting rumors to damage their reputation. While this certainly did occur in larger cities, some border towns, crippled under the weight of an unending war, often ignore his words and accept the opportunity to smile again. Their traveling caravan not only produces coin to keep their theater running, it can also provide a convenient front for the Lotus Coalition when needing to travel inconspicuously.



LIFESTYLE

Their territory's heart is the Wu Ji Theater, where they throw amazing parties and put on show-stopping performances. Few cities under their watch want for entertainment, as their performances raise the citizens' spirits and keep them from being crushed by the propaganda spouted by the Emperor. His armies have attempted to take the theater several times, but have yet to be successful.

The Blazing Dancers serve as one of the principal tribunal clans of Danketsu, enjoying the opportunity to teach their students in a safe environment away from the prying eyes of their enemies. Flame-Spitters are teachers, after all, and go to great lengths to teach togetherness and strength-in-numbers to the youth.

They attempt to befriend most other clans, when possible, but a long-standing animosity exists between the Dancers and the Grasping Shadows whose members often detest the Odoriko for being foreigners.

Training within the Blazing Dancers is usually unassuming. They take in volunteers of all ages and help them hone their skills; some make it and others work as stagehands, or designers or serve some other function. The best among their students rise in the ranks and become inducted into the Odoriko Clan of ninja. This means that not all Blazing Dancers are ninja. In fact, of their thousands of members performing and training at

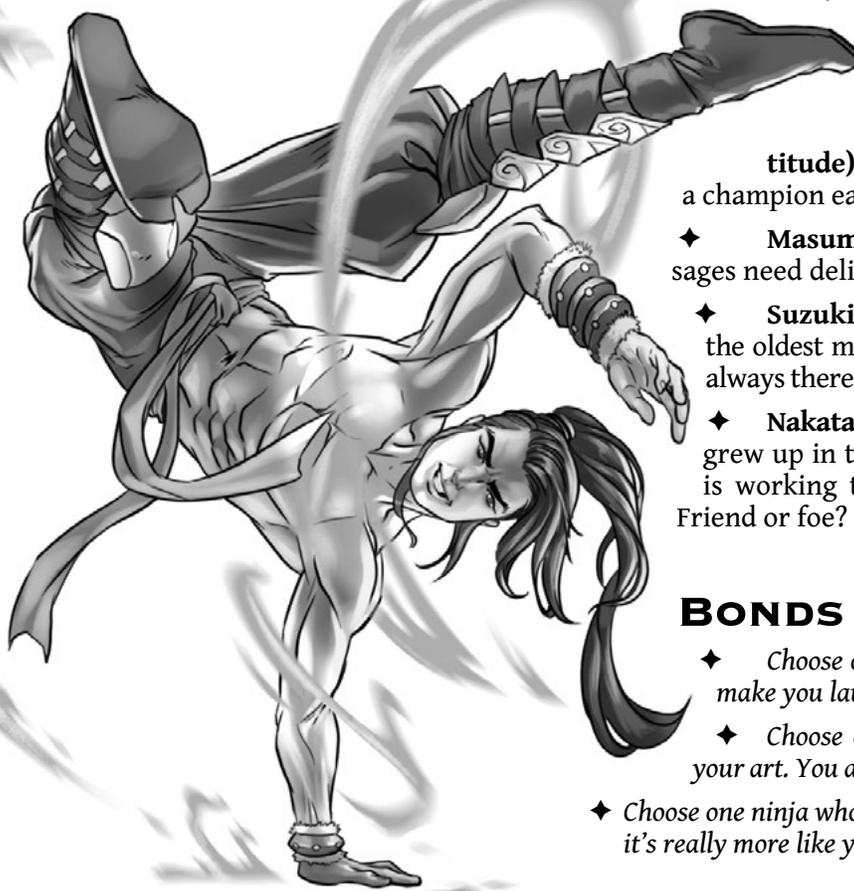
CHAPTER TWO - CLANS OF THE EMPIRE

their dozens of chapter houses spread out all over the Empire, only about one-third are ninja. They all bear the burden of the Emperor's hate, however.

AGENDAS

When the Ninja Crusade cropped up, there was a divide within the clan. Many leaders saw this as just another attack on their people, and convinced others that returning to the Land of Exalted Flames would be better than suffering under the Emperor's bruised ego. Even though some Odoriko left, the vast majority of Dancers today are Izou-born. This is their home.

While other clans look to the war with extreme focus, The Flame-Spitters instead look to Danketsu as a new future for their people. If they can keep it hidden from the Empire, they could live there indefinitely and just let the Ninja Crusade wither and die with no one to hunt. To date, their voice has been shouted down by the more aggressive voices. They will continue to fight alongside their comrades and defend Danketsu until they can change the tribunal's minds.



CLAN GIFT AND TRIGGER

◆ **Gift - Performance Mastery:** Every Dancer hones a single type of performance, be it singing, acrobatic displays, musical instruments, etc. This intense training is why they are the best in the Empire. Gain a +1 bonus to any check where they can explicitly use their specialty. This bonus raises to +2 when used specifically with the Perform Skill.

◆ **Trigger - Disrespected:** The Emperor's influence is far-reaching. While many communities enjoy the celebratory tone of the Blazing Dancers, several others have been corrupted by his devious words into believing the Dancers to be little more than jesters and fools, or worse harlots and leeches. Gain 1 Karma when this bad reputation makes things hard for the ninja.

CONTACTS

Choose one Ally and one Rival.

◆ **Ryoko Naoko (Perform)** - A fellow troupe performer, she can carry a song like no one else, but doesn't like to share her fame.

◆ **Odoriko Mao (Crafts)** - A brilliant costumer, Mao is well known for his expert disguises and stage dress.

◆ **Takahashi Tani (Fortitude)** - A star of the Empire, Tani is a champion eater despite being a tiny woman.

◆ **Masumi Ichiro (Speed)** - When messages need delivering, he is the one to call.

◆ **Suzuki Hidetoshi (Intuition)** - One of the oldest members of the Odoriko Clan, he is always there to dispense wisdom or cast doubt.

◆ **Nakata Sachiko (Marksman)** - She grew up in the same village as the ninja and is working to become an Empire engineer. Friend or foe?

BONDS

◆ Choose one ninja who always knows how to make you laugh.

◆ Choose one fellow ninja who isn't a fan of your art. You are determined to prove them wrong.

◆ Choose one ninja who thinks they are protecting you, but it's really more like you are protecting them.



Grasping Shadows

- ◆ **Other Names:** Kumori Clan, Shades, Shadows
- ◆ **Stereotypes:** Assassins, Traditionalists, Bigots
- ◆ **Fighting Styles:** Eagle, Wildcat
- ◆ **Favored Jutsu:** Way of Ebony Clutches (pg. 121)
- ◆ **Skills:** Discipline +1, Intimidation +1, Marksman +1, Stealth +1
- ◆ **Ki Balance:** +1 Yin

HISTORY

The Grasping Shadows count themselves among the first ninja clans, making a position for themselves out of a pile of bodies of those who have stood in their way. For generations, they were under the influence of the Hebi clan, as they waited patiently for the perfect opportunity to make their grab for power. The rise of the Izou Empire allowed for just such a moment. The Emperor selected the Kumori clan as Imperial Assassins, selectively eliminating any of his enemies and opponents, and even a few leaders from rival kingdoms and clans. This station, and their mastery over stealth, allowed them to operate with relative impunity. The Kumori were excellent killers and grew at a rapid pace, which became concerning to their Hebi rivals.

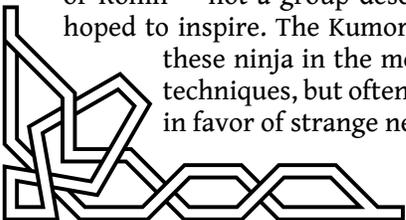
When the Izou turned their attention to the clans and started to tighten their grasp over the ninja, the Grasping Shadows began targeting the agents of the Empire. Close advisors, allies and daimyo died under mysterious circumstances or were assassinated, under no pretense, by the ninja. They made a point to reject the role of the Emperor's trained dogs, the Silver Blades, and spread the word to other ninja clans that they needed to make a stand against the Empire. Other clans agreed, and some aligned with the Shades, but almost all of them were minor clans or Ronin — not a group deserving the fear the Shadows hoped to inspire. The Kumori tried to train a number of these ninja in the more traditional and effective techniques, but often found their lessons rejected in favor of strange new jutsu and fighting styles.

This rejection led to bad blood between the Kumori and other ninja clans. Almost all communication was cut and the group became reclusive for a long time, staying in their land to defend (or terrorize) their citizens. The Ninja Crusade, however, has forced these ninja to break out of their self-imposed exile to form alliances once more with some of these fledgling clans. They still view other clans as rebellious or lesser, but they understand surviving at all costs includes getting along with ninja who eschew tradition. The Lotus Coalition allows them to get a leg up on their enemies and strike back at the Empire.

LIFESTYLE

To the Kumori clan, peace is a relative term. Peace comes through truth, truth through obedience and obedience from tradition. Those who are not part of their clan are only to be trusted so much. They can be considered allies, and even friends, but any refusal to accept tradition is taken as a refusal of the true way of the ninja. Life in their territory can be very peaceful unless one steps out of line or speaks out against the Grasping Shadows. Once that happens, the punishment is swift, lasting and often deadly. Most citizens accept this way of life, since the Shades are also considered protectors of the people and enemies of the oppressive Empire.

The Kumori's training focuses on making them masters of stealth; they can hide in plain sight, often hidden among the common people and ready to strike with deadly efficiency. They often strike using traps or poisons, as well. Initiates learn that obedience and hard work are the only things that allow them to remain a productive member of the clan. They do not tolerate failure and throw out of training any they identify as lazy. Those who cause trouble or who wish to use the power of the Kumori for their own purposes are dealt with harshly. If they can be taught obedience, then there is an opportunity to continue their training. If not, they are often eliminated so as not to be a problem in the future. Becoming a full Grasping Shadow means complete obedience and discipline. Trainees are assigned a target, usually a high-level or corrupt Izou official, and their task is to execute a plan of their own



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design to eliminate them. The taking of another life when ordered to do so is the perfect illustration of the Kumori moving towards peace.

AGENDAS

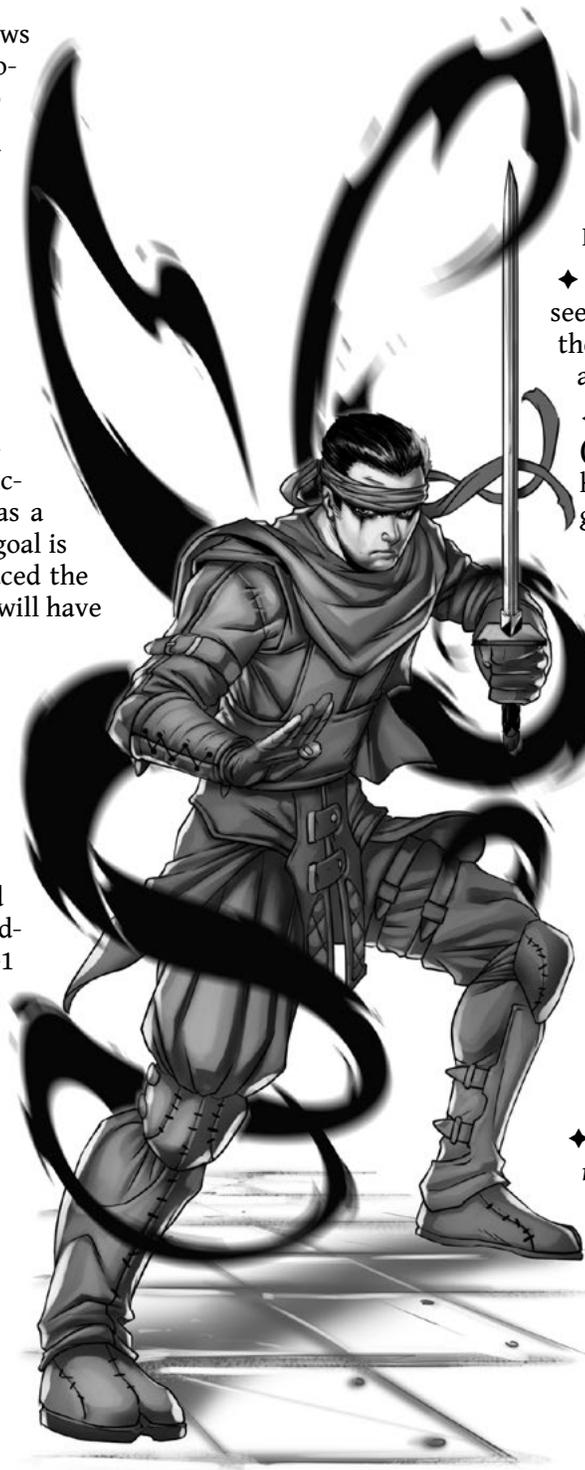
Though the Grasping Shadows are full members of the Lotus Coalition, they are only involved to further their own unique agenda: The complete destruction of the Izou Empire. There are some among the Shades who have begun to understand the usefulness of the other ninja. They especially value those who honor the traditions of their ancestors, like the Living Chronicles and the Hidden Strands of Fate. Maybe they can be utilized at a later date. Shadow elders see their tenuous alliances with the lesser clans largely as a means to an end, and once their goal is met, if the clans have not embraced the Kumori ideal of peace, then they will have to be destroyed as well.

CLAN GIFT AND TRIGGER

◆ **Gift - Darkness Comes to Life:** The Grasping Shadows are masters of moving unseen and throwing their voice from the shadows. Their training grants them +1 Stealth when using shadows, and if they succeed, they receive an Intimidation bonus equal to the difference between their check and the check to detect them. For instance, if they got 5 successes on their Stealth check and their target gets only 3 successes to detect them, the ninja gets +2 Intimidation to scare their target.

◆ **Trigger - Ninja Pride:** The Shades see other clans as ki manipulators and nothing else; they are not true ninja in the slightest, simply children playing ninja and getting in the way of those who are truly descended from

greatness. Because of this, Shadows often step on their squadmate's toes, ever attempting to show them up. Gain 1 Karma when the ninja's pride gets in the way of progress.



CONTACTS

Choose one Ally and one Rival.

- ◆ **Akiyama Shigematsu (Discipline)** - This monk has taken a vow of silence, but is one of the most connected men in the Empire.
- ◆ **Sando Kata (Intimidation)** - This seemingly delicate beauty is among the foremost talents at kidnapping and collecting ransoms.
- ◆ **Nakashima Kagehisa (Fighting)** - A pit fighter who has his ear to the ground in underground circles.
- ◆ **Ruko Tani (Empathy)** - This old woman always has an open ear to listen to someone's feelings and offer advice, even to killers.
- ◆ **Kumori Takashi (Marksman)** - This thief has been a thorn in the side of the Izou for years, hiding in one of his many safehouses.
- ◆ **Soga Kiyomi (Knowledge)** - A nun among the monastic Living Chronicles, she is always willing to share her stories.

BONDS

- ◆ Choose one ninja who has made you rethink the position of their "lesser" clan.
- ◆ Choose one ninja who has caught you performing a heinous act against a perceived innocent.
- ◆ Choose one ninja who has saved your life and you may owe a favor.

Hidden Strands of Fate

- ◆ **Other Names:** Asaito Clan, Strands, Thread-Bearers
- ◆ **Stereotypes:** Manipulators, Corrupt Politicians, Underhanded
- ◆ **Fighting Styles:** Crane, Horse
- ◆ **Favored Jutsu:** Way of Spun Threads (pg. 129)
- ◆ **Skills:** Deception +1, Intuition +1, Perception +1, Persuade +1
- ◆ **Ki Balance:** +1 Yin

Years ago, it came to light that key leaders within the Hidden Strands of Fate were actually responsible for several of the sparks that created the Ninja Crusade. A very successful coup within the Asaito culled those members from their numbers, allowing them to assert themselves more fully within the Lotus Coalition. While their inner-clan politics have remained largely the same, they have become more of an accepted clan, rather than a bitter enemy one must work with only for survival. Strands just always seem to have their agenda, however.

HISTORY

One cannot look at Asaito Clan history without acknowledging its sway on the Empire. They claim to have been one of the first clans, a highly political family who saw the Orime Rebellion as an easy way to steal the secrets of ninjutsu from the peasants. Blending in with their numbers, they helped to topple the regime and claimed their place among ninja greats by subtly replacing other clan leaders with their own, through assassinations and justified honor killings.

Their reputation is not one of honor, however, for the Hidden Strands of Fate are betrayers. Clan leaders with the Asaito are determined by secret plots and sudden coups, usually occurring every half decade or if the leaders have made a serious mistake. These ninja sleep with one eye open, constantly on the lookout for others within their clan who want their spot and are willing to do anything to take it. As many of their members are descended from noble and warrior class bloodlines, they are well accustomed to the ins and outs of political (and literal) backstabbing.

This distrust, quite predictably, extends to their dealing with other clans and even commoners, as they find themselves at the helm of other people's lives. This practice is especially common with their young initiates, as their masters manipulate every detail of their lives, leading them to the embrace of the clan.

Ninja who have the willingness to do this to their own clanmates certainly incur a healthy dose of suspicion within the Lotus Coalition.

LIFESTYLE

Much of their territory lies just west of Daiwa, the Izou capital, filled with miles of jungle where their own hidden villages reside. Few venture into Strand territory, for they are the masters of setting traps with thousands of threads reaching indefinitely. What they are protecting is a vast silk industry, which produces the majority of their wealth.

Peace is often the final goal of the Hidden Strands of Fate. They are willing to spill a lot of blood to attain such peace, but chaos is not what they are after. To this point, Strands seek peace with other clans and put aside any infighting to combat a common enemy. Their students are often from higher social classes from birth, giving the clan control (or at least influence) over much of the Izou Empire's politics and laws. This is the main avenue in which they aid the Lotus Coalition's efforts to stop the Ninja Crusade, attempting to change the system from within.

From a young age, a Thread-Bearers' curriculum contains brutal lessons of self-reliance and manipulation. The most well known are the tournaments initiates must complete, fighting against the elements and each other. Rarely does more than one student reach the end before either being swallowed by deadly traps or betrayed by their fellow ninja. The more ruthless the measures taken to win, the more favor they gain within the clan. While they may seem harsh, many Asaito become hardened, accomplished ninja at very young ages, and survive longer than others who may have nicer masters.



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AGENDAS

Hidden Strand leaders have been in a rebuilding process for years. With the dispatching of their disgraced members who caused much of the Ninja Crusade, they have established a new directive of aiding the Lotus Coalition. This has done little for the fact that their leaders often openly despise most other clans they live and work beside currently. In true Asaito fashion, there are already plans in place to gain control of Danketsu leadership. For now, they are happy to act as advisors until the time to strike arrives, which will likely occur just after they accomplish their goal of eradicating the Izou Empire.

CLAN GIFT AND TRIGGER

◆ **Gift - Orchestrated Life:** Every event that occurs in a Strand's life, from birth to death, is part of their masters' machinations, each one designed to let the character grow stronger through suffering. In return, they receive power and prestige beyond what others can even imagine. In addition to +1 Initiative, the character receives a +2 bonus from their Tragedy Gift or they can garner 2 Karma dice from their Tragedy Trigger (only one or the other in any given Scene), reflecting a true understanding of the lessons their clan intended to teach.

◆ **Trigger - Giving More to the Clan:** To say the Hidden Strands of Fate are corrupt would be an understatement. The very nature of their training is to betray each other, and this often extends into their duties for the Lotus Coalition. Strands are commonly asked to perform additional tasks for their clan, including relaying names back to their superiors or retrieving a secret item from a battlefield. This usually starts small and grows in severity as they rise in Rank. Gain 1 Karma when following their secondary, secret objective causes tension or appears to go against their comrades.

CONTACTS

Choose one Ally and one Rival.

- ◆ **Natsume Mitsuyo (Persuade)** - A politician in the Izou courts, she is known for being able to convince anyone to do anything.
- ◆ **Kawakami Haruki (Deception)** - A truly underhanded politician, he is well known for getting things done through plotting and scheming.
- ◆ **Kakuta Soseki (Fighting)** - A mercenary for hire, he is a coin away from being at someone's throat.

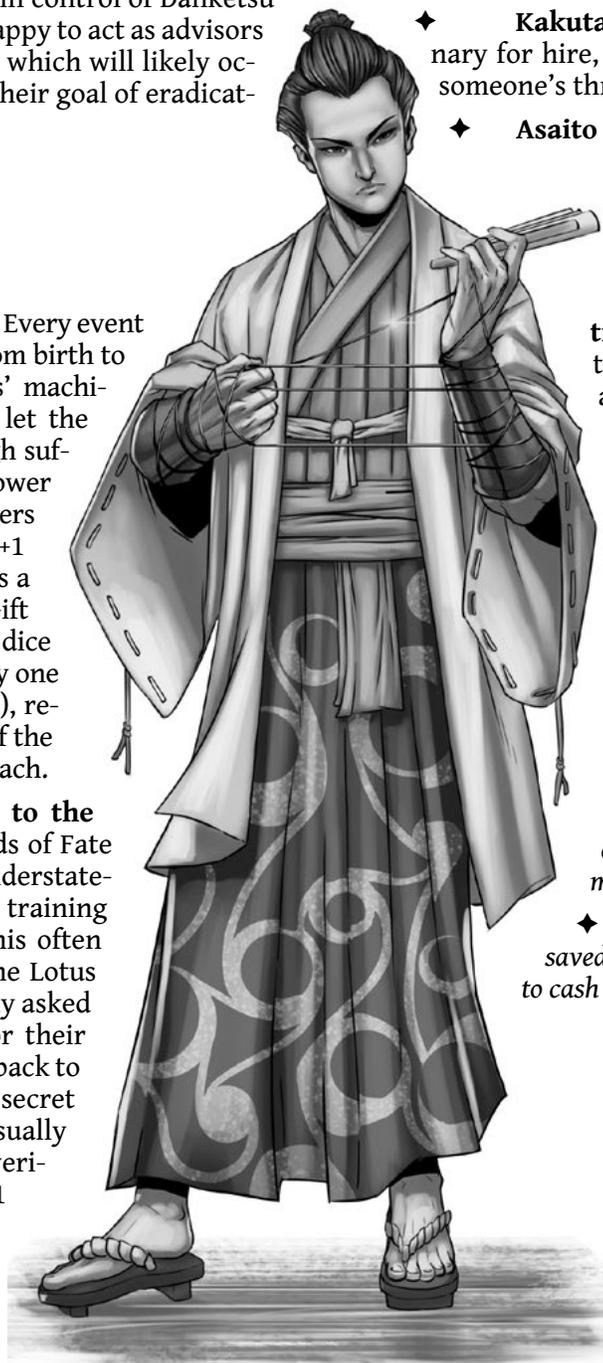
- ◆ **Asaito Yukio (Travel)** - A talented wagoner, she is able to get clients any number of places or make it harder to get from one city to the next.

- ◆ **Asaito Natsuo (Holistics)** - A master of potions, many turn to her when in need of herbal assistance.

- ◆ **Murakami Hiromi (Stealth)** - She is an accomplished thief, able to get her hands on just about anything.

BONDS

- ◆ Choose one ninja who made you feel welcome into the squad when the others weren't too happy with your assignment.
- ◆ Choose one ninja who has caught you in a betrayal and who may never fully trust you again.
- ◆ Choose one ninja whose life you saved at some point. The time may come to cash that deed in for a favor.





Living Chronicle

- ◆ **Other Names:** Rekishi Clan, Codices, Historians
- ◆ **Stereotypes:** Quiet, Knowledgeable, Distant
- ◆ **Fighting Styles:** Crane, Mantis
- ◆ **Favored Jutsu:** Way of Kept Lore (pg. 128)
- ◆ **Skills:** Crafts +1, Knowledge +1, Perception +1, Travel +1
- ◆ **Ki Balance:** +1 Yin

HISTORY

The origins of the Rekishi clan began centuries ago when a powerful, but aging, feudal lord sought out a group of secluded monks. He asked them to document the history of his life and his deeds for the benefit of all to come after him. The monks obliged and created manuscripts with such detail and beauty that the lord immediately called for members of the monastic tradition to be placed among his court to record all goings on thenceforth. Their skill and attention to detail became renowned, leading many other nobles to recruit the monks for their own posterity.

The monks took their positions very seriously and started documenting and reproducing the histories and current events of every place they lived, eventually uncovering knowledge about ninja and their manipulation of ki. When the monks compiled their knowledge in the first Great Library, they were able to unlock some of these secrets to channel ki for their own purposes. This allowed them to control the elements, master the seas around the Land of Crashing Waves and the mighty mountains where they hoarded their vast collection of knowledge. This experimentation became increasingly risky and one day led to the release of powerful forces none of the monks could control. The earth rent asunder, it destroyed the Great Library and the ranks of the monks were devastated.

The Rekishi knew that if they were to survive and continue their goal of recording all knowledge and secrets of the land, they needed to take drastic steps.

Using their knowledge, and now calling themselves the Living Chronicle, they started tattooing themselves with historical events to

document history as it happened. They immediately imprinted major events on their most senior members, who would eventually, upon death, be permanently preserved through a ritual known only to them. These rituals, considered the highest honor among the clan, prevent the deterioration of the body to ensure the text is never compromised.

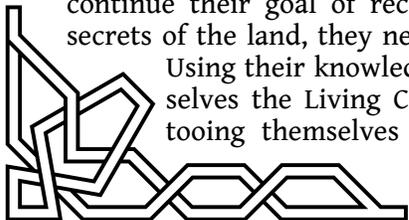
The Living Chronicle ninja were involved with the Lotus Coalition from early on, documenting and recording dates, battles and major decisions; but the Rekishi have quickly become the primary strategists of the organization.

LIFESTYLE

The Historians all hail from their central monastery, the rebuilt Great Library commonly referred to as the Fortress of Scrolls. Here, the ninja and monks study together, and trade information from their travels or their expansive archives. Outsiders are never privy to which of the monks are actually ninja, but very few of the Rekishi clan actually practices the art beyond foundational understanding of their unique jutsu. They expect each

member to become fluent and literate in multiple languages to assist in the cataloging, preservation and documentation of any incoming material during a mandated two-year tenure in the clan's archives. After this period, each member is required to spend at least one year in the world, traveling with an inker and documenting major events before returning. Returning without a certain number of tattoos is considered a failure to put oneself in the middle of history. Afterward, many find their way into service of lords or officials, repairing books and manuscripts, or providing sage advice as advisors.

The monastic order has many small enclaves, and they are generally a welcomed presence since most don't suspect any connection with the Rekishi clan. The largest of these enclaves outside of the Fortress of Scrolls is the new library in Danketsu, which collects knowledge from the other clans. The establishment of this library is a strong signal of support from the Historians, as it stands as a resource for all welcomed ninja to enjoy.



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The preservation of knowledge is the foremost goal of the Living Chronicles. For centuries, they were fine with staying out of the conflicts of kingdoms and nations, instead maintaining a strong neutral stance in order to accurately record how events unfold. The Empire is responsible for forcing their hand after it attacked many of their enclaves, razing them to the ground along with thousands of volumes, while burning at the stake dozens of monks with important tattoos. These ninja have become more dedicated to the fight in light of such actions, seeing such wanton destruction as a plight they all must eliminate. The clan longs to see the culture and respect for knowledge returned to the land, and their vast wealth of historical knowledge gives them a keen insight into the actions of humanity.

Restoring their order is also high on their list of priorities. The Emperor has called for the heads of any Living Chronicle monk suspected of using jutsu, and he only becomes more dangerous as knowledge that every Codex uses jutsu, regardless of whether they are a ninja, comes to light.

CLAN GIFT AND TRIGGER

◆ **Gift - Knowledge of the Ages:** Fear is the lack of understanding. Every historian has studied and set to memory the history of lords and kingdoms long forgotten by the rest of the world. They are able to pull from this knowledge for a number of purposes. First, they gain one free Specialty for their Knowledge Skill. Second, the Codex gains a number of automatic successes equal to their Knowledge (up to their Rank) on checks to remain calm or overcome fear.



◆ **Trigger - Respect the Word:** So much has been lost to the sands of time that they can never turn back. Being able to preserve knowledge for future generations is the height of living for a Living Chronicle, especially if it can be done in the face of certain destruction. No one can get between a Codex and ancient knowledge. Gain 1 Karma when risking their lives (or that of their group) to obtain a document or historical tome.

CONTACTS

Choose one Ally and one Rival.

- ◆ **Kondo Kei (Crafts)** - A master calligrapher, always willing to teach his craft if you have a story to share.
- ◆ **Oishi Toshie (Knowledge)** - One of the chief Historians at the Fortress of Scrolls.
- ◆ **Aoki Hyobe (Perception)** - A top advisor to a young Daimyo, though he has a loose tongue when he drinks too much (which is often).
- ◆ **Muraoka Mikazuki (Travel)** - A traveling merchant who sells her wares across the Empire, but always makes time to share tales of her travels with the Rekishi.
- ◆ **Rekishi Marise (Fortitude)** - An old monk who has been embalming members of the clan for decades.
- ◆ **Kurokawa Iwa (Marksman)** - A hunter who grew up in the same village as the ninja, and sometimes resents their gifts.

BONDS

- ◆ *Choose one ninja whose stories you'll always listen to, no matter how bad they are.*
- ◆ *Choose one fellow ninja to whom you are determined to teach the value of history.*
- ◆ *Choose one ninja whose life story you need to chronicle, as a key figure of major events.*



Pack of the Black Moon

- ◆ **Other Names:** Tsuki Clan, Hounds, Mutts
- ◆ **Stereotypes:** Animal Lovers, Outdoorsy, Uncivilized
- ◆ **Fighting Styles:** Dragon, Horse
- ◆ **Favored Jutsu:** Way of Twin Beasts (pg. 130)
- ◆ **Skills:** Athletics +1, Fortitude +1, Might +1, Survival +1
- ◆ **Ki Balance:** +1 Yang

HISTORY

The Tsuki consider themselves the last of a proud tradition, a clan more in tune with the living pulse of nature. They view cities and trappings of so-called “modern culture” as chains that taint the land and betray people’s true natures. They are often at odds with other clans, who consider their lack of discipline and sophistication in modern society disturbing. Those who have seen them in action first hand, however, know how effective the brutality of nature can be.

Perhaps this clan’s unique feature is their reliance upon the specially bred dogs the clan has raised for centuries. These dogs, each trained for a specific purpose and bonded to a Tsuki at a very young age, are raised alongside them. Over the years, these dogs have become part of the clan’s jutsu, and many of their techniques and martial arts use the dogs as an extension of themselves. To the Pack, the canines are valued as much as man, and with the help of their canine partners the Pack has survived. This partnership has allowed the clan to withstand repeated attacks from the Grasping Shadows.

The Pack of the Black Moon has survived to modern times due to their knowledge of the forests and caves in the Empire, which has been invaluable in the wake of the Ninja Crusade. Though still earning the scorn of their colleagues for their animalistic ways, the Pack see themselves as survivors, and face outside aggression with as much fury as they can muster. They prefer to tend to their ranches and herds, but will protect their family at all costs.

The arrival of the Ninja Crusade and the founding of the Lotus Coalition have allied the

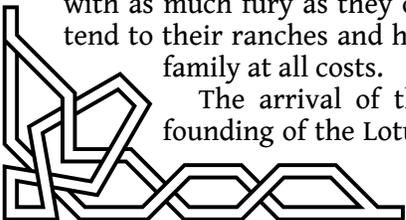
Pack of the Black Moon with others and given them a new perspective on the world. They still prefer to stick to themselves, but they know survival in the face of Imperial aggression means they must adapt. Danketsu welcomes them as excellent scouts and observers, and many other clans have grown to respect the abilities (and the bite) of their dogs.

LIFESTYLE

The Pack prefer solitary existences, surrounded only by their immediate family and those friends close enough to them who they can trust completely. They do not lack an appreciation of the finer things of life, but take great pleasure in the simple things. They look upon any outsider as a potential enemy, and their rough demeanor is often attributed to their barbaric ways. In reality, however, this is a safety measure the clan has developed after centuries of shadow wars with other clans who continuously target them.

Next to their mates, the best friend in a Tsuki’s life is their partner, which is a specially bred canine. From an early age, all Pack ninja are raised alongside these animals, and though they are allowed time to play their time is mainly focused towards working with them as equals. In a Tsuki household, the dog receives their own place at a table and their own portion of the meal, as the family knows that the dog helps provide for them as any other family member. When a dog dies, the entire family mourns and receives gifts from the community until they adopt a new one.

In many ways, the Tsuki embody the animal natures of their partners. They sleep under lotus trees, run barefoot across the hills, and stalk their prey together. Through their partner, they are able to access their ki, and feel that by working alongside an animal they are working alongside living embodiments of the world’s life force. This has surprised the Pack’s enemies on more than one occasion when they find that the Tsuki and their partner are able to unleash devastating attacks together, with the dog channeling part of their master’s ki inside of them.



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Survive. Protect your family. Destroy all intruders. These simple tenets of the Pack's philosophy reflect their goals within the Lotus Coalition very well. In Danketsu, they see how their ways are not so different from their fellow ninja, and so long as respect flows both ways, there are few inter-clan problems. They view their role in Danketsu is to help teach their fellow ninja how to live simply, and with the help of their ninja dogs they are able to provide effective watchers on all the paths in and out of the city. In many ways, they are often the most loyal members to the Lotus Coalition, even though they stand the least to gain by the Empire's defeat. When the Ninja Crusade ends, they hope the world will be just a bit simpler.

CLAN GIFT AND TRIGGER

◆ **Gift - Entwined Souls:** The Tsuki have trained to work alongside their ninja dog partners, rumored to have been bred from normal and Celestial canines. They share their strength and poise in combat, just as they laugh and play together outside of a Battle. They gain a +1 bonus to any task where the dog can somehow be an active participant, as their senses supplement the Hound's. In Battle, the ninja dog is treated as a Smaller Animal (Warrior, pg. 158) with +1 Health and +1 Psyche (and raises by another +1 Health and +1 Psyche with each Rank). By spending 1 ki (of either type) any jutsu they use automatically affects their ninja dog.

◆ **Trigger - Primal View:** Hounds tend to take a simpler view of the world. They do not stand for the complications civilized folks place upon themselves, nor do they stand on tradition and ceremony when it is unnecessary to their goals. Gain 1 Karma when the ninja disregards etiquette and tradition to the detriment of the group.



CONTACTS

Choose one Ally and one Rival.

- ◆ **Iwao Akiyama (Stealth)** - An artisan known for trading in rare jewels. Many have wondered how someone appearing as a farmer is able to acquire the raw materials for his art.
- ◆ **Sanada Mako (Deception)** - A trickster playing upon folktales and legends to scare Imperial soldiers away from her forests, she is a skilled illusionist and inventor.
- ◆ **Matamura Keiko (Knowledge)** - A seer priding himself in keeping the folktales of farmers and the poor alive. He is rumored to keep the truly ancient and impressive tales as secrets to himself that he barter for food for his children.
- ◆ **Ichiyusai Moeko (Travel)** - She is the best pirate on the high seas between the Land of Crashing Waves and Izou Empire. Moeko can get anything almost anywhere.
- ◆ **Ikoma Sakawa (Intimidation)** - A businesswoman whose love for the environment makes her seek ways to profit from it without destroying it, her radical need for control causes her to drive out all competition.
- ◆ **Tsuki Mei (Survival)** - Known for being able to tame any animal, she often takes excursions into lost lands to find any exotic animal for clients.

BONDS

- ◆ *Chose one ninja you view with suspicion, even though your dog loves them.*
- ◆ *Choose one ninja who you find arrogant and condescending.*
- ◆ *Choose a ninja to be your trusted advisor on all things regarding civilization or "normal" society.*

Recoiling Serpents

- ◆ **Other Names:** Hebi Clan, Coils, Serpents
- ◆ **Stereotypes:** Sneaky, Poisoners, Malicious
- ◆ **Fighting Styles:** Snake, Wildcat
- ◆ **Favored Jutsu:** Way of Great Serpents (pg. 122)
- ◆ **Skills:** Holistics +1, Speed +1, Stealth +1, Survival +1
- ◆ **Ki Balance:** +1 Yin

HISTORY

The Hebi come from a proud line of independent warriors from the Triumph Province. Their clan remained a myth to the others for many centuries, as they had managed to rise to dominance in their region and became a sacred sect to the people of that land, looked upon as their judges. When someone was wronged, they turned to their protectors to save their honor and preserve their family name. Criminals grew to fear them, and even the just were aware that the shadows could hold serpents waiting to strike.

Their ancestors began the War of Withered Fangs, but the Recoiling Serpents have their own history of vile acts as well. Deep within their swamp territory, luring rival ninja and Izou battalion alike to their deaths became a regular event, as their hatred for other clans knew no bounds. Whenever the opportunity arose to assassinate an important political figure or an especially influential ninja leader, the Recoiling Serpents took it without hesitation. In many instances, their reputations for such actions meant they also received blame for deaths they had no hand in, and revenge taken out on individual members.

It was a moment of contention within the Hebi clan, but joining the Lotus Coalition is what kept Izou eyes off them for years. Instead, they began being lumped in with other ninja, who were now just as hated. Today the Hebi fight alongside the Lotus Coalition, finally having an excuse to exercise their assassination skills for a cause other than proving their clan's greatness. Though criticized by many for their seemingly dishonorable methods, the Recoiling Serpents

do not care for the judgements of others. In Danketsu, they sell weapons and poisons to interested parties, and business is doing very well.

The Recoiling Serpents remain a proud clan. They see their current state of affairs as ironic circumstance; they had stood against Imperial aggression before, and now the Lotus Coalition seeks to fight against the same destruction of their beliefs and temples that the Hebi themselves faced. They are more than willing to share their knowledge of fighting a guerrilla war with the other clans, but they do so knowing that someday they will be free once more.



LIFESTYLE

The Hebi are used to keeping to themselves, and although they have learned to trust their teammates when working in the Lotus Coalition, they know to trust family first. They are fierce and proud of their ways, and many still long for the days when their lands were free of Imperial rule and they were independent of the Empire. They still hold deep grudges against other clans, but choose to focus on their duty to the Lotus Coalition for the time being.

The Serpents' training focuses on the skill and ease with which they deliver their poisons to a target. In their training camps located in the deepest swamps, the Hebi force their ninja to learn every aspect of a particular poison, from how it smells to how it tastes. Many young ninja are thrown into pits of venomous snakes, where those who survive have earned the right to join the clan's ranks.

The Recoiling Serpents are a clan whose presence is felt both publicly and privately, as they remain one of the largest clans in the Empire. The other members of the Lotus Coalition still keep an eye on the Hebi, as the wounds they once inflicted upon the other clans are still fresh in many elders' memories. Ever ones to turn circumstances around, they have begun using their reputation to force issues on the Council or when deciding the next missions for the Coalition. A veiled threat, an implied accident, and even just a subtle raising of their eyebrows can often cause fear in even their most stalwart allies. Against their enemies, they are even more

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threatening, defending their homelands through fear and intimidation.

AGENDAS

The Triumph Province, which the Recoiling Serpents call their home, is one of the largest in the Empire. This is due to the clan's enduring defense of their territory from other clans, even if they have an alliance. Turning over even an inch of their border would dishonor the Serpents. The Ninja Crusade has worked to the clan's benefit in many cases, however, allowing them to encompass conquered areas within their protection. This systematic takeover and spreading of their influence will put them in an advantageous place when the Ninja Crusade ends and the ninja are once again at each other's throats. For now, Serpent elders play nice in Danketsu, comfortable in the knowledge that they won't have to keep up this lie for too much longer.

CLAN GIFT AND TRIGGER

◆ **Gift - Serpent's Body:** Recoiling Serpent training has altered much of the ninja's natural physiology, making their skin soft like scales and their body increasingly flexible and malleable. This allows the ninja to mimic the flowing movements and resilience of the snake. They receive +1 Health, as well as +2 Athletics for the purposes of flexibility or escaping confinement.

◆ **Trigger - Rattle then the Bite:** Revenge is not just part of their teachings but a way of life for the Recoiling Serpents. Unanswered wrongs or crimes against them burn to the core of their being, and drives them to pursue vengeful actions, even when they are not practical. The Serpent gains 1 Karma when they engage in revenge against the party's goals and to their detriment.

CONTACTS

Choose one Ally and one Rival.

- ◆ **Akiko (Holistics)** - An enigma known for her skill at creating poisons, she accepts payment only in trinkets of personal value to the ninja.
- ◆ **Daigo Orino (Stealth)** - A skilled tracker and smuggler, she prefers to act discreetly and professionally with her clients, and when the contract ends, so does her involvement.
- ◆ **Taneda Hide (Crafts)** - A ninja who lost his arm when accidentally poisoned by a faulty needle, he specializes in building deceptively benign looking tools to inject others with poison.
- ◆ **Hebi Misaki (Fortitude)** - A restaurant owner with a flair for cooking, she knows the best ways to kill a man without being detected.
- ◆ **Orihara Mika (Perception)** - A boat captain who prides herself on the speed with which she can get her clients from place to place in style, her skill with dice is legendary.
- ◆ **Ezaki Kohei (Athletics)** - Once a skilled athlete and runner, Ezaki prefers to spend his time drinking alone. Once he was a celebrity in the Empire, his wife's murder haunts him still.

BONDS

- ◆ Choose one ninja who seemed genuinely fascinated by your clan's nature, always looking to learn more.
- ◆ Choose one ninja who irritates you with almost every word they say.
- ◆ Choose one ninja who you feel has an ability you admire, but you'll never admit this to them.



VIRTUOUS BODY GARDENERS

- ◆ **Other Names:** Sumi Clan, Gardeners, Inks
- ◆ **Stereotypes:** Artistic, Innovators, Punks
- ◆ **Fighting Styles:** Monkey, Tiger
- ◆ **Favored Jutsu:** Way of Inked Skin (pg. 127)
- ◆ **Skills:** Crafts +1, Fighting +1, Intuition +1, Perform +1
- ◆ **Ki Balance:** +1 Yang

HISTORY

The Sumi clan is the youngest of the major clans in the Lotus Coalition, breaking away from the Living Chronicle only 80 years ago, while other clans span several centuries. The ninja served them as tattooists and were responsible for placing their distinct and regimented markings. They were skilled artists, but also treated with little respect by the clan they served. As their artistic expertise continued to grow and their jutsu that manipulated tattoos became integral to their talents as ninja, the young ninja eventually surpassing their mentors.

The practiced and methodical tattoos of their old clan were stifling and without true art, but now they were free to create new masterpieces befitting the ninja they had become. The formation of a new clan was met with strong opposition by staunch traditionalists like the Will of Iron and the Grasping Shadows. These clans saw the rebellious actions of the Inks as nothing more than the tantrums of petulant children. The Living Chronicles took a softer approach, viewing them as wayward family who may eventually return to the fold. Today, they are resigned to the fact that the Sumi clan has found a unique identity and will not be returning.

Their initial acceptance into the Lotus Coalition was met with reluctance since they were young, brash and unproven, but a number of clans vouched for their dedication and combat mastery. Even those firmly opposed to their membership could not overlook the wishes of the Blazing Dancers and Living Chronicles. Throughout the Ninja Crusade, the Sumi have proven themselves time and again as dedicated ninja, fighting on the front lines and often volunteering

for the most dangerous missions. Now, there are many members of the Gardeners who have found themselves in positions of leadership among the Lotus Coalition. These ninja view themselves as a force of change in the world, serving as a catalyst spurring the Coalition forward at times when it may have become complacent.

LIFESTYLE

The Gardeners claim a small territory, the borders of which haven't shifted much since they took over. The land is southeast of the capital and shares borders with the Pack of the Black Moon, the Grasping Shadows, the Recoiling Serpents and the Wardens of Equilibrium. The clan marks their territory, and that which they intended to claim, with special characters on rocks, trees and other landmarks to warn intruders or rival clans. Initially, the Inks chose this territory so they would be in constant struggle with their brethren and make their clan stronger, but the focus of their attention has become locked on the Empire in recent years. The war has enhanced their jutsu, developed their fighting skills and proved to other clans that they are deserving of respect. The Inks have also wholeheartedly bought into the existence of Danketsu for this very reason, seeing it as another opportunity for them to hone their skills in support of the Lotus Coalition. Their influence slowly increases in the hidden village, even though they were unable to have Danketsu built in their own Territory. The other clans believed it safest away from the capital, but the Inks are never known for doing things the easy way.

Every Sumi ninja begins their training with the use of weapons and martial combat, but their real education begins once they've mastered these arts. Students are secluded for weeks where the only other contact they have with others is a three-day period of ritualistic scarring. This process prepares their bodies to use their specialized jutsu and hastens the development of their resistance to pain. Some even learn how to derive pleasure from this pain, leading them to submit to more extreme methods of self-mortification. They wear the evidence of these practices, like scars, piercings, and burns as badges of honor, as they are evidence to the



CHAPTER TWO - CLANS OF THE EMPIRE

world of their position among the Sumi.

Once the ninja's training is complete, they receive a brand at the base of their neck with the clan's mark, showing the world they are a member of the Sumi clan. After such a rigorous process, the ninja are staunchly dedicated to their clan, but even if someone wanted to leave, it seems the only way out is death.

AGENDAS

Since their inception, the Virtuous Body Gardeners have wanted little more than to be legitimized by other established clans. Their early actions of territorial expansion and angering other clans were a way of proving themselves, but over the past decade, the clan has eased its aggression. They are still very outspoken, but they direct their anger more toward the proper cause and enemy. Playing the same political games as other clans seems to have resulted in acceptance and legitimacy, which has also helped increase their numbers. There are a few clans who still dislike the rebellious nature of the Sumi, hinting that once they deal with the Izou, another bloody war may ensue.

CLAN GIFT AND TRIGGER

◆ **Gift - Flowing Ink:** The Gardeners are all highly skilled at all types of painting, and their tattoos are among the most intricate available. They gain a +2 bonus to Crafts checks when performing any kind of painting or tattooing and their work fetches twice the standard rate. In addition, due to their physical training, Pain penalties are reduced by 2 (pg. 152).



◆ **Trigger - Prove Yourself:** The Inks are young and constantly disrespected by other clans, so they are always trying to prove their worth in the eyes of their brethren. This often leads to volunteering for dangerous or foolish tasks. Gain 1 Karma when they accept a mission or job to do something dangerous or foolish that at least one other person has refused.

CONTACTS

Choose one Ally and one Rival.

◆ **Okumura Yuko (Might)** - One of the strongest men in the realm, and he knows it.

◆ **Sumi Chimaki (Speed)** - A stunning beauty but deadly with blades, Chimaki is always the center of attention.

◆ **Saito Juzo (Perform)** - A famed street performer, often performing gruesome contortions.

◆ **Yasutake Hizuru (Intuition)** - A matronly midwife who claims to have helped more babies enter this world than the lives the Ninja Crusade has taken.

◆ **Asai Oniji (Deception)** - The leader of a gang of orphan thieves, who doesn't take kindly to those who betray him.

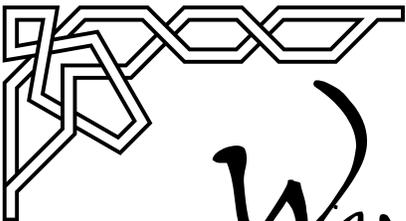
◆ **Tachibana Kozue (Persuade)** - A local alchemist with a penchant for selling healing and sleeping potions that only work part of the time.

BONDS

◆ Choose one ninja who you are determined to tattoo, whether they want it or not.

◆ Choose one ninja who you are constantly trying to impress.

◆ Choose one ninja who is itching to challenge you to a battle of blades.



Wardens of Equilibrium

- ◆ **Other Names:** Chuushin Clan, Monks, Merchants
- ◆ **Stereotypes:** Sensei, Neutral, Greedy
- ◆ **Fighting Styles:** Bear, Snake
- ◆ **Favored Jutsu:** Way of Balancing Scales (pg. 118)
- ◆ **Skills:** Deception +1, Discipline +1, Knowledge +1, Persuade +1
- ◆ **Ki Balance:** +1 Yin or +1 Yang

HISTORY

The Wardens of Equilibrium's story is one of rising after a great catastrophe to becoming a strong force in the Empire, a cycle that has repeated numerous times in their history. They were founded after the War of Withered Fangs, a devastating conflict that saw thousands dead and the economies of the Empire devastated. Several merchant families came together to try to create a force to stand against such an event ever happening again. Chuushin Nobu, their founder, taught them the ways of balancing their emotions and drawing strength from that power.

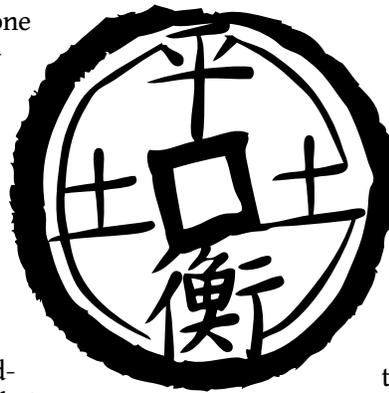
They created alliances with several monasteries, training with monks to learn the ways of ki balancing to keep them strong and principled. Instead of staying at a centered spiritual position, however, they usually swing to Yin and Yang extremes, leading them to side with different families during conflicts. This has earned them quite the reputation.

The Wardens of Equilibrium have always planned long into the future, and weigh each action against all possible outcomes. This pragmatic nature has helped them thrive in business, and for a time the clan was the wealthiest in the Empire. Their numbers swelled, bringing in mainly nobles and merchants from every province, which only added to their immense wealth as a collective. Where business lives, crime exists as well; but the Wardens easily absorbed the more nefarious dealings in with their clan just as easily. While they abhor common bandits and thugs, several guild leaders

grace their ranks. They accept the honorable and the wicked, fitting with their idea of clan balance. Without the Wardens, much of the order that exists

in the Empire would have been lost years ago.

When the Ninja Crusade began, the Wardens were also prepared. They organized the early resistance to the Empire, and were instrumental in laying the foundation to the Lotus Coalition. Few thought bringing together bitter rivals into a united force was possible, but they are no stranger to beating the odds. The rise of Danketsu was also possible due to their diplomacy, and their numbers have been among the leaders of the Lotus Coalition since its beginning. By pooling all the clans' collective resources, they have helped everyone survive, a fact they do not let other clans forget.

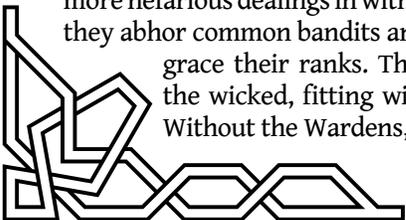


LIFESTYLE

The Wardens live their life dedicated to focusing themselves along a single path. Though the path may change, they consider their lives meaningless unless they approach everything they do with perfection. This is a great strength for them, as they purge the competing emotions inside of them by taming either their Yin or their Yang, and using the peace granted to them to great effect. Instead of finding themselves spread out among many conflicting feelings, they empower themselves with the strength of one.

This is not an easy task for them, and though some Wardens may go their entire lives by taming either their Yin or Yang, others find they cannot choose one path to live their entire life. A Warden may find themselves needing to purge their emotions and embrace the opposite to their current mindset, and do so with the Rite of Walking Another Path. This ritual, a sacred rite that does not take long, but its effects are profound on the user, can be either passionately violent or coldly emotionless as the Warden shifts their thoughts and views of the world to fit with a new way of thinking.

With their businesses and temples spread across the Empire, the Wardens have a broad reach with which they can affect society, a fact they greatly enjoy. But they are very careful not to get caught up solely in the material wealth of the world. While a Warden of Equilibrium will work to increase their clan's wealth and to prosper, they are wise enough to know that material wealth is fleeting and can go against their attempts at balance if not managed carefully. "Wealth makes life easier, but an easy life is not the path to enlightenment."



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AGENDAS

The Chuushin may have lost much of their wealth since the Ninja Crusade began, but they are still very strong politically and economically. This mindset is unpopular among the more action-oriented clans, such as the Will of Iron or Blazing Dancers, who prefer a more aggressive philosophy. They view Danketsu as a place to prove their philosophy as the correct one, and subtly maneuver their politics among the Lotus Coalition along these lines. They are excellent strategists, and with their businesses giving them cover and safehouses throughout the Empire, they have made many friends among the other clans. Even they know, however, that the days of this alliance are numbered the closer they ninja get to the end of the Ninja Crusade.

CLAN GIFT AND TRIGGER

◆ **Gift - Balancing Act:** The Warden is always at odds with themselves, constantly trying to keep their inner ki balance even. This training strengthens their mind and body and manifests in the power of their jutsu, as their opponent can attest. If they ever have more Yang than Yin, they have +2 Health. When their Yin is higher than their Yang, they have +2 Psyche. If their ki is balanced, they have +1 Health and +1 Psyche, as well as a +1 bonus to jutsu activation checks.

◆ **Trigger - Unpredictable History:** The Wardens of Equilibrium have equally helped and harmed the other clans over the course of their existence, an ideology that has made it hard for others to trust their motives. They do not know when a Warden may change their alliance with them; it could be at any moment, and as a result, the other clans keep them at arm's length. Gain 1 Karma when forced to break a promise or alliance with someone that causes tension or conflict.



CONTACTS

Choose one Ally and one Rival.

- ◆ **Sawai Yuuki (Persuade)** - A toymaker and seller of candies, she is an expert at learning rumors through the aid of her child-informants.
- ◆ **Kida Shiro (Intuition)** - A purveyor of high-grade weapons and armor, his dealings with bandits and Imperial garrisons makes it so he knows the locations and troop movements of armed forces across the Empire.

- ◆ **Manabe Rin (Knowledge)** - A librarian who dabbles in poetry, her connections with high society and her ability to garner invitations to any party makes her well connected among the nobility.

- ◆ **Katsuya Tsuyoshi (Deception)** - An Imperial dispatcher who handles the paperwork for all trade done out of the Imperial capitol, many have jokingly referred to him as the Trade Devil for his ability to shut down trade with a single word.

- ◆ **Narumi Nao (Survival)** - An expert animal trainer, her circus animals are a delight to see. She is rumored to be a member of a destroyed noble house, but she makes no claim to be nobility.

- ◆ **Chuushin Taro (Crafts)** - A master counterfeiter, his ability to reproduce priceless works of art has made him infamous among the art merchants in the region.

BONDS

- ◆ Choose one ninja who you respect for their intelligence, and can rely on their counsel.

- ◆ Choose one ninja who you cannot bring yourself to trust due to their chaotic nature.

- ◆ Choose one ninja who you find a worthy ally on the battlefield.

Will of Iron

- ◆ **Other Names:** Hagane Clan, Sheriffs, Judges
- ◆ **Stereotypes:** Enforcers, Zealots, Pious, Unforgiving
- ◆ **Fighting Styles:** Mantis, Tiger
- ◆ **Favored Jutsu:** Way of Heaven's Judgement (pg. 124)
- ◆ **Skills:** Empathy +1, Fighting +1, Intimidation +1, Perception +1
- ◆ **Ki Balance:** +1 Yin

HISTORY

The Hagane clan is one of extremes, for its founding was in a time of bloodshed and turmoil. Dedicated to following truth and justice, they have continued to be the clan that makes sure that all crimes are uncovered and the guilty punished. A clan who many blame for having extremist viewpoints when it comes to the law, they see simply the simplicity of the law.

Their founder, Hagane Yoshiro, was one of the first to be able to bend justice to his will when he sought guidance from the gods. His brother had been accused of a terrible crime and was set to be executed for it, though he knew of his brother's innocence. Dedicated to seeing justice carried out, he made sure he received the commission to forge the blade to kill him, using mysterious metal discovered in a temple. When the blade refused to slice his brother's neck, Yoshiro saw it as a sign from the gods of the immutable will of justice, and how it always prevails.

Often at odds with other clans due to their strict adherence to the law, the Hagane quietly policed the Empire of criminals for centuries before the Ninja Crusade. Many of their lessons were taught during their time in the Land of Five Blades. Now, their fight against the wrongs of society continues, but they must be more selective when carrying out their sacred task. By joining the Lotus Coalition, they have managed to survive and serve as the moral compass for the organization, becoming essential arbiters who solve several disputes in Danketsu.

The Will of Iron hold the sacred nature of the

law very close to their hearts. They seek to punish the wicked and protect the innocent, and they fight against the chaos a lawless society would bring. Though their methods are harsh, and at times work against their own interests, the Will of Iron stand as a force against crime. They are as strong and resolute as the sword forged by their founder, as their often-criticized belief of "Only the guilty have something to hide" often singles them out among their colleagues in the Lotus Coalition.

LIFESTYLE

For the Will of Iron, their life is a constant state of maintaining perfection and discipline in a chaotic world. Others who choose to take shortcuts and bend the rules surround them; for someone who has dedicated themselves to following not just the law but the entirety of the law, it can be frustrating. Their training stresses great fortitude, both physically and mentally, as they view themselves as unyielding iron in the heat of a forge of chaos.

It is for this reason that only the most resolute members of their clan ever learn their jutsu, because the Hagane do not waste time on those who do not have the will to learn. The heat of the forge pales in comparison to the fire a Will of Iron must carry within them. In Danketsu, other clans often sit and watch two Hagane spar with each other, debating a legal matter while simultaneously exchanging blows. The true victor is the one who wins the argument and the match.

When it comes to relaxation, the Hagane find solace in their libraries and in their forges. They are often found in teahouses and temples in their province, lecturing other clans on the meaning of the law. Taught to temper the body and the mind, they keep themselves as ready as they can. They enjoy spirited debates on the topic of law, with their voices echoing loud in their hidden temples as they discuss what it means to be truly just. Their forges allow them to perpetually seek perfection, and in their steel weapons, they find the means to carry out the law.



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AGENDAS

The Will of Iron serve as the enforcers inside the Lotus Coalition, trying their best to preserve a sense of honor and stability in an organization made of warriors with histories of disregarding the law. Their skills are a welcome addition, but other clans stand at odds with their strict adherence to law. The clan's current plan is to build their numbers in order to preserve order in whatever form the destroyed Empire takes once the Ninja Crusade has ended. They chafe at being forced to work with other clans who care little for honor, but they bide their time as they gather their resources together.

CLAN GIFTS AND TRIGGER

◆ **Gift - Steel Never Lies:** The Will of Iron is able to place themselves in tune with metallic objects, gaining an empathic affinity to any metal held within their hands. This ability comes from their several years learning how to forge and craft weapons, as no warrior should ever wield a weapon they do not know how to make. They receive a +1 bonus to any check when utilizing a metal tool or weapon. If it is an item the character forged themselves, they receive a +2 bonus instead.

◆ **Trigger - Black and White:** The Will of Iron live by very strict moral codes that do not allow them to deviate from following the letter of the law. Even bending a rule is disturbing to them, and causes them to want to lash out in order to preserve order. Gain 1 Karma when they stand firm to preserve the law and refuse to break an oath, rule or their conscience to their detriment.

CONTACTS

Choose one Ally and one Rival.

◆ **Koga Harue (Fighting)** - A warrior who operates his own mercenary company that offers protection to villages and towns, Harue's strict enforcement of the law makes him a useful ally or a sympathetic foe.

◆ **Kusamura Yume (Perform)** - A traveling monk on pilgrimage who puts on performances for villages in exchange for room and board. She has much to share with anyone who cares to listen.

◆ **Hagane Fuyuko (Intuition)** - An investigator whose focus on solving crimes borders on zealotry, they find themselves constantly at odds with how their duty keeps them from ever truly resting.

◆ **Uefugi Miwa (Empathy)** - Captain of the guard for a local village the Izou travel through often, she always has information to share.

◆ **Kaijo Ryuu (Might)** - A retired trainer who has spent his years working on perfecting a recipe for pho gah soup, he does not like bullies and treats them with open contempt.

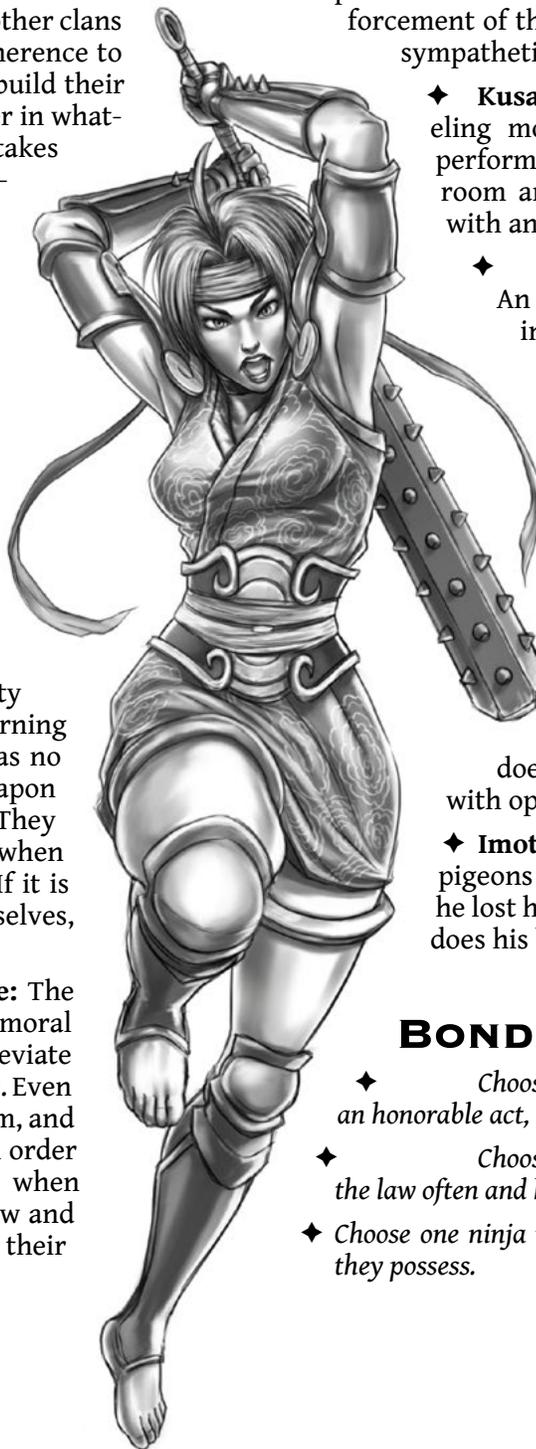
◆ **Imoto Samuru (Stealth)** - A trainer of pigeons and rodents for use as messengers, he lost his brother to a violent criminal and does his best to help justice.

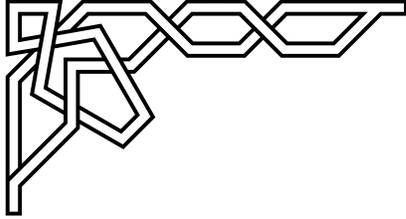
BONDS

◆ Choose one ninja who impressed you with an honorable act, making you trust them more.

◆ Choose one ninja who bends or even breaks the law often and has lost your respect.

◆ Choose one ninja who you seek to redeem of some flaw they possess.





RONIN

- ◆ **Other Names:** Clanless, Orphans, Scavengers
- ◆ **Stereotypes:** Loners, Rebellious, Free
- ◆ **Fighting Styles:** One of Choice
- ◆ **Favored Jutsu:** None
- ◆ **Skills:** +1 to four separate Skills (player's choice)
- ◆ **Ki Balance:** +1 Yin or +1 Yang

HISTORY

The Ronin are ninja who have left their clan or those who developed their ki manipulation abilities on their own and refuse to join a clan. Their lifestyle is frowned upon by clan ninja as a sign that the person is either a shame upon their previous clan or full of pride, unbecoming of one wielding such power. These warriors dedicated themselves to a path that took them away from the laws and philosophies of their parents, and yet are formidable warriors in their own right.

Before the Ninja Crusade, Ronin survived as outcasts and mercenaries. Some sold their skills to the highest bidder, while others lived a solitary life of reflection, preferring to keep to themselves and train their skills. There are stories of some Ronin who earned their way back into their clan's good graces, but there were stories of dark hearted ninja who reveled in their banishment and became terrors to the people of the land. Kanaka the Knife, a Blazing Dancer who destroyed his own temple when the girl he loved chose another, is often cited as an example of how Ronin are dishonorable and merciless killers.

The truth is the Ronin are trained warriors who lack a patron family to support them. Ronin possess the same skills and access to jutsu as other clans, and some were once members of clans that were wiped out by the Inquisition. Others willingly left their families after some crime or slight stripped them of their honor, and they find working from the shadows to be more preferable.

The Ronin have thrived under the auspices of the Lotus Coalition. They face their enemies as bravely and as fiercely as clan ninja, and in doing so have proven they are more than honorless dogs.

Many higher-ranking agents in the Lotus Coalition have begun to prefer the Ronin to other clans, as they find them easier to work with and cause less strife in ninja groups. While they are looked down upon simply because they are Ronin, they rarely have the ancient feuds with other clans that cause division in their ranks.

LIFESTYLE

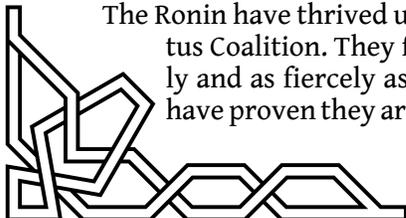
Where once Ronin had to keep to the edges of ninja society, the Ronin are enjoying a period where their services are in high demand. To counter the threat of the Imperial soldiers and their black powder weapons, the Lotus Coalition calls upon them to aid them in battle. Some Ronin see this as an opportunity to expand their fame, beginning their plans to form their own clans. They see the Ninja Crusade to be a great test to make their legends known.

That does not mean most clans accept them. Some, like the Recoiling Serpents and the Hidden Strands, consider them a distasteful part of ninja society. Many Ronin end up that way because they have committed crimes against their clans, or are otherwise taught by those who were exiled for their crimes. A Ronin who proudly wears the crime they have committed only furthers the stereotypes many have against the clan.

On the other hand, there is a growing number of ninja who see the Ronin as worthy allies. Not all Ronin became so because they committed crimes, and many Ronin have fought for worthy causes. In Danketsu, they have become a very common sight in the taverns and dojos of the hidden village. They have even begun to seek recognition among the other clans for their aid, and some elders have admitted, reluctantly and distastefully that their help is much needed. In a time when the Empire considers all ninja to be criminals, the Ronin are heroes like many others.

AGENDAS

The Ronin have no agenda, as they lack unity in their own ranks. Most of them have their own philosophy and ideals, often at odds with their fellow Ronin, and which

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make them appear as if they are making their own way in this world. The Ronin count among their number many powerful ninja, and the fact they are not beholden to any specific clan or dojo makes them valuable for recruiters in the Lotus Coalition. Ronin with plans to create their own, brand new clans often want to see one of the major clans gone in order to take their place, as well.

CLAN GIFTS AND TRIGGER

◆ **Gift - I Can Do That Too:** To survive, the Ronin has had to adapt their skills and become as flexible as the wind. When necessary, they can shift their ki to draw upon knowledge they may need to possess. A Ronin may spend 1 Dynamic Action to substitute a Skill they possess for another Skill for a single check. This allows them to apply unique Skills that mark them as different from other clans. Ronin may also select jutsu from any list (including Clan-Specific), though they only receive 4 points to spend during character creation.

◆ **Trigger - Unaligned:** Often looked down upon by their fellow ninja as being rogues and assassins, the Ronin have had to work hard to survive in a world where they have enemies on both sides of the Ninja Crusade. Their anger comes to the fore when they are rejected for their lack of inherited station, and when their ideas are rejected for their lack of patronage. Gain 1 Karma when acting out their independent nature puts them or their group in danger.



CONTACTS

Choose one Ally and one Rival.

- ◆ **Hagane Michio (Fighting)** - A banished warrior, it is said he now exists as a bounty hunter for any clan.
- ◆ **Aozara Satoru (Marksman)** - An expert smuggler whose left side of his face is paralyzed from an attempted poisoning, he is an expert on getting goods where they need to go, but is awfully paranoid.
- ◆ **Mitsuyoshi Tamiko (Speed)** - An excellent street musician, she passes messages across the city under the nose of even the most observant city guard.
- ◆ **Katayama Suki (Survival)** - A forest guide who knows the fastest ways in and out of cities, she favors helping the innocent, and will abandon the guilty to the elements.
- ◆ **Motohoshi Yuji (Discipline)** - Once a legendary wrestler, he has faced many challenges in his day and now finds life boring. He seeks greater and greater thrills to keep him motivated.
- ◆ **Kuwashiro Chino (Athletics)** - An excellent mountain climber and trailblazer, she is known for taking noble tourists looking to travel into harsh mountain terrain.

BONDS

- ◆ Choose one ninja who was an old friend who knew you before you were Ronin.
- ◆ Choose one ninja whose ideals you do not respect, and seek to prove that your way is superior.
- ◆ Choose one ninja who came to your defense once when no one else would.

Rumi woke to a cold hearth. As her thoughts coalesced out of the freezing, pre-dawn air, she was angry. Kiko knew how the chill of winter crept into Rumi's bones; the girl should have been awake already, tending the embers of last night's fire to spark the hearth and heat the room.

"Fool apprentice," she thought, and then remembered she sent Kiko with the rest of the village to Danketsu two days ago.

The cottage was warm enough for the feeling to return to Rumi's nose by the time she finished her breakfast of yesterday's stew. Her knees creaked as she stood from the table and cleared her bowl. She grimaced as she hobbled out onto the small porch with her teacup to watch the sun rise over the snow-capped mountains and white-dusted hills. The wind bit her cheeks, and she wrapped her shawl more firmly around her shoulders.

Age had dulled her reflexes, but her eyes were still sharp. Over the hill, maybe an hour away, she saw the waving Izou banners. Her mouth drew into a tight line. At least her scouts had seen the enemy in time to evacuate the village. Rumi supposed she should have gone as well, but Kiko was nearly ready to pass her final tests as a ninja, and this had been Rumi's family's land for generations. If she had to die anywhere, she would die here, where her bloodline was buried.

She watched the banners grow closer as the tea warmed her belly. When her cup was empty, she went inside, turning it thoughtfully in her hands. Her mother had spun a set of six from the local clay, hand painting the flowers with a hair-thin brush. Only two remained after fifty years of use. After today, Rumi supposed even these would become splinters and dust. Everything had its time, though. Everything died.

She set the teacup back on the shelf and stripped her clothing, folding and stacking each item neatly. Naked, she crossed to the rosewood chest against the wall and opened it reverently. It had been two decades since last she painted the symbols and donned the robes, but her hands remembered the way. She expected fear, solitude, regret but only peace came. Her ancestors were gathering to bear witness. The scent of jasmine tickled her nose, the ghost of her mother's perfume.

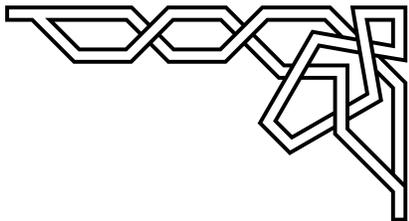
Her mind was clear, her spirit ready. Rumi had one task remaining. A tiny thing, to record her last thoughts, to roll the scrip up, to go outside and send it winging to Danketsu with the last pigeon from the coop. She stood in the street, shaded her eyes and watched the bird disappear into the sky. She hoped Kiko received her message. She hoped Kiko understood the words.

The banners were minutes away now. Rumi knelt in the snow and closed her eyes. The houses were empty around her, but the presence of her ancestors kept her warm. She thought of her mother's teacups, sitting on the shelf and suddenly knew that Kiko would someday return for them.

She smiled as the wind pushed through her hair. She lifted her veil to her face. Her hand tightened on the hilt of her sword. She waited for the Izou to come.

- - -

My blood guards this land.
My spirit is cloud and wind.
All things die in time.

CHAPTER THREE

THE LONG ROAD

Step One - Ocean: Element, Ki Balance, Skills
Step Two - Village: Occupation, Skills
Step Three - River: Tragedy, Ki Balance, Skills
Step Four - Forge: Wartime Role, Skills
Step Five - Mountain: Clan, Ki Balance, Contacts, Bonds, Skills
Step Six - Temple: Martial Training, Skills, Specialties
Step Seven - Sky: Select Jutsu

Once players have a good concept for their ninja, it is time for them to take their character along their life's journey, choosing different events and lessons they've learned along their path. These Choices determine things like personality, talents and hardships they have experienced. Each step along their path grants not only vital roleplaying cues, but also ways to interact with the mechanical elements of *The Ninja Crusade 2nd Edition*.

Each Choice contains the following:

- ◆ **Name:** A general descriptor of the Choice
- ◆ **Skills:** Every Choice gives +1 Level to four Skills, based on its concept.
- ◆ **Ki Balance:** If the Choice affects the character's Ki, they either give +1 Yang, +1 Yin or +1 to the player's choice.
- ◆ **Gift:** Dice bonuses provided when a character performs certain tasks connected to their Choice.
- ◆ **Trigger:** A terrible twist that affects the Scene in a dramatic way and usually offers Karma in exchange.

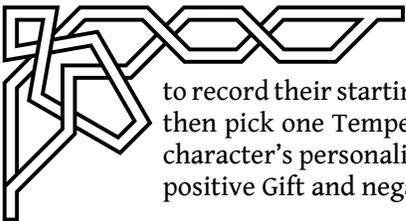
If the player is unsure of the direction they want to take with their character, they may leave fate to their dice instead. Randomly created characters can often prove a roleplaying challenge to veteran players or take away the feeling of choice paralysis from new players to the game. Random character creation rules are on pg. 100.

STEP ONE: OCEAN

Everything is born from the ocean: the fish, the stars and even people. There exists a belief that every person holds within them pieces of the very elements that make up the world, coloring their personalities, actions, hopes and dreams. Knowing someone's inherent Element is to know their very soul and hold power over them.

During character creation, the player chooses one (1) Element for their character, making sure





to record their starting Skills and Ki Balance. They then pick one Temperament which best suits the character's personality type, making note of their positive Gift and negative Trigger.

EARTH

Earth is the element of patience, honesty and physical fortitude. It is the symbol of balance, composed of both Yin and Yang equally. Characters with an Earth affinity aren't fans of frequent travel and many label them as stubborn, as they seldom change their mind on any issue. They are the unchanging pillars of society and are quite spiritual as well, leaning on faith to see them through tough times.

Skills: Crafts +1, Fortitude +1, Intuition +1, Perform +1

Ki Balance: Yin +1 or Yang +1 (player's choice)

COLLECTOR

Gift: The character has an almost obsessive personality when it comes to collecting a certain thing, be it weapons, rare jewels or even the ears of their victims. Everything has its place in their mind, making it easy to tell when something is out of place around them. Gain +1 Perception to spot something missing from a target (i.e. room, clothing, etc.) or out of place.

Trigger: Their collector mentality can often get the better of them. Gain 1 Karma if they just cannot resist going after another addition to their collection, regardless of the danger it puts them in.

INDULGENT

Gift: It's hard to say no to one's inner demons, especially when saying yes provides pleasure. The ninja has a problem with giving in to the need for intoxicants — an addictive personality some would call it. Gain +1 Holistics when concocting potions for one's own consumption.

Trigger: They can often take their indulgence too far, overdosing on intoxicants at the worst of times. Gain 1 Karma when they find it difficult to function and it hurts their group.

LINGUIST

Gift: It is a gift to have an ear for other languages, but from a young age, the ninja has shown an interest in other cultures and behaviors. A truer understanding of others often brings them closer to complete strangers. Gain +1 Knowledge to recall local area information wherever they are.

Trigger: Their information is usually spot on, but at times, they get key details incorrect. Gain 1 Karma when a miscommunication causes embarrassment or outright hostility toward the characters.

CHAPTER THREE - THE LONG ROAD

RESPONSIBLE

Gift: The ninja is often the leader of their squad, their local clan or their family; they know how to take responsibility and make things happen. Acting as an example, they also gain +1 Persuade to convince others to do the right thing.

Trigger: Some perceive these characters as martyrs, taking punishments in the place of others. Gain 1 Karma when they must pay for someone else's mistake as a result.

FIRE

Excitement, artistic expression and passion all fall to the Element of Fire. Those with a strong Fire Element are often born leaders and generals, due to undeniable natural charisma, but are also the most athletic and combative. They are martial rebels capable of using words or fists to create change.

Skills: Athletics +1, Fighting +1, Intimidation +1, Perception +1

Ki Balance: Yang +1

CONFIDENT

Gift: The ninja is the pinnacle of bravery, believing in themselves and their abilities. This helps them fight against even their worst fears and overbearing obstacles. Gain +1 Empathy against fear.

Trigger: At times, the character can act foolhardy and full of themselves, believing they can overtake anything or anyone set before them — even if it is obviously wiser to turn away. Gain 1 Karma if they walk into the jaws of obvious danger without a blink.

EXPRESSIONIST

Gift: Art is at the center of the ninja's life, and everything they do is an expression of that sentiment. They may see beauty in the stroke of the brush just as easily as in the splatter of blood made by their blade. Gain +1 Crafts when creating works of art.

Trigger: The appeal of art can sometimes become too strong for the character to resist. Gain 1 Karma if they are drawn into the world of art, making them ignore everything else.

HOTHEADED

Gift: From a young age, they were easy to rile and fought the other kids on the playground too often. It takes very little to make the character's blood boil, since they are very hotheaded. Gain +1 Might when flying off the handle.

Trigger: Their actions can often get away from them, taking them to a very dark place. Gain 1 Karma if they start a fight and just cannot walk away, even if it would be strategic to do so.

CHAPTER THREE - THE LONG ROAD

SILVERTONGUED

Gift: The character has just always had a way with words. This makes them effective leaders or liars, depending on how they grew up. Gain +1 Deception to convince someone you're right.

Trigger: Their tongue is often their strongest weapon, leading them to depend on it even after the situation has come to blows. Gain 1 Karma if they allow someone to attack them without them fighting back.

METAL

The aspects of bravery, discipline and justice fall under Metal. Followers of Metal are keen on routine and rules and subscribe to the concepts of justice in almost all cases. Like metal, their beliefs are hard to destroy and are sharp enough to cut, but can temper and bend under the right extremes of proof and rationality. They can be shaped to carry out many different roles in society, but excel as law-makers and sheriffs.

Skills: Deception +1, Discipline +1, Might +1, Speed +1

Ki Balance: Yin +1

AUTHORITATIVE

Gift: The character has a boom in their voice that can make almost anyone do what they say. It's not that they are a good leader, but more that they scare people into submission. Gain +1 Intimidation when issuing commands.

Trigger: Browbeating others into doing what they want becomes all too common, even spreading to situations when they should listen to others. Gain 1 Karma when others follow their order, but it was obviously the wrong call.

HONORABLE

Gift: Some believe doing things honorably is more important than life itself. These characters concur, and are willing to go without rather than lie or steal from others. They receive +1 Fortitude to stave off hunger, thirst or sleep deprivation for the greater good.

Trigger: There are times when acting honorably is not in one's best interest, and others take advantage of this fact. Gain 1 Karma whenever honor hurts the character or their squad.

METICULOUS

Gift: They make sure to do things right the first time, and keep everything as accurate as possible. Their eye for details makes them both cocky and deadly accurate. This extends to their ability to strike impossible targets at range. Gains +1 Marksman when attacking at Distant Range (pg. 146).

Trigger: All too often, either they hit their mark or they miss entirely. Gain 1 Karma if missing a potential target is detrimental to everyone.

QUIET

Gift: The ninja has a soft-spoken demeanor, only speaking when needed and often blending into the background if they are not immediately being addressed. They gain +1 Stealth when trying to go unnoticed amidst a crowd.

Trigger: Sometimes the character simply cannot bring themselves to speak, even if it would help them in the end. Gain 1 Karma when they pass on saying something that could change the course of terrible events.

WATER

Like the ever-moving rivers, Water-aspected ninja are intelligent and often sneaky people with long memories. Their personalities change almost constantly, going from happy to angry in a split second, but this gives them additional insight into others' emotions. They move from land to land to impart knowledge and enact change.

Skills: Empathy +1, Knowledge +1, Stealth +1, Travel +1

Ki Balance: Yin +1

CALM

Gift: Water-types have a well-known talent for keeping their composure under pressure, and a cool head. They stay alert and ready to handle whatever comes their way, never letting panic overtake them. Gain +1 Discipline to ignore distractions.

Trigger: Sometimes their calm attitude can come off as cold or uncaring, even if they aren't. Gain 1 Karma when not showing appropriate concern could prove to be a problem.

DEVIOS

Gift: Against their own better judgement, the character has a certain devious streak they just cannot escape. This often leads to double-crossing acquaintances or trying to get something for nothing. Gain +1 Fighting for un-sportsmanlike attacks.

Trigger: Showing one's devious side against the wrong opponent can have long-reaching consequences beyond a bruised body or ego. Gain 1 Karma for a cheat gone wrong that causes a problem in the future.

RESOURCEFUL

Gift: The character grew up without an abundance of material possessions, making them adept at working with only the barest of materials or coming up with alternative strategies to solve problems. They may make a Survival check even without proper gear, and gain +1 Survival with it.

Trigger: Because of their often jury-rigged approach to life, anything they put together with their hands is unstable. Gain 1 Karma if their tools break or crumble at the worst possible moment.

WISE

Gift: The ninja doesn't concern themselves with book learning, instead preferring to experience what life has to provide. Their vast worldliness allows them to make educated guesses at most things. Gain +1 Intuition to randomly come up with correct common knowledge.

Trigger: Their guesses are not always right, but usually sound authentic to anyone to which they give their explanations. Gain 1 Karma for completely inaccurate, but truthful-sounding information that leads you or your squad into danger.

WOOD

Wood ninja often have a gentle nature, usually accompanied by a healthy complexion. When in a state of rest, they are strong and independent perfectionists, always attempting to better themselves and those around them. If attacked, however, they are like a mother defending their children, taking out their opponent with a special kind of aggression. They have strong bonds with nature and health, loving their time in the forests more so than in cities.

Skills: Holistics +1, Marksman +1, Persuade +1, Survival +1

Ki Balance: Yang +1

CHAPTER THREE - THE LONG ROAD LOQUACIOUS

Gift: The ninja is outgoing, known for their bubbly personality and almost never stops talking. This helps them in life, making it easy for them to grab the attention of others. They receive +1 Perform to draw others to them and be the life of the party.

Trigger: Sometimes, their mouth gets the better of them and they say something they shouldn't have. In some cases, this means blurting out an insult they meant to keep in their mind or even letting a secret slip. Gain 1 Karma when they have loose lips.

PERFECTIONIST

Gift: Knowing how to do something isn't enough. The ninja needs to know they have performed the task to its utter perfection. Even better when they do this quickly. Gain +1 Speed (non-cumulative) when they've used the same combo in the same Scene.

Trigger: They can often get stuck on an activity until they get it just right. Gain 1 Karma if the character is urged to perform the same task again and again until they get a Style Boost (pg. 136).



CHAPTER THREE - THE LONG ROAD

YOUTHFUL

Gift: The character may be a kid. They may also be someone who just never lost their sense of wonder or ability to keep active for untold hours without tiring as long as fun is involved. Gain +1 Athletics when playing games or participating in physical competitions.

Trigger: Being youthful often means others take the character less seriously. Gain 1 Karma whenever child-like naivety or lack of respect hurts them in some way.

WANDERER

Gift: They don't know how to stay still, always wanting to travel from one place to another. Luckily for them, they've grown good at it along the way. Gain +1 Travel when going to somewhere they've never been before.

Trigger: Wanderers rarely read the guidebook before heading into uncharted land. Instead, they go in blind and hope for the best. Gain 1 Karma when the best is nowhere to be found.

STEP TWO: VILLAGE

Villages are places of learning. People learn to walk and talk there, and eventually learn a trade when they come of age. The morals, wealth and even location of the village where a person grows up shapes their lives and how they live them. After all, not all entertainers sing for their supper and not all warriors draw their swords for the same reason.

During character creation, the player chooses one (1) Profession for their character, making sure to record their starting Skills on their character sheet. Then, they pick one (1) Focus in that Profession that best suits their character's personality and training, recording also their Focus Gift and Focus Trigger.

ARTISAN

The satisfaction of making something useful or beautiful from almost nothing is familiar to the ninja. The character spent years learning the techniques of their craft, gaining a great concentration and a keen eye for detail.

Skills: Crafts +1, Discipline +1, Perception +1, Speed +1

ARTIST

Gift: The world of evoking mood with colors requires great empathy from the artist. The character understands how people feel and evokes this with a few swipes of a paintbrush or the pinch of clay. Gain +1 Empathy to read a person's mood or motivations.

Trigger: Artists are passionate people and those emotions can pour out at unexpected times. Gain 1 Karma when the character has an emotional outburst that hinders the character or group.

BUILDER

Gift: What's the use of learning to craft wonderful things if no one uses and appreciates them? The character can impress others with the skills that took so long to acquire. Gain +1 Perform when selling their wares or showing their skill to a crowd.

Trigger: The craftsman doesn't always have control over how their work is used. That is something the ninja has to live with. Gain 1 Karma when something they made is used against the character or group.

SMITH

Gift: The proficient smith tests their work, and this practice has honed their skill with arrows. They are some of the most intricate items to make and require a lot of rigorous testing. Gain +1 Marksman when attempting to hit small targets.

Trigger: Working the smithy requires strength to bend and shape metal, but sometimes brute force isn't the best means to an end. Gain 1 Karma when using brute force at the wrong time causes complications for the group.

DEDICANT

The ninja dedicates themselves to a cause. It could be anything from revenge to making the world a better place. Whatever the cause, the character is completely devoted to their goal and will go to extraordinary lengths to achieve it.

Skills: Discipline +1, Intuition +1, Persuade +1, Stealth +1

ALTRUIST

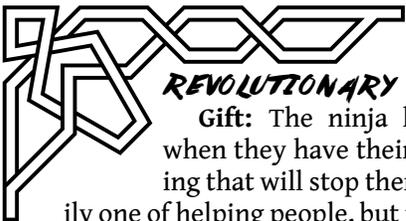
Gift: Life is brutal and the ninja feels they should do everything they can to help. They have cultivated an ability to ease people's pain and worry if only for a short time. Gain +1 Empathy to calm or console someone.

Trigger: Despite knowing the world is a rough place, the ninja still likes to see the best in people. Sometimes the character puts trust in people who do not deserve it. Gain 1 Karma when the character is duped or misled.

MONK

Gift: The character has spent most of their life training in the ways of the monk. Learning how to remain still during meditation is one of the first basic lessons the monk learns. Gain +1 Fortitude to remain unmoving for long periods of time.

Trigger: A monk has a code of behavior and certain restrictions that are part of their overall lifestyle. Sometimes those duties put the character in danger. Gain 1 Karma when the character chooses observance over safety.



REVOLUTIONARY

Gift: The ninja has a one-track mind, and when they have their goal in sight, there is nothing that will stop them. Their cause is not primarily one of helping people, but rebelling against someone or something greater, often with aggression. Gain +1 Fighting when explicitly battling for their cause.

Trigger: Single-mindedness to the exclusion of all else can be a boon or a curse. The character sometimes ignores other duties when pursuing their goal. Gain 1 Karma when the character chooses to pursue their cause to their or their group's detriment.

ENTERTAINER

All the world is a stage, and no one knows this better than an entertainer does. They live to perform and make people smile. It's a way to escape the reality of life at war and imagine something better.

Skills: Empathy +1, Fortitude +1, Perform +1, Stealth +1

ACTOR

Gift: The ninja gets a thrill and is very skilled at becoming someone else, even fooling those who are very close to the character. Gain +1 Deception when faking a personality, emotion or identity.

Trigger: Constantly shifting between roles can make it hard for the character to understand how they themselves feel or think about a situation. Gain 1 Karma when the character's insincerity about their thoughts or feelings causes contention.

MUSICIAN

Gift: Music runs through the character, and they have a way of getting it out into the world for other people to appreciate. Gain a +1 Crafts when writing or analyzing music, or when creating instruments.

Trigger: Musicians with skill are often in the spotlight and there are usually people who will recognize them anywhere. Sometimes this happens at the most inconvenient times. Gain 1 Karma when recognized when it would have been best to stay incognito.

TUMBLER

Gift: The ninja can bend their body in amazing ways, bending, flipping, contorting and then always landing on their feet. Gain +1 Athletics when attempting acrobatic performances or expert landings.

Trigger: Even the best athletes falter in front of an audience. Gain 1 Karma when the ninja doesn't perform their best during a show, and it causes embarrassment or shame.

CHAPTER THREE - THE LONG ROAD

FARMER

Living off the land means the character has both independence and a deep understanding of nature. Nature is both their friend and ally, and they often spend hours basking in the world's beauty.

Skills: Athletics +1, Marksman +1, Might +1, Survival +1

GARDENER

Gift: Some plants can kill and some can cure, but they don't discriminate. The ninja spends most of their time among them and has learned which plants are safe and which are deadly. Gain +1 Holistics when identifying plants and their use.

Trigger: Knowledge of plants does not mean the character gets the results right every time. Gain 1 Karma when the herbs they prescribe have terrible effects.

HARVESTER

Gift: Fields and forests can be rough going for the uninitiated. Fortunately, the life of a harvester has made the ninja comfortable with whatever terrain nature provides. Gain +1 Travel when going over rough terrain.

Trigger: The ninja knows how to behave with others who live off the land. Those who live in the lap of luxury are a different story, and sometimes the character is left dumbfounded. Gain 1 Karma when the ninja's behavior in high society has a negative effect.

HERDER

Gift: The ninja's animals are their livelihood and they know how to keep them hidden from predators. Using the land to its best advantage is key. Gain +1 Stealth when hiding in forests and fields.

Trigger: Blending into fields or trees is easy for the character, buildings and streets are not as easy. Gain 1 Karma when sticking out like a sore thumb in an urban environment.

HEALER

Helping people and healing the world is an important goal for the character. Studying herbs and anatomy all leads to the skills necessary to help when it counts, making them an integral part of society.

Skills: Empathy +1, Holistics +1, Knowledge +1, Survival +1

COUNSELOR

Gift: Whether it's their trustworthy face or tone of voice, the character can get almost anyone to open up. This comes in very useful when there is something they want to know. Gain +1 Persuade when gathering information from someone by talking it out.

CHAPTER THREE - THE LONG ROAD

Trigger: The character feels responsible when they give counsel for the outcome. No matter how good the advice, the outcome is not always what the ninja wanted. Gain 1 Karma when counsel the character gave comes back to haunt them.

GEKAI

Gift: The body gives out signals when there is something wrong, and a gekai (surgeon) knows how to identify them. The ninja is skilled at seeing the signs of illness and knowing what they mean. Gain +1 Intuition when diagnosing a patient.

Trigger: The cycle of life and death is natural, but the character does their best to balance the scales toward life. Sometimes death tips the scales no matter what the character does. Gain 1 Karma when the character loses a patient.

HERBALIST

Gift: A little of this and a little of that. The character knows how to mix herbs to create a variety of results, though they specialize in healing. Gain +1 Crafts when making healing items.

Trigger: The most powerful mixtures require special ingredients and the character cannot always get those precious herbs exactly when they need them. Gain 1 Karma when the character is forced to do something they don't want to do to obtain a rare/illegal ingredient.

MERCHANT

Providing people with what they need is the key to a functioning society. There is always a deal to be made and services to render, and the character is ready to provide.

Skills: Crafts +1, Intimidation +1, Intuition +1, Travel +1

CON ARTIST

Gift: Those who fend for themselves, those who cannot miss out, win the world. The ninja does what it takes to get ahead, even if their methods are unscrupulous. Gain +1 Deception to convince someone they have good intentions.

Trigger: The character doesn't always tell lies. Sometimes they have important information. If only the group would trust them. Gain 1 Karma when the character's reputation as a con artist precedes them and causes trouble.

MONEYLENDER

Gift: Money doesn't buy happiness, but it sure makes unhappiness easier to bear. The ninja knows the value of things and how to convince others to accept their offer for them. Gain +1 Persuade when money can sway someone.

Trigger: The lure of making coin is irresistible to the character. If there is a deal to be made, it takes a lot of willpower for the ninja to say no. Gain 1 Karma when the character cannot turn down making a deal.

TRAVELER

Gift: The ninja makes their living traveling far and wide convincing people they have what the person needs. They are very good at their job. Gain +1 Persuade when haggling or negotiating.

Trigger: Knowing where you are is key to making a living on the road, and most of the time the ninja succeeds. There are times, however, when the ninja doesn't know where they are. Gain 1 Karma when the character gets themselves (and usually their squad) lost.

NOBLE

No matter how they handle their position or how they came by their nobility, being a noble is something the character uses to their advantage. They make choices every day that affect the entire Empire, but more importantly themselves.

Skills: Deception +1, Intimidation +1, Perform +1, Travel +1

ELDER

Gift: The ninja knows that experiences of the past can teach those in the present. Therefore, they impart these lessons to the young today, hoping to mold the next generation. Gain +1 Knowledge when remembering historical facts.

Trigger: Focusing on the past can mean the present is blurry. The ninja sometimes has a hard time reconciling how present attitudes have changed. Gain 1 Karma when the character's being out of touch with modern times or attitudes causes embarrassment or trouble.

KUGE

Gift: The world of politics can be just as fraught as any battlefield, but it is a battlefield of wit. The kuge (aristocrat) is skilled at navigating the mines of political battlefields. Gain +1 Discipline to remain poised in tenuous conversations.

Trigger: Even the hardest materials can crack under pressure, and politics is a game of secrets. Gain 1 Karma when one of their political skeletons is revealed by a rival kuge to hurt or manipulate them.

MAGISTRATE

Gift: Stepping into a situation without prior knowledge is tricky, but it is vital to enforcing justice. The ninja has learned to quickly analyze a situation and act accordingly. Gain +1 Intuition to assess a situation.

Trigger: The law can be stretched sometimes, and the letter must be obeyed at other times — even when it might not be the spirit of the law. Gain 1 Karma when the character refuses to bend or break the law to help the group.



OUTSIDER

Society can be rough, but the character has made do on their own. Who needs others when one has wits and will to survive? Not these characters.

Skills: Athletics +1, Deception +1, Fighting +1, Speed +1

DRIFTER

Gift: Moving from place to place, the ninja has learned to adapt in whatever environment they find themselves. Cold, heat and rain are all the same when one knows how to deal with them. Gain +1 Fortitude when resisting negative environmental effects.

Trigger: The life of a Drifter is not exactly one of luxury. There are times of plenty and times of famine. The latter are never convenient. Gain 1 Karma when the character cannot pay for an item they really need.

HERMIT

Gift: The ninja knows how to make a life for themselves alone, and how to survive without a community. All they need is their spirit, a roof over their heads and the beauty of nature. Gain +1 Survival to forage or hunt for food in the wilderness.

Trigger: Living in nature and the quiet has whittled down the ninja's ability to process noise and chaos. Gain 1 Karma when the character is overwhelmed in populated places.

UNTOUCHABLE

Gift: Lower classes of people, of which untouchables are the lowest, go unnoticed by the higher classes. They sometimes forget these people have ears and can hear the most interesting things. Gain +1 Stealth to overhear conversations of the higher classes.

Trigger: Despite certain jobs being necessary, they do not have the respect of so-called "clean" occupations. Gain 1 Karma when their lowered status has a negative effect, such as being ignored or arrested.

SCHOLAR

Knowledge can never be taken away once it is given. The character can think of no better way to spend their life than learning and growing with that learning.

Skills: Holistics +1, Knowledge +1, Perception +1, Persuade +1

HISTORIAN

Gift: The ninja has spent so long around books and what resides within that they have a knack for finding information they need with little effort. Gain +1 Speed to research texts quickly.

Trigger: Knowledge is power and misinformation can change the course of history. Gain 1 Karma when incorrect information or a mistranslation from a text causes problems for the group.

CHAPTER THREE - THE LONG ROAD

SAGE

Gift: The ninja is skilled at scouring a scene and analyzing clues to gather information. The smallest details can tell the ninja which way a target went or if there was a struggle. Gain +1 Knowledge to analyze evidence left at a scene.

Trigger: Sages are well-respected and in high demand across the Empire. Gain 1 Karma when the ninja's alliances are divided between multiple clients, causing strife for the foreseeable future.

SCRIBE

Gift: The written word takes patience and skill to mold into something that entertains or educates, and this character is highly skilled in such ways. Gain +1 Crafts when creating literary masterpieces or forged documents.

Trigger: People can misinterpret or twist the written word. Gain 1 Karma when something the character has written is used against the character or the group.

WARRIOR

Some have to fight, so others may live peacefully. It is a dangerous and sometimes unrecognized calling. The character knows they might not live through the next battle, but the outcome is worth the cost.

Skills: Fighting +1, Fortitude +1, Marksman +1, Might +1

MARAUDER

Gift: The ninja is used to making demands and getting what they want. Their demeanor means they never ask anyone to do anything; they order them. Gain +1 Intimidation when conscripting services or items.

Trigger: The character is used to fending for themselves and as a result cannot help but think of the individual over the group. Gain 1 Karma when the character chooses their own personal gain or safety over the group.

SELLSWORD

Gift: Being quick on their feet has earned the ninja their living. Winning a battle is often not about strength, but speed. The character is adept at dodging most attacks. Gain +1 Speed when Dodging.

Trigger: Selling their skills for money has made the character do things they try to forget. Those things can come back at the worst times. Gain 1 Karma when something the character was once hired to do plagues them.

SOLDIER

Gift: A soldier's profession is not one of comfort. The ninja has learned to live with pain and keep going when others might falter. Gain +1 Discipline against pain.

Trigger: As a soldier the ninja has allegiance to someone in power. Gain 1 Karma when the character must choose between loyalties and it causes trouble.



STEP THREE: RIVER

The River flows past the Village, sometimes calm, sometimes churning. It carries the debris of anger, pain, injury and suffering across the landscape of a ninja's lifespan, shaping hardship and tragedy into a channel of experience that teaches valuable lessons to the ninja.

During character creation, the player chooses one (1) Tragedy that has befallen their character through their life, making note of the Skills they receive. Then they select the Affliction their Tragedy has left upon them. Each Affliction comes with a Gift and a Trigger, lessons learned from the unique circumstances of each Tragedy, and grants either +1 Yin or +1 Yang.

CIVIL DISCORD

The consequences of politics touch all corners of each province. It turns peaceful citizens into unwilling soldiers, causes debts to be created, separates friends and family from each other and creates criminals from law-abiding people.

Skills: Discipline +1, Perform +1, Speed +1, Travel +1

CONSCRIPTED

Ki Balance: 1 Yin

Gift: Before becoming a ninja, they fought on the side of the Empire, press-ganged into unwilling service, or perhaps choosing the life with no better options for survival. Gain +1 Might when a feat of strength can get you out of a tight spot or when backed into a corner.

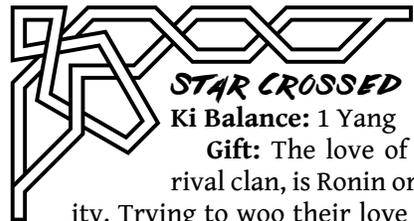
Trigger: Though it might not have been all bad, their military record follows them now as a ninja, causing mistrust and hostility amongst the clans. Gain 1 Karma when it does.

FAVORS OWED

Ki Balance: 1 Yang

Gift: The ninja owes someone a lot of money or a big favor. The weight of that debt follows them constantly, and they have become proficient at dissembling in the face of collection attempts. Gain +1 Deception when seeking to dodge uncomfortable situations.

Trigger: Debt collectors dog the ninja's footsteps. Gain 1 Karma if the ninja's debt ever catches up in a way that threatens the group or the success of a mission.



STAR CROSSED

Ki Balance: 1 Yang

Gift: The love of the ninja's life belongs to a rival clan, is Ronin or may even be Imperial nobility. Trying to woo their love with poetry, history and art has led them to learning a lot of irrelevant but interesting facts. Gain +1 Knowledge if the ninja tries to impress someone with a piece of trivia.

Trigger: The ninja is easily distracted by thoughts of their love. Gain 1 Karma whenever the ninja misses an important detail due to distraction that endangers their group.

WANTED

Ki Balance: 1 Yin

Gift: The ninja was not careful in their past actions, and the Empire knows their status and face. Posters advertising a reward for the ninja's capture — or death — hang in taprooms, on fence posts and tree stumps in every province. Gain +1 Athletics when evading the law.

Trigger: As a wanted person, the ninja's face is recognizable in settled lands. Gain 1 Karma when word of the ninja's arrival causes alarms to ring and soldiers to turn out.

RAVAGED BODY

Physical injury or disability may come to define the ninja, or it may simply be a lesson the ninja has internalized. Ninja with Ravaged Bodies have learned to overcome and integrate the lessons of their Tragedy into their lives.

Skills: Athletics +1, Fighting +1, Intimidation +1, Might +1

IMPAIRED SENSE

Ki Balance: 1 Yang

Gift: The ninja may have been born deaf or blind, or suffered an injury or illness that left them with an impaired sense. As a result, their other senses are sharper. Choose an impaired sense: smell, touch, hearing, sight or taste. The ninja receives +1 to Perception checks when using any other sense.

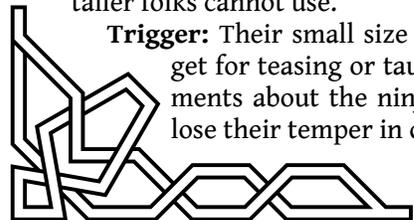
Trigger: Gain 1 Karma if the diminished sense causes the ninja to mishear an order, mistake a target or attacker or otherwise cause issues.

RUNTOFTHE LITTER

Ki Balance: 1 Yang

Gift: The ninja was born small and never grew much bigger. They have borne the brunt of their peers' teasing their entire lives, but learned to make their size work for them. Gain +1 Stealth when the ninja uses concealment taller folks cannot use.

Trigger: Their small size makes them a frequent target for teasing or taunting. Gain 1 Karma if comments about the ninja's size ever cause them to lose their temper in delicate situations.



CHAPTER THREE - THE LONG ROAD

SLOW TO SPEECH

Ki Balance: 1 Yin

Gift: Whether they were born with damaged vocal cords, lost their voice later in life, have taken a vow of silence or simply cannot verbalize at the same speed as their thoughts. Gain +1 Discipline when concentrating on a physical or non-verbal method of communication.

Trigger: Because they do not speak, the ninja is often mistaken for a lackwit or a dullard. Gain 1 Karma if the ninja's silence creates a misunderstanding or causes hostility or discomfort.

SCARRED

Ki Balance: 1 Yin

Gift: An accident or illness has left the ninja with heavy scarring across their body. Though mostly cosmetic damage, some scars are deep enough to affect muscles and pain receptors. Gain +1 Fortitude when resisting pain.

Trigger: The ninja's scars often cause them to be frightening or intimidating in appearance. Gain 1 Karma when the ninja unintentionally frightens someone, such as a new client or romantic interest.

TORMENTED MIND

Not all injuries and scars are physical. Ninja with Tormented Minds may suffer from trauma dealt by the war, a fear of enemies in the shadows, particularly bad tempers or an unease with staying in one place.

Skills: Empathy +1, Fortitude +1, Knowledge +1, Stealth +1

ESCAPIST

Ki Balance: 1 Yang

Gift: The ninja was a political prisoner, was under house arrest or was otherwise kept against their will in one place. Whatever the reason, they feel a constant urge to be on the move. Gain +1 Travel when searching for an escape route.

Trigger: The ninja has trouble staying in one place and seeks to keep moving, no matter the consequence. Gain 1 Karma if the ninja's wanderlust ever leads their group into danger.

HAIR TRIGGER

Ki Balance: 1 Yang

Gift: While they might not always be in a bad mood, the ninja is easily angered, and can become aggressive over perceived slights, refusing to back down. Gain +1 Intimidation when the ninja's reputation is known to the target of their ire.

Trigger: Little annoyances others brush off have a tendency to escalate the ninja's anger rapidly. Gain 1 Karma whenever the ninja blows their cool in a situation requiring level heads.

CHAPTER THREE - THE LONG ROAD

PARANOID

Ki Balance: 1 Yin

Gift: The ninja may believe that danger lurks under every bush and behind every tree, but that doesn't mean the Izou don't have spies about to jump out and ambush the group. Gain +1 Intuition when detecting an ambush or sneak attack.

Trigger: Sometimes, the ninja's paranoia can get the better of them, causing them to inadvertently create danger where none exists. Gain 1 Karma if the ninja's paranoia gets the better of them and increases the risk for their group.

WAR WEARY

Ki Balance: 1 Yin

Gift: The long war has taken its toll on everyone, including the ninja. They have spent the majority of their lives on the front line, battling the Izou Empire and the Ronin clans, and have faced death many times in the process. Gain +1 Fighting when the ninja is battling for their life.

Trigger: Violent memories may be overwhelming, triggering fear and panic responses in those who suffer them. Gain 1 Karma if memories of the war overwhelm the ninja and keep them from completing a mission.

UNENDING STIGMA

A ninja's circumstance, as well as their choices, have the potential to affect them for the rest of their lives. Unending stigmas are burdens of status and class the ninja carries with them, which gifts them with an increased sensitivity to the undercurrents of social interaction.

Skills: Deception +1, Holistics +1, Intuition +1, Persuade +1

ENEMY

Ki Balance: 1 Yin

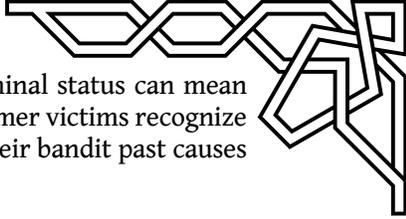
Gift: Everyone has rivals, but the ninja has gone above and beyond, turning their rival into a true enemy. In order to stay one step ahead of their enemy's plans, the ninja has become adept at winnowing out information in a very short amount of time. Gain +1 Persuade when seeking time-sensitive information from Contacts.

Trigger: Their enemy will stop at nothing to see the ninja destroyed, and searches for the smallest opportunity to get in their way. Gain 1 Karma when the efforts of the enemy impede the ninja (or their squad).

FORMER BANDIT

Ki Balance: 1 Yang

Gift: Before their clan took them in, the ninja lived the life of a bandit. It may have been necessary for survival, or perhaps the ninja enjoyed it. Gain +1 Marksman when setting an ambush for unsuspecting targets, as they have done many times before.



Trigger: The ninja's criminal status can mean that one or more of their former victims recognize them. Gain 1 Karma when their bandit past causes trouble for their group.

PARIAH

Ki Balance: 1 Yin

Gift: The ninja's social class may be untouchable, such as those who work with the dead, or they may have been born to a Ronin clan or Imperial noble family known to be hostile to ninja clans. Gain +1 Empathy when negotiating with Ronin and other outcasts for supplies or protection.

Trigger: Most people treat the ninja's class with disdain, and are unwilling to help them. Gain 1 Karma when your social status directly impedes a goal or mission.

SINGING FOR SUPPER

Ki Balance: 1 Yang

Gift: The ninja has lived a life of hardship and poverty. If not for a talent with singing, dancing, playing music or other artistic skills, they would have starved to death long ago. Gain +1 Perform when begging or busking gains the ninja needed supplies or assistance.

Trigger: The ninja may have plenty now, but still remembers the burn of a hungry belly. Gain 1 Karma when the ninja hoards supplies away from their group.

VICTIM OF CIRCUMSTANCE

The environmental conditions around the ninja were particularly hazardous at an important stage of their life. Flooding, natural disaster, disease and the loss of family all have the potential to leave lasting scars (emotional and otherwise) and teach lessons of awareness and self-reliance.

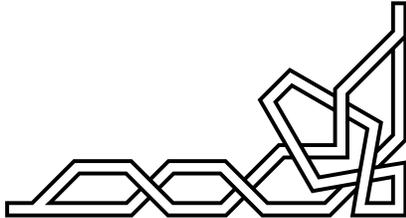
Skills: Crafts +1, Marksman +1, Perception +1, Survival +1

DISASTER MAGNET

Ki Balance: 1 Yin

Gift: The ninja has seen many disasters, including earthquakes, landslides and flash floods. Some even say that disaster follows them wherever they go. They have developed a sixth sense about such things, though, and have grown quite adept at sidestepping tree branches and falling rocks. Gain +1 Speed when avoiding sudden danger and unseen pitfalls.

Trigger: The ninja's danger sense is well developed, but can force them to react too quickly to help others. Gain 1 Karma when the instinct to avoid danger saves the ninja from injury, but leaves their group in peril.



DISPLACED**Ki Balance:** 1 Yin

Gift: The ninja lost their village, whether during the Year of Floods or due to the Empire's assault on the hidden villages. The ninja learned to make do with very little, and how to gather or create necessities out of the materials around them. Gain +1 Crafts when constructing rudimentary tools or supplies out of raw materials.

Trigger: The ninja takes pride in their self-reliance, and may not be receptive to outside help. Gain 1 Karma if the ninja takes offense when offered assistance, pity or charity.

PLAGUE SURVIVOR**Ki Balance:** 1 Yang

Gift: During an outbreak of illness, the ninja was responsible for caring for dying family, neighbors or possibly their entire village, even though they were sick themselves. Gain +1 Holistics when attempting to heal the sick and downtrodden.

Trigger: People have died in the ninja's care, and it has left its mark on them. Gain 1 Karma if the ninja becomes obsessed with helping the injured despite the danger to themselves.

ORPHANED**Ki Balance:** 1 Yang

Gift: The ninja was orphaned young. Whether they lost their entire family all at once or slowly, no one else took them in. The ninja grew up with no one to depend on for survival but themselves. Gain +1 Survival whenever the ninja must rely on their own wits.

Trigger: Gain 1 Karma when the ninja's fear of abandonment prevents them from making a solid connection or gives them difficulty separating from the friends they've made.

**STEP FOUR:
FORGE**

War changes the land and people it touches forever, just as a forge shapes a blade. How the character chooses to live through the war leads them down a path capable of shaping them for years to come. Some blades come out stronger from the flames and some break, either way they are changed.

During character creation, the player chooses one (1) Wartime Role for their character, making sure to record their starting Skills on their character sheet. They then pick one (1) Title that best suits their character's expertise in these terrible times, recording their Title Gift and Title Trigger.



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COMMANDER

Battle plans need someone to conceive of them, delegate responsibilities and execute them with meticulous attention to detail. Commanders know how to direct people and create plans that don't just win battles, but campaigns.

Skills: Discipline +1, Fighting +1, Intimidation +1, Perform +1

OFFICER

Gift: The character leads soldiers and has the instinct to make the best plans to achieve their goals. They also have an uncanny knack for knowing just what the enemy will do next. Gain +1 Intuition to predict the enemy's next move.

Trigger: Those in leadership positions have to make tough decisions. The ninja, on occasion, chooses their individual relationships over the group. Gain 1 Karma when the decision made puts personal attachments over the group.

STRATEGIST

Gift: The ninja knows past battles well, and can easily list off the pros and cons of strategies in order to choose the most effective plan. Gain +1 Knowledge when recalling advantages or disadvantages of battle strategies.

Trigger: Even the best strategies can go wrong, and when they do, the character takes it personally. Gain 1 Karma when a strategy the character chooses ends badly for the group.

TRAINER

Gift: Training dozens of soldiers in terrible conditions for long periods has given the ninja an advantage on a certain terrain. It is comfortable for them, perhaps even to the bafflement of their group. Gain +1 Athletics within a certain terrain type the player chooses (i.e. jungle, tundra, etc.).

Trigger: Training hard leads to expectations of performance. Sometimes that expectation can overwhelm the ninja. Gain 1 Karma when the fear of defeat prevents them from taking action.

COMMUNICATIONS

Making sure information gets to key locations and people while keeping sensitive information out of enemy hands can be the difference between winning and losing the war. The character has trained to handle this important job.

Skills: Deception +1, Intuition +1, Knowledge +1, Perform +1

DIPLOMAT

Gift: The ninja has practice spotting important people at crowded affairs. It's important to know where everyone is at all times. One never knows when they might have the opportunity to make a lucrative connection. Gain +1 Perception to spot someone in a crowd.

Trigger: The lure of winning over someone with their charm can be too much for the ninja to resist. They love to exercise their social abilities. Gain 1 Karma when the ninja's charming or flirtatious manner hinders the group.

MESSENGER

Gift: Motivation is powerful, and the ninja can move faster when they have a mission. This is especially true when it is for a cause close to their heart. Gain +1 Speed when delivering a message.

Trigger: Messages can be good or bad, and in times of war, the chance of bad news increases. Bearing this news can take its toll on the ninja. Gain 1 Karma when delivering bad news becomes bad news for the character.

SPY

Gift: It's dangerous if a spy cannot maintain their cover. Lives lost and battles forfeited can be the result. The ninja is skilled at leaving no trace behind. Gain +1 Stealth when covering their tracks.

Trigger: No matter how good or how carefully information is kept hidden; it sometimes finds a way to get out. Gain 1 Karma when their identity is revealed at the wrong place or time.

FOOT SOLDIER

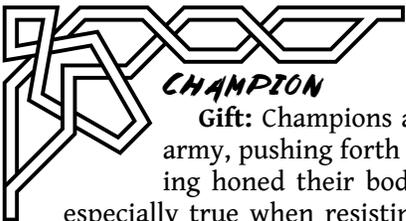
The foot soldiers are the ones who put their lives on the line for the cause. These brave ninja do it for a better tomorrow and the hope that their risk means someone else is safe.

Skills: Athletics +1, Discipline +1, Fighting +1, Might +1

BOWMAN

Gift: Bow and arrow are the ninja's focus. They have spent hours training on the archery range to shoot under the worst conditions. Gain +1 Marksman when shooting through something that obscures their target (ex. fire, fog, other people).

Trigger: Sometimes the only thing between a win and a loss is one shot, and misses have repercussions. Gain 1 Karma when blind firing strikes the wrong target, one that will haunt the character for some time.



CHAMPION

Gift: Champions are the strongest among the army, pushing forth their cause and usually having honed their body against invasions. This is especially true when resisting toxic substances. Gain +1 Fortitude against poisons.

Trigger: Believing in a cause can bring great strength, and the character knows they are right in their convictions. Not everyone is ready to hear such rhetoric, however. Gain 1 Karma when the ninja shares their truth and it causes conflict.

ENFORCER

Gift: The character knows how to make an enemy too scared not to reveal what they know. It's probably best not to pry into how they got those skills. Gain +1 Intimidation to interrogate an enemy.

Trigger: Following orders is imperative to being a good soldier, but the ninja knows sometimes that a person has to break the rules. Gain 1 Karma when the character disobeys an order to their detriment.

MEDIC

Seconds count when injured on the battlefield. The ninja can recognize injuries quickly and stabilize patients so they have a better chance of survival. Making it back home to their loved ones is their goal.

Skills: Crafts +1, Holistics +1, Knowledge +1, Speed +1

BONESETTER

Gift: Long hours putting together muscle and bone has taught the ninja how to stay alert, because losing focus costs lives. Gain +1 Discipline to remain awake.

Trigger: Things don't always go as planned, no matter how alert the ninja is. Gain 1 Karma when a procedure fails due to circumstances within the character's full control.

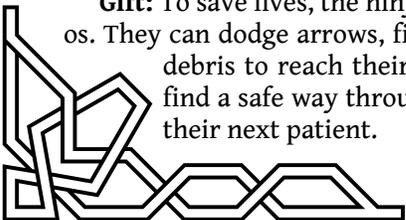
KUSURIYA

Gift: The character trusts their gut to know how to treat something that is new to them. Kusuriya are very good at picking just the right concoction. Gain +1 Intuition to treat something the character has never seen before.

Trigger: Confidence is key to diagnosing ailments, but confidence can turn to pride and cause more problems than it solves. Gain 1 Karma when their pride causes conflict within or for the group.

SAVIOR

Gift: To save lives, the ninja has to weave through chaos. They can dodge arrows, fighting through soldiers and debris to reach their goal. Gain +1 Perception to find a safe way through a battle or fight to get to their next patient.



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Trigger: Hard choices must be made on the battlefield, and the character cannot save everyone. This doesn't mean those hard choices don't affect them. Gain 1 Karma when the character must choose to save one person over another.

MERCENARY

The character knows that in the end one must take care of themselves above all else. They have carved a place in the war to do just that. No matter what the ninja believes, they know they will come out at the end a survivor.

Skills: Fortitude +1, Intimidation +1, Marksman +1, Persuade +1

ASSAILANT

Gift: The ninja is adept at fighting large groups of foes, almost daring others to join the fight against them. Gain +1 Fighting when outnumbered in a battle.

Trigger: Life as a soldier is fraught with the danger of losing things important to them. Gain 1 Karma when their lifestyle causes them to lose something or someone precious.

REBEL

Gift: One can move fast when money is involved. One cannot fulfill a contract if they aren't in the right place at the right time. Gain +1 Traveling when traveling for a hired job.

Trigger: Sometimes the character believes they are the only one who can solve a problem, and leaves the group to their own devices. Gain 1 Karma when the character goes off alone and steps into trouble.

TRADER

Gift: The ninja can keep all eyes on them, selling their wares while the group completes their mission. It also fetches a pretty coin. Gain +1 Deception when creating a distraction.

Trigger: The character can be too eager to make a trade on occasion. This can make the ninja pushy and draw unwanted attention at times. Gain 1 Karma when their eagerness hinders the group.

PACIFIST

War is never the answer to these characters. The ninja may vocally object or seclude themselves, but they always ask the question: What worthwhile can possibly be gained from killing each other?

Skills: Empathy +1, Holistics +1, Persuade +1, Stealth +1

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OBJECTOR

Gift: Their determination to help their cause gives them the ability to hold out against opposing forces. Gain +1 Fortitude for sustained action, like protesting (holding sit-ins, picketing, hosting a rally, etc.) against the war.

Trigger: The character is opinionated and because of that, others sometimes find them abrasive. Gain 1 Karma when they state their opinion about the war and it draws unwanted attention or even hostility to the group.

RECLUSE

Gift: Being alone means surviving alone and the ninja is used to surviving and protecting themselves. They are especially adept at finding shelter. Gain +1 Survival when making or finding shelter.

Trigger: The character is not used to relying on other people and finds it hard to ask for help when they need it. Gain 1 Karma when their reclusive nature prevents them from seeking help, even when they really need it.

REFUGEE

Gift: Being forced from their home taught the ninja how to navigate new places with ease. Often, such bad luck has the character crossing borders. Gain +1 Travel when in foreign countries.

Trigger: The character is used to being on their own, but the memory of what they have lost (i.e. a family member, an important heirloom) can overwhelm them. Gain 1 Karma when they are reminded of something they lost and it hinders the group.

SCOUT

Soldiers need to get where they are going without any hassles, and the scouts are the ninja who get them there. It may be going deep into enemy territory or scouting a jungle for soldiers to pass. The character is an expert at finding the correct path.

Skills: Athletics +1, Fortitude +1, Perception +1, Travel +1

OBSERVER

Gift: In order to do their job and observe the enemy, the character learned to slip past guards with little effort. It's easy as soon as you know how. Gain +1 Stealth when slipping past guards or soldiers.

Trigger: The character has seen things they cannot forget, usually before anyone else has. The horror of war is something they carry with them, and it causes the ninja torment. Gain 1 Karma when the character has flashbacks to the war and it incapacitates them.

PATHFINDER

Gift: If the enemy follows then allies cannot move forward. The ninja is capable of making vicious traps to slow

down unwanted company. Gain +1 Crafts when making or finding traps.

Trigger: The ninja is always on the lookout for enemies and traps, but sometimes this can get in the way of progress. Gain 1 Karma when they mistake an innocent for their enemy with horrible consequences.

SLEEPER

Gift: As a sleeper deep in enemy territory, keeping true loyalties a secret is the difference between life and death. The ninja must convince all around them the truth of their loyalty. Gain +1 Deception when convincing someone of your loyalty.

Trigger: Life undercover is not easy and the people the ninja loves and the places they cherish can be put in danger. Gain 1 Karma when they choose to remain undercover and it compromises something or someone they care about.

STRIKER

Some missions require a special set of skills — ones only a Striker possesses. The character can get into places most people cannot and complete missions that require stealth and cunning with masterful execution.

Skills: Marksman +1, Might +1, Stealth +1, Survival +1

ASSASSIN

Gift: From above, below or from the side, the ninja is skilled at striking first. Their mission is the quick death of their target; nothing more, nothing less. Gain +1 Speed when making a surprise attack.

Trigger: Through circumstance or choice, there are times when a target survives the assassination attempt. Gain 1 Karma when the survivor becomes an obstacle for the group.

GLADIATOR

Gift: The ninja is at their best when they are face to face with their opponent. Blood and gore are just a bonus for these warriors. Gain +1 Fighting when in a one-on-one battle.

Trigger: People can boast of their skills, or something they accomplished, but the ninja won't believe it until they see it with their own eyes. Gain 1 Karma when their skeptical disposition causes conflict.

RAIDER

Gift: The smell of the ocean is like home to the ninja, and they can move as well on the sea as they can on land. Gain +1 Athletics when on a ship.

Trigger: It's difficult for the ninja to see something they want and not take it. They never know when they will get another opportunity. Gain 1 Karma when their greed has a negative effect on the group.



SUPPLIER

Resources are key in any war. Those who control them can turn the tide of battle or even give the upper hand in an exchange. The character is skilled at managing resources as well as how to use them.

Skills: Crafts +1, Deception +1, Perception +1, Travel +1

DEALER

Gift: Whether in a private meeting room or the upper class section of the market, they can gain access if the ninja speaks to the right person. Gain +1 Persuade to convince someone to let the character into any kind of restricted area.

Trigger: The character makes a living initiating deals of all kinds, but sometimes those deals can go south. Gain 1 Karma when the character makes a deal that goes sideways and causes trouble.

HOARDER

Gift: “Be prepared” is the ninja’s motto. They always seem to have what they need when nothing else seems to be around. Gain +1 Survival to find supplies, even in an abandoned or desolate place.

Trigger: The character wants to keep everything. They never know when they might need something: be it food, an old shoe, clothing or a broken staff. Gain 1 Karma when they choose not to leave spoils behind and it later hinders the group.

STEWARD

Gift: Through smell, touch or their other senses, the ninja can figure out what is in any mixture. This is thanks to their extensive knowledges of plants, medicines and other substances. Gain +1 Knowledge to determine the ingredients of a mixture.

Trigger: Stewards like things exactly a certain way, and are none too happy when things go sideways. Gain 1 Karma when the character’s finicky nature causes friction for the character or group.

VILLAGER

The ninja is not a soldier. Instead, they just do what they can to make sure the people in their village are as comfortable and safe as possible until the war is over.

Skills: Empathy +1, Intuition +1, Speed +1, Survival +1

CUSTODIAN

Gift: If the wound is from a dagger, sword or any other weapon the ninja has probably seen it before. Gain +1 Hologistics to treating wounds gained in battle.

Trigger: The character has made a promise to protect the village, and they will do whatever it takes to keep that promise. Gain 1 Karma when the character chooses loyalty to the village over their loy-

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alty to their group.

GUARDIAN

Gift: When innocents are hurt right before their eyes, the ninja becomes enraged and strong enough to defend those who remain. Gain +1 Might when defending civilians from physical harm.

Trigger: The instinct to guard is strong with the ninja and when something they are guarding falls victim to continued attack, they may lose confidence. Gain 1 Karma when something or someone the character is guarding is put in danger.

SHEPHERD

Gift: The character is used to hidden items and people who bring them to a safe place later. They are also adept at finding hidden things. Gain +1 Perception to find hidden items or spot the enemy.

Trigger: The ninja’s job is difficult, but sometimes it is hard to remember everyone’s names and faces. The character can even forget other important things that they shouldn’t. Gain 1 Karma when the character’s absent-mindedness causes trouble.

STEP FIVE: MOUNTAIN

It is a hard and arduous journey from the bottom of a mountain to its very pinnacle. All the lessons in one’s life are necessary to brave such an excursion, but true enlightenment awaits the character at the top. Enlightenment in the form of a new family; a clan.

Each character has chosen to align themselves with a ninja clan, either through birth or circumstance. Their clan challenges them to push beyond their boundaries and become better and stronger than any others are.

While each write-up presents a set of cultural thoughts, appearance and clan outlooks, like a Strand’s love of lying, remember that each character is an individual. A player can choose to play a Strand who hates being untruthful if they want, as long as it makes sense within the grand scheme of their character. GMs should encourage this kind of out-of-the-box thinking, but should also remind the player this singles their character out as different even among their own kind.

Once the clan is selected, the player records the Skills and Ki Balance their character receives, as well as their Clan Gift and Trigger, before moving on to Contacts and Bonds. They should also make note of their clan’s available fighting styles and favored jutsu. Characters will never change clans. Leaving their clan makes them a Ronin, a ninja no clan wants within their ranks.

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Living Chronicle	34	Historians and observers
Pack of the Black Moon	36	Ranchers and bumpkins
Recoiling Serpents	38	Snakes and survivalists
Virtuous body Gardeners	40	Artists and warriors
Wardens of Equilibrium	42	Merchants and monks
Will of Iron	44	Judges and sheriffs
Ronin	46	Loners and outcastes

CONTACTS

No ninja is an island. They exist in a vast empire, surrounded by people from all walks of life who may want to help them or kill them. Contacts give the character two people (to start) they know outside of their clan dealings. They select one Ally and one Rival during character creation.

- ◆ **Allies:** When a Contact is also an Ally, the character can ask for assistance and can gain a +2 bonus to a specific type of Skill check the Contact agrees to. The character may also ask for information or leads on an investigation pertaining to the Contact's area of influence, which can be provided as long as the GM agrees they are likely to know said info.
- ◆ **Rivals:** A Contact made a Rival is opposed to the character, though not necessarily violent or out to kill them. The Rival is very good at their associated Skill and any attempts to use said Skill against them or in their presence suffers a -2 penalty. Rivals also make it harder to acquire information in their area of influence, usually requiring a favor before gaining access.

Names have been provided for Contacts for convenience. Players are encouraged to change the names as they see fit. Characters from the same clan may even know the same Contact, who is sometimes helpful to one and a threat to the



STEP SIX: TEMPLE

Stepping inside the temple means they have achieved something great. It is a spot for reflection, meditation and personal growth, but it is also where the majority of their martial training takes place. They will truly never be the same person once they leave the temple.

The Temple represents the character's achievement in the martial arts and other training they may have received to help them survive. The Ninja Crusade takes no prisoners, after all. Even ninja from the same clan and similar backgrounds will find some part of their lives where they differ... and it usually comes from the Temple. First, the player gets to personalize their character, followed by choosing additional abilities from several martial training options.

PERSONALIZATION

The player gets a few points to customize their character. They receive 10 Skill points to spend, noting that Level 1-4 of a Skill cost 1 point each, but Level 5 of a Skill costs 2 points. These points can be spent on any Skill, regardless of whether the character already has levels in said Skill.

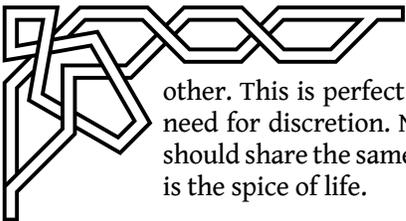
Once Skill points have been spent, the player may also define two (2) Specialties (pg. 136) for the character. Specialties are similar to Gifts in that they give the character a +1 bonus when using a Skill for a particular purpose. These are written on the Specialties line below Skills on the character sheet.

CHOOSING MARTIAL TRAINING

Players may select two (2) levels of Martial Training. There are three different kinds of Martial Training: Fighting Styles, which enhance the character's hand-to-hand combat ability; Weapon Styles, which grant them additional abilities when wielding a specific weapon; and the 99 Styles, which include fringe abilities like brewing potions or building expert traps. The selected levels can be Level One and Level Two of the same Martial Training within the same Style or Level One and Level One of two different training Styles. Players are encouraged to discuss their concepts with the GM for help in finding the best Martial Training options.

FIGHTING STYLES

Fighting Styles are a physical expression of the character's martial prowess, giving them additional abilities and tricks they can use in Battle. There are 10 Fighting Styles, each with three different paths leveled One to Three. While this may seem like a lot of choices to consider, the character's chosen clan actually dictates which two Fighting Styles they have access to. For instance, the Recoiling Serpents can only choose between the Snake and Wildcat styles during character creation. Once gameplay begins,



other. This is perfect for creating conflict and the need for discretion. No more than two characters should share the same Contact, however, as variety is the spice of life.

FAVORS

A major difference between Allies and Rivals is that Allies will do a favor in exchange for a favor later on. Rivals, on the other hand, usually want a favor up front; because they do not necessarily trust that the character will come through at a future date. During character creation, Rivals begin with their Owe a Favor box checked, as the character needs to prove themselves before gaining any benefits. A favor can range from anything such as settling a dispute, beating someone up, fetching an item, collecting money, saving someone from an evil noble to anything else that needs done.

Asking for a favor from an Ally who the character already owes a favor turns them into a Rival. Doing the same with a Rival, means they fulfill the request, but are lost as a Contact forever. Likewise, fulfilling a favor for a Rival even when you don't owe one can change a Rival to an Ally. Since these changes have story relevance, they do not cost XP. A player can force these changes, however, by doing so (pg. 94).

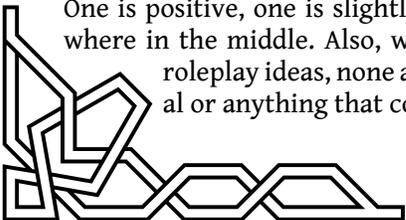
BONDS

When ninja gather into squads, there are often mixed emotions and reasons for new friendships or rivalries to bloom between the players' characters. Three examples of individual Bonds have been included with each clan write-up, giving prompts for roleplaying and discussion of possible past events the squad has been through.

Each player should choose another player's character for each of the three Bonds, defining it and discussing with them how it affects the two characters' relationship. This can lead to interesting plots going into the game, as one character may implicitly trust another, while the other is simply using them as a means to an end. If they run out of characters in the group (more than three other characters), then they still only have three Bonded. They'll be Bonded to other characters by proxy; a friend of a friend if you will.

CREATING YOUR OWN

While the clan section has brief Bonds to help any player jump seamlessly into their character, the players can also create their own if they have a strong idea for one. **Note:** The three Bonds presented have a certain balance. One is positive, one is slightly negative and one is somewhere in the middle. Also, while each of them gives fun roleplay ideas, none are outwardly confrontational or anything that could cause a group schism.



CHAPTER THREE - THE LONG ROAD

they may select from any Fighting Style as long as they find the correct teacher and prove they are worthy to be a pupil. Ronin characters only get one Fighting Style, but there is no restriction on which they choose.

BEAR

Strategy is important. So is a stout arm and a strong back. Bear fighters see the need for endurance, stamina and power as essential attributes for a warrior. Stances are strong with powerful swings and crushing grips just like their namesakes. Once in the ninja's grasp, they may employ a wide number of chokes and grappling techniques to subdue or even kill their opponent.

ANGRY MOTHER PROTECTS THE YOUNG

- ◆ **Level One:** This ninja makes the perfect bodyguard, using their immense frame to shield a ward. They gain +1 Armor against physical damage per level when acting as a human shield for another.
- ◆ **Level Two:** The glare of the bear ninja is enough to unnerve most ninja. Gain +2 Intimidation during Battle due to their ferocious style.
- ◆ **Level Three:** For every blow that strikes the bear-stylist, the fighter adds +1 damage to their next attack on the offending individual.

INESCAPABLE EMBRACE

- ◆ **Level One:** The bear-stylist moves quickly, despite their apparent bulk, and gains a +1 bonus per technique level to Initiative Grab Actions.
- ◆ **Level Two:** The ninja can squeeze and do damage effectively while grappling. They gain +1 damage to Inflict Harm Actions while in a Grab.
- ◆ **Level Three:** If the opponent is held for 3 Rounds in a row, they are rendered unconscious, resulting in a Knockout 2 Condition. Those without strong constitutions could suffer death instead.

THICK SKIN

- ◆ **Level One to Three:** Through rigorous conditioning exercises and meditation, this ninja has developed the resilience of a bear. They gain +1 Armor per level. This is usually Armor against physical attacks, but some bears have hardened their mind as well.

CRANE

The elegant movements of the Crane are poetry in motion. Only a crane could throw a barrage of spinning kicks, elbows and oddly shaped fists in the beautiful flowing motion of dance. Despite the wide number of techniques

known, Crane fighters tend to be defensive and focus their energies on artistic pursuits or medicinal arts. These ninja have a strong knowledge of human anatomy and use that knowledge to further their goals.

HEALING OF THE MOTHER

- ◆ **Level One to Three:** The crane beak can be used via acupressure to stimulate healing, set broken bones or bring about consciousness. Each level adds +1 Holistics when attempting to heal Conditions.

PATIENCE AS REWARD

- ◆ **Level One:** A crane ninja dances about, deflecting all manner of strikes on all types of surfaces. When fighting purely defensively, the ninja is nigh impossible to harm. They may choose not to attack in a Round to add a +1 bonus per technique Level to Defense checks for the Round.
- ◆ **Level Two:** Bonus raised to +2.
- ◆ **Level Three:** Dynamic Actions spent on Enhance Defense produce 3 dice (instead of 2).

PUSHING ON CRANE WINGS

- ◆ **Level One:** Often considered the ultimate Crane technique. Whereas most attacks from man or beast are force and aggression orientated, the Crane Ninja rocks backwards to absorb the energy of an assault only to then return the energy in a gentle shove to knocking the assailant to the ground. This is used as an alternative to a Block with a -1 penalty. If successful, the attacker is knocked back (Level x10ft). Can only be used once per Round.
- ◆ **Level Two:** Also knocks the attacker down. It may be used twice per Round.
- ◆ **Level Three:** May be used up to three times per Round and Knock Back distance is doubled.

DRAGON

The dragon-stylist undergoes severe stretching, meditation and breathing exercises in all weather conditions to develop the presence of mind and body before learning any techniques. Dragons are always flowing when in motion. Although they move in any direction, most prefer circular or semi-circular steps, stances, spins and open-handed blows. This explains the fighter's disdain for direct and aggressive encounters.



DRAGON WHIPS TAIL

- ◆ **Level One:** The dragon-stylist drops and spins, performing spinning leg sweeps on anyone within Near Range. They position themselves for a spinning leg sweep but balance enough to swing both legs together forming, essentially, a dragon's tail. Add +1 Fighting to the attack, and all targets get a chance to Dodge. Those who fail are knocked down.
- ◆ **Level Two:** Bonus raised to +2 Fighting and victims also take 1 damage if within Close Range.
- ◆ **Level Three:** Deal 2 damage (instead of 1) and victims suffer a -2 penalty (instead of -1) if they use a Quick Action to stand.

FLAILING BODY

- ◆ **Level One to Three:** A ninja with this discipline is difficult to grapple. They seem to lack any bones as they slip from the grasp of almost any living thing. Any attempt to trap or grab the ninja suffers a -1 penalty per Level of this technique. The ninja also gains a +1 bonus per Level to escape chains or similar objects that bind them.

MASTER OF SURROUNDINGS

- ◆ **Level One to Three:** Dragon ninja are deceptively tricky to fight, but even more so in a crowded area. Enemies can find themselves

punching tables, kicking bowls or even each other as opposed to their intended target. Starting on the second Round and for every Round afterward, the ninja gains +1 die (per level) that they may add to any Defense check. At Level 3, Improvised Weapons (pg. 147) no longer take on the Fragile Quality.

EAGLE

The Eagle fighter is all about momentum. These ninja believe a warrior's biggest advantage lies in the ability to move, hit hard and fast and then get out of harm's way. Armor is a crutch best avoided, since it only slows one down and leads to overconfidence. No defense is impenetrable; better to just not be there.

BEATING MY WINGS

- ◆ **Level One:** As easily as an angry eagle flaps its wings, this ninja can throw two small projectile weapons (like shuriken) or fire two arrows at a single target, suffering a -2 penalty. Targets receive one Defense check to avoid being hit, as each weapon's damage stacks instead of being calculated individually.
- ◆ **Level Two:** Penalty is reduced to -1 and they can throw/fire three weapons (instead of two) at up to two separate targets.

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- ◆ **Level Three:** May now throw/fire up to four weapons at up to four targets with no penalty.

FLYING INTO BATTLE

- ◆ **Level One:** The ninja employs special dodging strategies by leaping away. After a successful Dodge, they may make a full Movement for free. Opponents cannot trigger a Retreating Attack against this technique.
- ◆ **Level Two:** They may spend 2 Dynamic Actions to leap (up to their Movement), attack and then keep moving (up to Movement again).
- ◆ **Level Three:** Level Two's technique now only costs 1 Dynamic Action.

RAPTOR NEEDS TO FEED

- ◆ **Level One to Three:** The eagle claw, despite the wide array of kicks, is by far the most lethal attack practiced. It can attack and tear at the most vulnerable of pressure points. The ninja may spend +1 Dynamic Action for Deeper Cuts (pg. 140) on a single attack per level.

HORSE

The Horse fighter represents freedom and unbridled energy. They feel more at ease where they can run and jump, leaping from rooftop to rooftop, just themselves and their surroundings. Large thrusting, spinning and jumping kicks are their preferred attack method. There is little room for feinting, as the barrage of kicks usually thrown is confusing and disconcerting enough for most adversaries.

CANNOT BE TAMED

- ◆ **Level One:** When enemies surround the ninja in a tight circle, the ninja can launch into a wild barrage of kicks in all directions targeting everyone within Close Range. Afterwards, the ninja is exhausted and suffers a -2 penalty to checks until their next Turn. Can only be used once per Battle.
- ◆ **Level Two:** They are simply winded, suffering only a -1 penalty. The ninja also deals +1 damage with this barrage attack.
- ◆ **Level Three:** The ninja is now energized by this technique, suffering no penalty, and they can now use Cannot Be Tamed twice per Battle.

HORSE KICK

- ◆ **Level One to Three:** The fighter launches a powerful jumping thrusting kick with both feet, dealing +1 damage per level to a single opponent. They also send the target stumbling backwards (Level x5ft). At level 3, the target falls to the ground as well.

TO RUN FREE

- ◆ **Level One:** Due to intense strength and endurance training, the ninja can run faster than others can. Gain +4 Movement per Level.
- ◆ **Level Two:** Leaping becomes second nature to the Horse fighter, their jumping distance raises to Movement + (Might x3ft.) horizontally. Vertical jumping is still half this amount.
- ◆ **Level Three:** Quick thinking and response is easier, granting +2 Dynamic Dice per Battle that can be added to any Round.

MANTIS

Mantis style is as brutal as it is fascinating. The fighter squats slightly, extending both arms in front of them with the first two fingers dangled lazily towards the opponent. When launched forward, their fingers seize and tear flesh with ease or enable them to seize threats with an unbreakable grip. The grip is trained by pulling on ropes with the index and middle fingers and thumbs to develop strength.

CATCHING PREY

- ◆ **Level One:** Instead of blocking an opposing arm, limb or weapon, the ninja is able to trap it with the vise-like grip of the mantis. There is no penalty to trap an unarmed attack, but only a -1 penalty for weapons as long as the character has rope or cloth in-hand. On a success, the two characters are in a Grab.
- ◆ **Level Two:** Upon trapping the limb, it falls asleep or goes numb for a number of Rounds equal to the ninja's Might Skill. While affected, the victim suffers a noncumulative -2 penalty to use the limb for the Battle. On a Boost, it creates a longer lasting Injured 2 Condition.
- ◆ **Level Three:** Instead of numbing the limb, the ninja may instead harm the adversary's limb, dealing 2 damage instantly or shattering the attacker's weapon. A Boost can even destroy master-crafted or enchanted weapons.

MANTIS FEASTS WELL

- ◆ **Level One:** Opponents hate to face a Mantis fighter. The mantis claw can tear at flesh easily, dealing +1 damage with unarmed strikes.
- ◆ **Level Two:** The ninja may ignore 1 level of Armor.
- ◆ **Level Three:** They now ignore up to 3 levels of Armor.

MANTIS STANDS STEADFAST

- ◆ **Level One:** When resisting being knocked down, thrown or tripped in Battle, they may double their highest Skill's level. For instance, if rolling Fortitude 3 + Speed 2, they'd get 6 dice from Fortitude instead of 3.

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SNAKE

Ninja who pursue this discipline tend to have unsettling presences and fluid movement. Blocks are subtle, as are evasions, and strikes are made with the fingers held together and the thumb held underneath with vital points targeted. Studies and experiments in the use of poison are favorites, as is psychological warfare. Trainees learn by observing snakes in all their habits.

COIL AND STRIKE

- ◆ **Level One to Three:** The ninja must concentrate for 1 full Round without taking any Actions as they focus on their target (they may Defend normally). On the ninja's Turn the following Round, they may attack and gain a number of bonus dice equal to the number of Actions (Standard and Dynamic) they did not use the previous Round multiplied by 2. They may only utilize this up to (Level x3) dice, however. The attack also deals +1 damage. For example, a ninja with Coil and Strike Level 2 can gain up to 4 bonus dice on their next attack.

POISON STRIKING

- ◆ **Level One:** Snakes are not only blindingly fast, but also painfully accurate. They seem to unerringly find their mark in seconds. On a Boost, the fighter may create a Poison 1 Condition per Level for their opponent.
- ◆ **Level Two:** The ninja receives +2 Holistics when creating or handling poisons.
- ◆ **Level Three:** They are startling fast in Battle, and may use Speed as a secondary Skill on any combat check

IMMUNITY TO POISON

- ◆ **Level One to Three:** The ninja slowly ingests minute amounts of insect, spider and snake venom to build immunity to it. When dealing with unsettling relations with other ninja, it can prove to be time well spent. For every level, gain +1 Fortitude to resist the effects of the poison. Even if they fail their Resistance, the effects are cut by 25% at Level One, 50% at Level Two and 75% at Level Three.

TIGER

There are few beasts more savage than the tiger, and there is nothing subtle about a tiger-stylist in motion. Tigers only come out of their comfort zone for one reason and that is to kill, and these fighters emulate this with every stance set to either build power for training or explode towards an opponent. The blocks are brutally efficient and the kicks, although few in number, are designed for maximum damage.



- ◆ **Level Two:** If they ever fail a check to remain standing, they may reroll once.

- ◆ **Level Three:** If they are supposed to be thrown, tripped, etc. and succeed at resisting, they instead force someone else within Close Range to fall or be thrown without a check.

MONKEY

Some find it hard to take this ninja seriously, as they fall, roll and stumble around. Attempts to strike or control this ninja may prove useless, however, as they dive, tumble and leap out of danger just before slapping, tripping or jabbing opponents. When opponents become enraged enough to stomp the pest out of existence, they are nowhere to be found.

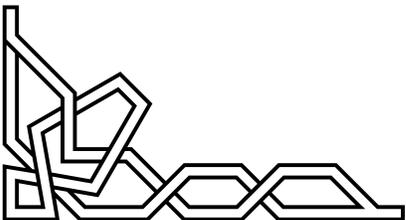
BABY MONKEY HAS A FIT

- ◆ **Level One:** The ninja is perfectly fine, if not preferring, to fight while prone or on their knees. Their kicks, and the occasional bite, gain them +1 Fighting per level if fighting an enemy considerably bigger than the character.
- ◆ **Level Two:** They may stand as a free Action and suffer no penalties from falling prone
- ◆ **Level Three:** They are quick to take an opportunity, reducing the cost of Interruptions (pg. 141) to 1 Dynamic Action (instead of 2).

ROLLING ATTACK / RETREAT

- ◆ **Level One:** The monkey-stylist can both tumble into battle and attack or attack and then roll out (Movement/2). The attack is made with a -1 penalty, due to its chaotic method, but opponents cannot execute a Retreat Attack against this technique.
- ◆ **Level Two:** The penalty is negated, and they now deal +1 damage with this kind of attack.
- ◆ **Level Three:** The ninja can now tumble in, attack and tumble out safely as a single Action.

VANISHING

- ◆ **Level One to Three:** The fighter is skilled at vanishing into trees, undergrowth, reeds or even among refuse in city streets. Pursuers suffer a -1 penalty per level to detect the ninja's location in this kind of environment. At Level Three, they receive a +2 bonus to attack from Stealth.
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NEVER FORGET A TASTE

- ◆ **Level One:** Once the fighter has fought and successfully drawn blood from a specific adversary, they gain +1 Survival to hunt the target, and +1 Initiative and +1 Fighting against them in battle. They may only have one such target at any given time.
- ◆ **Level Two:** All Level One technique bonuses raise to +2.
- ◆ **Level Three:** Bonuses count for up to (Intuition) targets.

TASTING YOUR OWN BLOOD

- ◆ **Level One to Three:** The fighter subjects themselves to numerous physical or psychological tortures to strengthen the mind and body. When the ninja rolls a Boost during a Battle, they may reduce any Pain Condition by 1. For each point of Pain they ignore this way, they gain +1 Initiative and +1 Fighting for the Battle. They may gain this bonus up to (Level) times.

TIGER CLAWS

- ◆ **Level One:** All who hear the horrible stories of its victims fear the tiger claw. In addition to any damage done, targets hit with tiger claws suffer a noncumulative Pain 1 Condition per Level. This affects unarmed attacks only.
- ◆ **Level Two:** Their palms, fingers and nails harden to ignore up to 2 levels of Armor.
- ◆ **Level Three:** Tiger Claw cannot be Blocked without taking 1 point of damage, regardless of how well they rolled.

WILDCAT

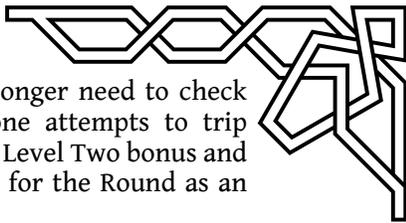
Although it lacks the size and sheer power of other beasts, the wildcat's ballistic nature more than compensates. The fighter knows the best defense is to overwhelm an adversary. Leaping and flying kicks are used to jump into the middle of a conflict where the ninja can unleash a flurry of close quarter blows.

FLURRY OF BLOWS

- ◆ **Level One to Three:** The ninja can explode into an offensive blur of chops, low range kicks and elbows. On any attack where the character Boosts, they can give up any other bonus they would normally receive to attack again. They may do this only (Level) times per Round.

LANDS ON FEET

- ◆ **Level One:** Whenever the ninja would fall to the ground, whether from tripping, falling, being thrown or other reason, they may make a free Moderate (2) Athletics + Speed check to land safely on their feet.
- ◆ **Level Two:** Difficulty drops to Simple (1) and a success gains the fighter a +1 bonus to their next combat check.

- 
- ◆ **Level Three:** They no longer need to check against falling. If anyone attempts to trip them up, they enjoy the Level Two bonus and gain +1 Dynamic Action for the Round as an automatic effect.

POUNCE

- ◆ **Level One:** Wildcats are renowned for their ability to fling themselves at their prey or foes with complete disregard for their personal safety. If the ninja gets to act first in any Round, they gain +2 Fighting and deal +1 damage on their first attack of the Round.
- ◆ **Level Two:** The ninja receives +5 Movement, allowing them to travel the battlefield more effectively.
- ◆ **Level Three:** When spending Dynamic Actions to affect Initiative (pg. 141), they cause a +3 bonus or -3 penalty (instead of +2 or -2).

WEAPON STYLES

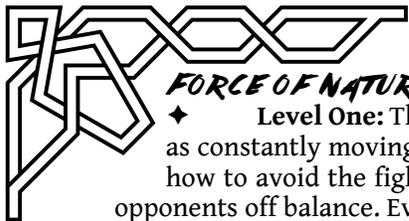
Weapon Styles are available to all characters equally. Each focuses on a type of weapon, giving the character an edge as long as they wield that type. There are five different Weapon Styles; each with three paths leveled One to Three. While Fighting Styles work under almost any circumstances, Weapon Styles require the character to have a weapon with at least one Quality that matches the Weapon Style drawn and ready to wield. If they possess multiple Weapon Styles and wield a weapon with two or more Qualities that match, they have access to all Weapon Styles effects simultaneously.

BLUNT

A master of blunt weapons understands that one need not cut to damage. Many times, where a swordsperson would slice their way through opponents, leaving a trail of blood in their wake, these fighters instead incapacitate and trip their enemies. Killing is not always the answer; crushing a target's spirit works just as well.

BONE CRUSHER

- ◆ **Level One:** The power of a blunt weapon is in its ability to destroy the things it strikes, including people. First, they deal +1 damage. On a Boost, they also create a Pain 2 Condition (instead of Pain 1).
- ◆ **Level Two:** In addition to the Pain 2 Condition on a Boost, the target also suffers either a Broken 1 or Injury 1 Condition (whichever fits the situation best).
- ◆ **Level Three:** In addition to the increases from Level One and Level Two, the Pain Condition is raised to 3 and Broken/Injury Condition raised to 2.



FORCE OF NATURE

- ◆ **Level One:** These warriors see themselves as constantly moving forces of nature. Few know how to avoid the fighter's attacks, as they throw opponents off balance. Even when attacking high, the length of their weapon means enemies must always watch their feet. On a Boost during an attack, any opponent within Close Range must make a Moderate (2) Athletics + Speed or fall to the ground.
- ◆ **Level Two:** Resistance Difficulty raises to Tough (3) and inflicts +1 damage in addition to falling.
- ◆ **Level Three:** By using their weapon to launch themselves into the air, they may make a (Movement x2) as a Quick Action once per Round. On a Boost, they may act again immediately without penalty.

SHATTER WEAPONS

- ◆ **Level One:** These masters practice by smashing their weapons into bodies of water to build the power and technique necessary to turn a stick into a powerful tool. If the defender uses a wooden weapon against the ninja's attack, the player may shatter the weapon on a Boost.
- ◆ **Level Two:** They may now shatter a metal weapon or render it useless with a Boost.
- ◆ **Level Three:** They extend this ability beyond battle to obstacles in everyday life, like wooden structures or metal doors. On a Boost while striking, the object entirely or partially shatters (depending on size).

CHAIN

Those who wield chain weapons know the value of unpredictability. The fluid motions of whips or nunchaku are easy to trick the eye and attack from an entirely different angle. Others may think chain weapons are unwieldy, but they lack the discipline to truly master this difficult tool.

CHAIN DANCE

- ◆ **Level One:** Masters of this discipline use waving, hypnotic motions to their full advantage. To them the chain is a living, breathing thing and one needs to understand it to use it against one's enemies. The hypnotic motions of the chain allow for +1 Fighting per level while wielding the weapon.
- ◆ **Level Two:** Any attempt to trap or catch the chain weapon suffers a -2 penalty.
- ◆ **Level Three:** The fighter may use an Action to clear the area with their chain. Anyone within Close Range is pushed out to Near Range or suffers 2 damage.

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CHAIN LIGHTNING

- ◆ **Level One:** A rapidly spinning chain weapon can produce incredible momentum. These masters use that energy and the surrounding reflected light to distract close adversaries. From the build-up of momentum, the sudden lashing out of the weapon allows +1 to Initiative per level.
- ◆ **Level Two:** On a Boost, the fighter can reflect moonlight, sunlight or firelight off the chain to blind their adversary. The defender must make a Moderate (2) Fortitude check or suffer a Sensory Loss 1 Condition.
- ◆ **Level Three:** On a successful Disarm, the fighter may grab their opponent's weapon with their chain and launch a second attack with it. This attack suffers a -2 penalty, but uses the Qualities of both weapons.

FLYING CHAINS

- ◆ **Level One:** Of all the unexpected things that can be thrown, a chain weapon must be one of them. Once mastered, the circular nature of chain weapons makes them unerringly deadly. Chain weapons can be thrown at Near Range at no penalty.
- ◆ **Level Two:** The weapon can be used to entangle wrists, weapons and ankles to disrupt movement on a Boost, reducing the Initiative of the opponent by 2. If another Boost is achieved against the same opponent in the same Battle, they suffer a Slow 1 Condition.
- ◆ **Level Three:** They now suffer no penalty to throw chain weapons at Far Range. If a thrown attack misses, their weapon immediately returns to their hand.

PAIRED

These weapon masters know that two weapons are better than one, utilizing paired weapons over a single sword or staff. They enjoy the increased ability to guard, but also learn how to use ambidextrous attacks with ease, making them almost unstoppable. It is all about outthinking and outmaneuvering one's opponent, which paired weapons make possible.

ABSOLUTE DEFENSE

- ◆ **Level One:** Practitioners of this skill set believe a strong defense is most important. The fighter chooses one Quality they are trained against, and gains 1 Armor per Level against weapons with that Quality while wielding Paired weapons.
- ◆ **Level Two:** They may choose a second Quality.
- ◆ **Level Three:** Choose a third Quality, and they can now use Block against Ranged attacks without penalty.

UNSTOPPABLE ATTACK

- ◆ **Level One:** Defense is important, but these fighters want only to end a fight as quickly as possible. By striking

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harder, faster and from more directions than any other warrior, they become a blur of terror. The fighter may attack twice with a single Action, but both attacks suffer a -2 penalty. Each attack is responded to separately.

- ◆ **Level Two:** Penalties are reduced to -1 for both attacks.
- ◆ **Level Three:** The master attacks high and low at the same time, enjoying +2 Initiative and no penalty to Double Strikes due to the bizarre nature of the attack.

YIN AND YANG

- ◆ **Level One:** Brawls, duels and wars are brutal exchanges of give and take. With that in mind, these fighters balance their attacks and defenses strategically with both limbs in harmony. Once per Round, the fighter can sacrifice dice (up to Level) from an Attack to add to their next Defense, or vice versa.
- ◆ **Level Two:** Upon being struck with an attack, the warrior positions themselves to open their opponent up to a painful counter blow. By spending a Dynamic Action, the attacker suffers a non-cumulative Pain 2 Condition instantly.
- ◆ **Level Three:** Their skill of paired weapons is such that any weapon can be used. They may add the Paired Quality of any weapon they wield, utilizing multiple weapon Qualities in combinations others would think

crazy. They still suffer a -2 penalty when using only one weapon with the Paired Quality.

RANGED

Enemies fear shadows on the battlefield, knowing that it only means the enemy has filled the sky with dozens of arrows ready to kill them. Masters of ranged combat have become skilled enough to do this almost single-handedly, taking out enemy after enemy with extra precision. No one underestimates ranged weapons; everyone knows how deadly they are, especially in the hands of one with extensive training.

BLACKOUT THE SUN

- ◆ **Level One:** These archers not only practice, but meditate in terrible weather seeking to harness the power of the storm. The result is near impossible hits when attempted, regardless of the conditions against them. On a Boost, they may make another Ranged attack. This may be done once per Round, and they may also fire at up to (Speed) additional targets with their second attack.
- ◆ **Level Two:** Level One may be 2 times per Round.
- ◆ **Level Three:** The ninja never runs out of ammunition to be fired or thrown, always having their hand on a Ranged weapon when they need it. Level One's ability may be 3 times per Round.



FIRING BLIND

- ◆ **Level One:** These fighters see their weapons as living extensions of their bodies. They use their ki to reach out and strike those who cannot be touched by hand alone, ignoring penalties to Ranged attacks at night.
- ◆ **Level Two:** Ignore penalties to firing into smoky, foggy or pitch black areas.
- ◆ **Level Three:** The master suffers no penalties at all when firing, even if they are blinded.

LIVING MISSILES

- ◆ **Level One:** These experts practice firing in all sorts of environments, from crouching in alleyways to hanging upside down from tree branches. This allows them to perform some of the most amazing feats seen in the Empire. Range penalties are reduced by 1 for the fighter.
- ◆ **Level Two:** The attacker can penetrate armor (through weak areas and links). +1 level of Armor can be ignored.
- ◆ **Level Three:** Anything in the master's hand can be thrown or fired with startling accuracy. Any weapon they wield gains the Ranged Quality until they let go of it.

SHARP

Bladed weapons are a favorite among ninja and martial arts heroes of legend. The beauty and delicacy of a sharpened weapon in the hands of a master is truly a sight to behold. Spinning, slicing and striking with speed and efficiency, there is a reason why blades are the preferred tool of war for ninja. The Empire has their firearms, but they are nothing against the sword.

ARMOR OF BLADES

- ◆ **Level One:** Blades and armor are forged from the same metals, and practitioners of this discipline see them as the same in spirit. The warrior spins their blades in a flurry all around their body while fighting, creating the ultimate shield. Attackers in Close or Near Range suffer a -1 penalty to attack the ninja. If the character's Defense receives a Boost, they gain +1 Fighting to their next attack.
- ◆ **Level Two:** Attackers attempting to initiate a Grab take 2 damage if they are successful. Penalty for Level One's technique raises to -2.
- ◆ **Level Three:** Shuriken and other ranged weapons suffer a -2 penalty to attack as well.

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BLADESTORM

- ◆ **Level One:** Blade wielders meditate in falling leaves, under waterfalls and even in dirty alleys to master their environment. When near a heavily dusty, snowy or leafy area, they use their blade to whip some into the eyes of their opponents. With every attack, up to (Intuition) opponents within Close Range must make a Moderate (2) Fortitude + Speed check or suffer a Sensory Loss 1 (Blind) Condition for each level of this path. Opponents can only be affected once at any given time.
- ◆ **Level Two:** Can now be used during a Defense check, and Difficulty of Resistance check raises to Tough (3).
- ◆ **Level Three:** On a Boost on an attack, the swordsperson may also throw the weapon at a second opponent within Far Range at no penalty.

SPLITTING ARROWS

- ◆ **Level One:** A close warrior's worst adversary is a skilled archer, but these practitioners train against such opponents. They meditate upon the process of cutting down projectiles, practicing on twigs fired at them or rocks thrown at them until they learn to cut down multiple lethal projectiles. The wielder can now cut down arrows or other thrown weapons as if Parrying a handheld weapon.
- ◆ **Level Two:** On a Boost, the swordsperson can automatically Parry the next (Speed) Projectiles, but suffers a -1 per deflected arrow to normal attacks for the Round.
- ◆ **Level Three:** The master can now even deflect firearm attacks with a -2 penalty.

THE 99 STYLES

Some ninja believe that refining their hand-to-hand styles or learning to wield a weapon is the pinnacle of martial perfection. However, the 99 Styles constitute additional martial study outside of those used directly in combat, including mastery of potion creation, expert building of traps, employing vast spy networks, adhering to the ancients set forth by omens and a personal relationship with the Celestial Animals that frequent the Earth. These are selected just like any other Martial Training option, but each works within their own rules. The 99 Styles are available to all characters equally.

ALCHEMY

Ninja hold the discipline of Alchemy in high regard; and the Empire has even adopted its practice for some medicinal uses. On a philosophical level, it is an exercise in creating imbalances or restoring balance in an individual to intrinsically change their place in the universe. In more concrete terms, by mixing a variety of seemingly innocu-

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ous ingredients, a well-trained alchemist can create a potion with astounding, almost magical effects. One potion could allow a guard to stay awake and alert for multiple nights, while a slight reworking of that formula could put them into a coma for days. The clans strictly regulate and monitor the practice of Alchemy to keep mishaps like this to a minimum. Regardless, it is not uncommon to see street vendors in Izou markets selling poultices and tonics claiming to be alchemical masterminds with the newest and best secret formulas, but they usually only sell empty promises, and sometimes even death.

THE STUDY OF ALCHEMY

- ◆ **Level One to Three:** Characters choose one Area of Study to focus on at Level One, learning all effects under its banner. At Level Two and Level Three, they select another two Areas of Study. This means no alchemist will ever know everything there is to know about the practice. There are some secret effects not taught to apprentices or dabblers, requiring either Level Two or Level Three to use.

CREATING POTIONS

The creation of a simple alchemical potion with a single effect is easy for any trained Alchemist requiring a Simple (1) Crafts + Holistics check. Up to (Knowledge) additional known effects can be added to a single potion, each one increasing the creation Difficulty by +1. Initially, all alchemical creations are in an ingestible liquid form, but the Alchemist can either make the concoction a potent inhalable or a solution able to be taken intravenously. Modifying the potion in these ways also increases the Difficulty by +1 or +2.

- ◆ **Inhalation (+1):** May affect an area up to 10ft away from the initial target, but victims may be able to Dodge to get out of the affected area. If they are affected, this raises the Resistance Difficulty to Tough (3).
- ◆ **Intravenously (+1):** Can be used to coat an arrowhead, dart tip or blade to get into the victim's body. Lasts for 1 Session before the toxin expires and must be recreated. Resistance Difficulty is raised to Challenging (4).
- ◆ **Addictive (+2):** Making the potion addictive means the target actively seeks out more of the potion, even to their own detriment. It is rarely added to complex concoctions due to its difficulty.

RESISTING POTIONS

Once a concoction has been taken, the character can do one of two things: allow the effects to take place or resist. Resistance checks are made using Fortitude against a Difficulty depending on the potion in question. The base Difficulty for an ingestible potion with one effect is Moderate (2). Making the potion Inhalable raises the Difficulty to Tough (3), while making it injectable raises it to Challenging (4). The Difficulty also raises by 1 for every 2 effects

beyond the first added to the same potion.

Dosed Conditions taken by ingesting potions are listed as separate Conditions, meaning characters can only ever be affected by four different potions, and only if they do not already have preexisting Conditions. More details are on pg. 150.

AREAS OF STUDY

ALERTNESS

- ◆ **Awake:** This generates an immediate jolt of sustainable energy. Those affected suffer a Dosed 2 Condition for the following: +2 Perception, but -1 Discipline from being hyper and fidgety. Awake counteracts Sloth and reduces As the Dead's Dosed condition by 1.
- ◆ **As the Dead (Level 2):** One minute after being exposed to this toxin, the target convulses violently and then falls completely paralyzed and limp like a corpse. During this period, the character is completely aware, still able to hear and see, though unable to move their eyes. This is a Dosed 2 Condition, but can be lowered by 1 by using the Awake effect.
- ◆ **Sloth:** The target becomes lethargic and slow. Motivation is difficult, and the victim is unable to focus on anything other than feeling overwhelmingly tired. They suffer a Dosed 1 Condition (2 Scenes) for the following: -2 to Perception, Fighting and Speed, and Movement is halved. This effect counteracts Awake.
- ◆ **Special Wine:** This concoction has similar effects to very strong alcohol, but has a sweet, pleasing taste. Those affected are jovial, happy and talkative. They suffer a Dosed 1 Condition for the following: -1 to Perception, Discipline and Fighting.

DREAMS

- ◆ **Dreamless Sleep:** The target falls into a deep, dreamless sleep and cannot wake until the effects wear off. They suffer a Dosed 1 Condition, but this can be raised by +1 by increasing its crafting Difficulty by +1 as well. This is often used medicinally to counteract insomnia.
- ◆ **Lucidity:** The target is able to fully interact with and vividly remember their dreams. This is often used with Dreamless Sleep to make valuable sleeping tonics or with Portents to ensure they remember all the details of visions. They suffer a Dosed 2 Condition, which can be used to counter Nightmares effect resulting in Dreamless Sleep.
- ◆ **Nightmares (Level 2):** Like the Lucidity effect, Nightmares affects the target's sleep. When used with Dreamless Sleep, this effect fills the target with the terrifying and realistic nightmares from which they cannot awake. There are no

external signs the dreamer is suffering; no tossing, screams or night sweats. Victims suffer a Dosed 2 Condition, which overrides Lucidity.

- ◆ **Truth-Telling:** This potion attacks the mind, reducing the target's ability to lie. They suffer a Dosed 1 Condition for the following: -3 Deception. If asked a question, a failed check means they instead blurt out the truth. This can be used to counter Influential (see Voice), but it is not commonly used medicinally.

HEALING

- ◆ **Elixir (Level 3):** This mixture completely heals the target and removes all Conditions, restoring the target to balance. This effect cannot be added to any other potions and is extremely rare. If one can find an alchemist to create such a potion, it should come at a large cost.
- ◆ **Miasma:** The target is immediately wracked with vomiting and sharp abdominal pains. They suffer a Dosed 1 Condition for the following: -1 penalty to all Skills, and Movement is halved. This potion starts as an inhalable at no additional cost if it is the only effect. If added to another potion, turning it into liquid increases the Difficulty by +1.
- ◆ **Poison:** This potion is solely used to harm or kill a target. This effect can be applied multiple times, dealing 2 damage for each +1 Difficulty added (up to 10 damage). Anyone who takes damage also suffers a Poison 1 Condition. These effects are instantaneous, but it can be made slower acting by increasing Difficulty by +1.
- ◆ **Restore:** This alchemical mixture is often a simple potion, but can take the form of a salve, poultice or ointment to heal cuts and wounds. Restore can be applied multiple times, healing 2 damage (maximum 10) or reducing a Condition by 1 (maximum 5). It can only affect one Condition per potion.

MIND

- ◆ **Amnesia (Level 2):** The victim is unable to remember details of their identity, including family members, clan allies, archrivals, combat techniques, skill specialties and other details. They suffer a Dosed 2 Condition for this effect. Certain aspects of the info they forgot can be made permanent by raising the crafting Difficulty by +2.
- ◆ **Enthrall (Level 3):** This potion puts the target in a hypnotic state, making them easy to manipulate. They suffer a Dosed 1 Condition for the following: Anyone using Persuade, Deception or Intimidation checks against the target receives a +2 bonus. If someone else is also using the Influential effect, the target is now completely under their control. Enthrall counts as 2 effects when calculating crafting Difficulty.



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- ◆ **Forgetfulness:** The target is suddenly unable to remember basic details, such as the name of an old friend, where they grew up, the message they were to deliver, etc. When used at the right time, this can have devastating repercussions. They suffer a Dosed 1 Condition (2 Scenes) for this effect.
- ◆ **Recollection (Level 2):** This potion grants a moment of clarity for the user, granting a +2 bonus to two Skills of choice, but two other Skills suffer a -2 penalty. Alchemists can mix and match to create very potent Recollection potions, but if combined with another effect that adds bonuses (i.e. Awake), any penalties are doubled. When in use the target is able to remember very minute details related to the enhanced Skills such as specific events, the words to an old song, a face in a crowd or something they read months ago. They suffer a Dosed 1 Condition for this effect, which counteracts both Forgetfulness and Amnesia.

SIGHT

- ◆ **Blind (Level 2):** Over the next minute, the target loses their sight, as their eyes turn white and cloudy. They suffer a Dosed 2 Condition with complete blindness, which turns into a Sensory Loss 1 Condition once it fades.
- ◆ **Dark Sight:** The target's eyes are now more sensitive to light. In bright lights, they suffer a -1 penalty to all checks, but at night or even complete darkness, the character is able to see clearly, removing associated penalties. They suffer a Dosed 1 Condition for this effect, which can be used to counter the Blind effect.
- ◆ **Irritation:** This concoction causes the target's skin to develop a strong rash, a cough from an irritated throat and watery eyes. They suffer a Dosed 1 Condition for the following: -2 penalty to all checks. This potion starts as an inhaled substance at no additional cost if it is the only effect. If added to another potion, turning it into liquid increases the Difficulty by 1.
- ◆ **Soul Sight (Level 3):** This potion allows the target to see the flow of ki in the world for a limited time. Ki patterns are all distinguishable from one another and can be used to find particular individuals or objects. They suffer a Dosed 1 Condition for the following: +2 Perception and Survival. This lets them see ki patterns through walls, doors, foliage and other objects or even to recognize specific people or objects solely by their ki patterns.

VOICE

- ◆ **Crowing Bird:** The target's diaphragm is constricted and their vocal chords tighten; forcing them to speak much louder. The character cannot, under any circumstances, speak lower than a high-pitched yell at the top of the lungs. This is a Dosed 1 Condition (2 Scenes) and can be used counter to the Mute effect.

- ◆ **Influential (Level 2):** The drinker's voice becomes smooth, sultry and a pleasure to the ears. Listeners are more willing to follow orders or make deals, even against their better judgement. They suffer a Dosed 1 Condition for the following: +2 Persuade and Intimidation. If a listener is also affected by Enthral, they are completely under the power of the character and will do whatever they say.
- ◆ **Mockingbird (Level 2):** The target's voice can imitate voices and sounds with ease after hearing them only once. They suffer a Dosed 1 Condition for the following: +2 Deception and Perform.
- ◆ **Mute:** The target's vocal cords are rendered unusable, completely eliminating their ability to speak beyond a breathy whisper. Their breathing becomes hoarse and raspy, however, resulting in -1 Stealth and +1 Intimidation. This is a Dosed 2 Condition and can be used to counter Crowing Bird.

ANTIDOTES

Many recipes can be used to counteract dangerous potions. Those trained in basic Holistics can identify these effects and craft healing items, but those trained in Alchemy can often create elaborate potions with multiple effects. Recognizing specific effects can be difficult for a practitioner of basic holistic medicine, and many times they only address one issue rather than the spectrum of maladies. This results in a patient who remains very ill.

Characters without Alchemy need a Tough (3) Holistics + Knowledge check to accurately identify all effects a victim is suffering. This Difficulty is reduced to Simple (1) for practicing Alchemists. Treatment of the effects is done via reducing the Dosed Conditions (pg. 75) or through the appropriate counter-potion.

MASTER OF SPIES

Some ninja are able to weave their way into social circles at every level of society, between both the Lotus Coalition and the Empire. They have friends and allies who constantly keep their ears to the ground to scrounge every bit of information, no matter how insignificant it may seem. A network of spies is not easy to build or maintain, however.

Most spies have spies of their own, creating a tangled web of social and political bartering where information is currency, with the character at the center. As this relationship is give and take, the player marks each network of spies they possess as an Ally under Contacts. Once they have asked their spies to perform a task for them, they mark their Owe a Favor box and must comply before asking again.



ASSASSINS

◆ **Level One:** Ninja are rarely alone and often surround themselves with other trained killers.

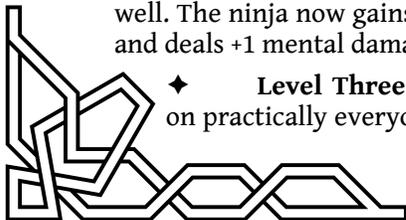
These assassins perform certain acts for the ninja, sometimes being asked to protect them in sensitive situations and other times being sent to kill someone in the ninja's stead. When asking the assassins to kill a person (only one person at a time may be targeted), they make a Persuasion + Speed check. The assassination takes (10 - successes) days to complete, but may only target regular people or those without public notoriety. If the character uses Gatherers to get info on the target beforehand, this assassination only takes (5 - successes) days instead.

- ◆ **Level Two:** Assassins can be assigned to guard the ninja for a Scene, lurking in the shadows in secret near the character. If they become the target of an attack, five assassins instantly jump into the Scene to Interrupt (pg. 141) the attack. For the rest of the Battle, they use the stats in the Assassins Squad sidebar on this page.
- ◆ **Level Three:** The ninja's assassins may now choose any target for the ninja to assassinate, whether they are a public figure or not. The GM decides whether the assassins will accept the contract, however, as few are fond of suicide missions. No assassin will accept a contract for the Emperor, for instance. Killing someone known to many takes a lot more finesse to not be linked back to the ninja, taking (15 - successes) days to complete or (10 - successes) days if they've used Gatherers.

GATHERERS

- ◆ **Level One:** The ninja's spy network focuses on the gathering of information, usually delivered at secret drop points or as encoded messages. With them, the ninja can acquire information about one target per Level at any given time with a Persuasion + Knowledge check. Valuable information takes (10 - successes) days to properly gather (minimum of 1 day per simultaneous target). Information provided is often made up of details on known associates, financial records and even family life. The ninja then has +1 bonus to social checks against the target for the foreseeable future. Obviously, this ability has little effect if the target has no skeletons to dig up. If they choose to make one of their targets into an Ally Contact, they need only spend 5 XP (instead of 10).
- ◆ **Level Two:** Access to information is easier and the information is more specific and damaging. It now only takes (7 - successes) days before info is available as well. The ninja now gains a +2 bonus to social checks, and deals +1 mental damage, against those targets.

◆ **Level Three:** Their spy network has dirt on practically everyone, much of which the ninja



ASSASSINS SQUAD

Health: 10 **Psyche:** 10
Attack: 5 **Actions:** 1 (Squad)
Defense: 6 **Armor:** 1
Initiative: 5 **Damage:** +1

Suggested Skills (3 dice): Fighting, Marksman, Perception, Speed, Stealth, Survival

Techniques: Holistics (+), Speed (+), Might (-), Travel (-); Assassins are great at attacking quick, often utilizing poisons to get the job done. Straightforward attacks are not their forte, however, and they rarely chase a target.

already knows by maintaining communication with their contacts. The ninja gets a +1 bonus in all social situations where this information comes in handy, and can acquire info on a target in (5 - successes) days. Against this target, the bonus raises to +3 for social checks and they deal +2 mental damage.

THIEVES

- ◆ **Level One:** The ninja has molded a group of thieves who can operate independently, usually used to retrieve things the character wants to possess. Ninja who are more nefarious use their thieves for kidnappings as well. Regardless of the target, the thieves receive 4 dice to roll to accomplish the task, making one check for each of the following stages: planning, execution and getaway. Each stage takes at least a day to complete. The GM chooses a Difficulty based on the subject being accessed or stolen. It may only be a Simple (1) to gather standard materials for the ninja because they are too lazy to do it themselves, but it may be Legendary (5) to kidnap a paranoid nobleman's child from a well-guarded estate. All three checks share the same Difficulty, and a failure at any stage spells trouble for the operation. The ninja rolls a Persuasion + Stealth check when making their request, with each success giving the thieves +1 die that can be added to any of the three checks.
- ◆ **Level Two:** Their thieves become much more accomplished, able to take on much more difficult tasks. Their dice pool raises to 5 dice.
- ◆ **Level Three:** The group of thieves have become great at their job, especially one aspect of it. Their dice pool raises to 6 dice, and they may pick one stage of the heist (planning, execution or getaway) that the group automatically succeeds at.

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PORTENTS

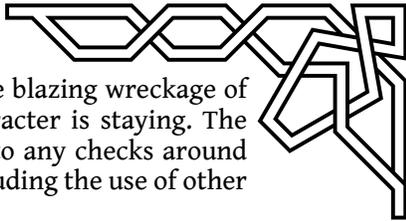
The study of portents requires study of traditional myths and superstitions and the knowledge that there is often greater truth deeply buried in those tales. Whereas many may write off a broken mirror or teacup, a student of Portents will see a promise may have been broken or a great deception taking place. A puddle of water in the road on an otherwise dry and cool night may mean the presence of a malevolent spirit or rival ninja. Through observation, study and meditation, A master of portents is an expert at sensing and interpreting these signs. Ninja who understand portents are always on the lookout for signs of the supernatural or strong ki disturbances, sometimes accused of looking for omens where there are none. Practitioners can seemingly predict events, guess an outcome or even see the future. Masters of this discipline can even see beyond the physical realm, interpreting dreams and receiving messages from ancestor spirits.

THE STUDY OF PORTENTS

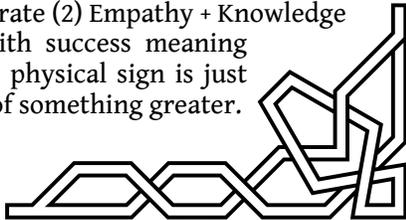
- ◆ **Level One:** The character learns Sense Ki and either Dream Reading or Divination. The ninja is fully versed in superstitions, religions and mythology, gaining a +1 bonus to related Knowledge checks about omens or superstitions per Level.
- ◆ **Level Two:** At this level, the ninja is able to better interpret variations in ki patterns. They learn Read Ki and the ability they did not select previously in Level One.
- ◆ **Level Three:** The ninja is a master of Portents and is granted either Ancestral Guidance or Dream Walker.

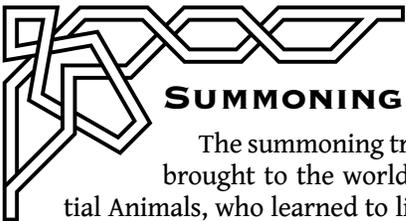
PORTENTS ABILITIES

- ◆ **Ancestral Guidance:** They communicate with the spiritual realm, hoping to gain insight into the result of a course of action. This ability occurs spontaneously (GM decides how and what to reveal), instantly giving the ninja a flash of a future event. The ninja then knows the most likely result of their choice. When this occurs, the ninja only has the vision of the result, but not of any events between the present time and when it occurs. The ninja can simply try to actively avoid the potential outcome, but actions taken to directly make the vision occur, feeding into fate, receive a +2 bonus.
- ◆ **Divination:** By reading tea leaves, tossing animal bones, throwing stone dice or observing how water flows over a particular stone, the ninja can see potential moments in the future. Upon using one of these methods, the ninja may ask a direct question aloud and make a Moderate (2) Empathy + Intuition check. This Difficulty increases depending on how specific the question is or how much they wish revealed. A Moderate (2) check may reveal a face and a sense of dread, but a Challenging (4) check might reveal that



the person is fleeing the blazing wreckage of the inn where the character is staying. The ninja gains a +1 bonus to any checks around the foreseen event, including the use of other Portents abilities.

- ◆ **Dream Reading:** The ninja may interpret their own dreams or some else's dictated to them, and understand the symbolism. A successful Tough (3) Discipline + Knowledge check or the consumption of a Lucidity potion (pg. 75) ensures the ninja can fully remember the details of their own dreams. Interpretation is a Moderate (2) Empathy + Intuition check, increased to Tough (3) for others' dreams. Imagery in dreams can represent people, clans, places and actions affecting them and the GM should use this as part of the narrative. If they give advice based on their interpretations, the subject gains a +1 bonus to related checks for a number of days equal to their Level.
 - ◆ **Dream Walker:** The ninja can fall asleep and enter the dreams of another. While in the dream, they are fully aware of the original dreamer and can communicate with them as if they were standing next to each other. The dreamer is not aware of the ninja unless deliberate communication is made, so this can also be used to simply stalk the target's dreams to learn their goals, desires and secrets. Doing so grants the ninja a +1 bonus for future social checks against the target for a number of days equal to their Level. The ninja also remembers every detail of the dream and reduces the Difficulty of any interpretation checks by 2. They can even attack the dreamer, with Battle being resolved normally between the ninja and the target's dream self. The Dream Walker gains +1 Fighting and Marksman while in the dream and has +1 Health and +2 Psyche. Any damage done to the target is classified as mental damage.
 - ◆ **Read Ki:** They can now sense, see and recognize unique ki patterns of others up to one mile away per Rank. It also tells the ninja how much and what type of ki a person or object has. This can be used to track one or more specific individuals through a crowd or locate someone in a compound. Maintaining focus while tracking requires a Tough (3) Discipline + Empathy check, but Difficulty increases by +1 for each additional individual the ninja is trying to focus on and track.
 - ◆ **Sense Ki:** The ninja can detect ki disturbances in the physical world. This can be anything from the location of a trap, a hidden door, a lost key or (more importantly) signs of the supernatural. The ninja is immune to ambush and gains a +1 bonus to all checks involving detecting and avoiding traps. If actively looking for a disruption, a Moderate (2) Empathy + Knowledge check can be made, with success meaning they know whether the physical sign is just a coincidence or a sign of something greater.
- 



SUMMONING

The summoning tradition has long existed. This brought to the world magical beasts called Celestial Animals, who learned to live among humans and make pacts with certain ninja who share their values. Ninja who may call on their animal-friends for assistance are called Summoners.

Pacts are often generational and handed down from teacher to student, and many are deeply protected by certain clans. Students begin with introductions with the bonded beast to see if they hit it off, not that things always go smoothly. This is crucial since the beast will one day continue the tradition by bringing along their offspring to form new pacts. There are certain Celestial Animals within the Izou Army, enslaved by the Golden Lions and used for nefarious means. The ninja, however, despise these practices and often go out of their way to liberate these creatures.

Forming a pact is never a capricious act. The process requires reverence for the ritual and mutual respect between Summoner and Celestial Animal, as their souls become bound. The animal family then forever chooses the character as a member and friend, and they sign, with blood, the Scroll of Summoners, an ancient document that mystically allows travel between the two worlds. Signers have an opportunity to read the names of those who came before them, seeing parents, teachers and legendary heroes next to their own.

When called upon, the creature directly arrives at the Summoner's location. The Celestial Animal isn't required to do the ninja's bidding, but most Summoners learn the proper etiquette for addressing and making requests. A little respect goes a long way for these honored creatures.

BECOMING A SUMMONER

After undergoing basic training, including history, traditions and etiquette, the character is now a Summoner. Their reputation with the animal family has a basis in both their Rank (pg. 92) and their Summoner level. The longer a ninja is a Summoner and the more powerful they become, the more influence they hold with their Celestial Animals. Level One is available to all ninja, but it requires Rank 3 to reach Level Two and Rank 5 to reach Level Three.

LEVEL ONE

◆ **Rank 1 - Associate:** The character bonds to a single animal family and may summon a Minor Animal of that family. In addition to the animal being there to fight beside the ninja, the character also gains a +1 bonus to the animal family's associated Skill, and while in their presence, suffers from their unique Trigger as well.

◆ **Rank 2 - Companion:** The Summoner and their animal family consider each other trusted companions. The ninja may summon a Major An-

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imal of that family to aid them, for a price. The player should pick a name for the Major Animal and write it in as an Ally. Depending on the circumstances surrounding their summoning, the Major Animal may ask for a favor later on.

LEVEL TWO

◆ **Rank 3 - Friend:** The Summoner is considered a friend whose reputation is becoming well known. The ninja can form a bond with a second animal family, but treat as if the ninja has Rank -1. **Note:** Celestial Animals from different realms don't always get along with each other.

◆ **Rank 4 - Kin:** They are considered to be almost family by their bonded animal family. The ninja can now summon Greater Animals. Unfortunately, Greater Animals aren't known for enjoying the summoning process and are often resistant. The player picks a name for the Greater Animal and adds it as a Rival, marking Owe a Favor on the character sheet. The character can only ever have one Greater Animal as a Contact at any given time, as they are also very jealous.

LEVEL THREE

◆ **Rank 5 - Blood:** The connection between the Summoner and Celestial Animals is at its purest. This grants the ninja the ability to spend 2 Yin and 2 Yang to instantly teleport to the Celestial Realm of their primary animal family. Entire adventures can take place in these fantastical worlds. Additionally, the ninja is able to form a bond with a third animal family, treated as if the ninja has Rank -1.

SUMMON ACTIVATION

A Summoner has constant access to Minor Animals they have bonds to without cost or a check, though extenuating circumstances may lead to the animal refusing to be called. If at any time the Summoner needs the animal but the animal refuses to come, they can spend 1 ki (either type) in order to call it immediately. This may cause a bit of agitation, so Summoners rarely do this, relegating it to only extreme situations.

Summoning a Major Animal requires more effort on the part of the ninja. The Summoner takes 1 physical and 1 mental damage, and then makes a Moderate (2) Empathy + Persuade check. The Major Animal can stick around for the Scene or until its task is completed. Summoners who share an Element with their animal family receive a +1 bonus to all summoning checks regarding that family. Likewise, this strong connection is something that often draws Celestial Animals to a certain ninja in the first place.

Greater Animals require a much greater expenditure of strength, energy and concentration to summon and keep

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in this realm. The ninja suffers either 2 physical or 2 mental damage, and then makes a Tough (3) Empathy + Persuade check, adding their Summoner level to their check. If the beast refuses to come, this Difficulty raises to Legendary (5), and the character takes a Dazed 1 Condition (whether or not they succeed). If successful, the animal appears, but won't be happy about it. Once called, the Greater Animal stays for a number of minutes equal to the ninja's Rank, but if the ninja takes 1 physical and 1 mental damage they may extend that stay to a Battle or a Scene. If at any time the animal's Health drops to 0, the Summoner suffers -2 penalty to future Summoning checks with that animal family until they make amends. These penalties are cumulative each time this occurs until summoning becomes almost impossible.

Mechanics for Minor, Major and Greater Animals begins on pg. 167.

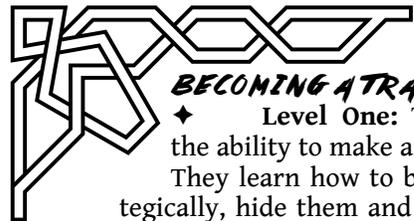
TRAP MASTER

Ninja have become accustomed to building and using traps through the years, but knowledge of traps is ever more important during the Ninja Crusade. Traps let characters protect an area or hinder an enemy without having to get their hands dirty. There are many traps set up in off-limits areas or on the invisible borders that separate clan territories, but Trap Masters have directed their more recent efforts at the common Imperial enemy since forming the Lotus Coalition.

MAKING AND HIDING TRAPS

To create a trap, the character needs two things: proper materials and time. If proper materials are available and the ninja has time to build the trap, they make a Tough (3) Crafts + Knowledge check. If the character has one but not the other, the quality of the trap may suffer and the Difficulty increases to a Moderate (4). If neither of these is available, then making a trap becomes extremely difficult, but still possible for a Trap Master, requiring a successful Legendary (5) check.

Placing and concealing a trap requires a successful Stealth + Knowledge check, with successes setting the Difficulty for others to detect it. If a trap is triggered, the victim must succeed at an Athletics + Speed check to get out of the way. The Difficulty of this check begins at a Simple (1) check, but increases by a number equal to the margin between the ninja's Stealth check and the victim's Perception check. For instance, if the ninja got 4 successes to hide their trap and the victim got two successes when trying to detect it, then their difficulty to actually avoid the trap is Tough (3).



BECOMING A TRAP MASTER

- ◆ **Level One:** This Level grants access to the ability to make any of the listed trap designs. They learn how to build traps, place them strategically, hide them and disarm traps they find, but are better at some aspects than others. The players choose two types of traps and reduce the Difficulties to create those types by 1.
- ◆ **Level Two:** At this Level, the character is even more adept at trap making and concealing. Choose two more types to again reduce the Difficulties by 1 (can even be the same types from Level One) and the Trap Master always gets 1 automatic success when hiding their traps.
- ◆ **Level Three:** All Trap Types reduce their Difficulties by 1 (in addition to any previous reductions), the ninja gets 2 automatic success to conceal (instead of 1) and the ninja can now craft Ki Traps.

TRAP TYPES

- ◆ **Attack Traps:** The victim of this trap springs an attack, such as poison darts, kunai, swinging blades, a gout of fire, shuriken or spears that rise from the ground to stop horses or impale infantry. Depending on the complexity of the trap and the type of weapons used, it may deal between 1-5 damage.
- ◆ **Capture Traps:** The victim is captured by the trap, such as a pit trap, a falling cage, a snare that catches one of the victim's limbs and suspends them from a branch or any other methods of capture. Victims are not only caught, but suffer a Confused 1 Condition.
- ◆ **Explosion Traps:** Trap Masters have access to volatile, explosive gunpowder. Some ninja even augment these traps with jutsu to make larger or more damaging explosions with minimal expenditure of gunpowder. If tripped, the victim suffers 5 damage, is knocked down and gains a Burned 1 Condition.
- ◆ **Immobilize Traps:** If tripped, this trap releases sleep gas or some kind of binding to restrict the victim's movement. The victim suffers a Slowed 1 Condition and then must either make a check against the alchemical concoction used in the trap or (if bound) must make a Tough (3) Might + Survival check to free oneself.
- ◆ **Ki Traps (+X ki cost):** At Level 3, the character can use jutsu as traps to create or add a variety of effects. One ninja could create a quicksand effect if a victim steps on a stone entryway, while another could create a fiery explosion or blinding flash when a trap is triggered. Activating the jutsu requires a +X ki to imbue the trap with the requisite energy. If adding the ki effect to another trap type, like an Attack trap, the Trap Master must increase the Difficulty of the creation check by 1. The trap may lay dormant for X number of days until it is triggered or a specific condition is met. After

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the trap is used, it must be set again just like mundane traps. GMs should use discretion when allowing anything other than attack-type jutsu, as other types may not be suitable for this purpose.

- ◆ **Knockdown Traps:** These traps are particularly dangerous since they not only cause an impact and damage, but knocks down the victim as well. This includes traps like swinging logs or snares attached to rubber trees or green bamboo. If triggered, the trap knocks the victim down, knocks them backwards up to a distance equal to the ninja's (Crafts + Intuition) x 5ft, causes 3 damage and creates a Light (1) Condition of one of the following: Bruised, Broken or Dazed.

STEP SEVEN: SKY

After training at the Temple, the character looks to the sky. Normal men and woman are bound by the earth's pull, but those who are masters of their body, of the ki that flows through everything on Earth, can release themselves from the laws of the world. With this ability, they become ninja of limitless possibilities.

Expressions of ki are at the core of any ninja's arsenal. Jutsu, as they are called, are the reason they are hunted by the Empire, the reason shadow wars have existed between ninja and the very thing that helps them survive.

CHOOSING JUTSU

Players receive six (6) points to spend on jutsu from up to three different Ways. A Basic jutsu costs 1 point, a Median jutsu costs 2 points and an Advanced jutsu costs 3 points. At least one of their selected jutsu must be from their clan's favored jutsu. The character also gains the Training and Backfire effects for any Way from where they select jutsu. Any character can select jutsu from Elemental and General lists, but they can only choose Clan-Specific jutsu if the character hails from that clan. The exception to this is the Ronin, who can select any jutsu from any Way, but only receive 4 points to spend on jutsu during character creation.

Note: Expanded rules for jutsu selection, activation and resistance are in Chapter Four (pg. 103).

ELEMENTAL	GENERAL
Way of Earth, pg. 105	Way of Beasts pg. 111
Way of Fire, pg. 106	Way of Movement pg. 112
Way of Metal pg. 108	Way of Survival pg. 114
Way of Water pg. 109	Way of the Unseen pg. 115
Way of Wood pg. 110	Way of the Warrior pg. 116

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CLAN-SPECIFIC JUTSU

Way of Balancing Scales, pg. 118	Way of the Immaculate Show, pg. 125
Way of Caring Hands, pg. 119	Way of Inked Skin, pg. 127
Way of Ebony Clutches, pg. 121	Way of Kept Lore, pg. 128
Way of Great Serpents, pg. 122	Way of Spun Threads, pg. 129
Way of Heaven's Judgement, pg. 124	Way of Twin Beasts, pg. 130

SKILL NAME	COMMON SPECIALTIES
Athletics	Climbing, Balance, Jumping, Landings
Crafts	Sculpting, Steam, Cooking, Sabotage
Deception	White Lies, Misdirection, Exaggeration
Discipline	Concentration, vs. Fear, Meditation
Empathy	Spotting Lies, Specific Emotion (Anger, Sadness, etc), Hiding Emotions
Fighting	Blocking, Sweeps, Swords, Staves
Fortitude	vs. Poison/Drugs, Staying Awake
Holistics	Diagnosis, Surgery, Side effects
Intimidation	Stare down, Interrogation, Subtle threats
Intuition	Gambling, Flip a coin, Educated Guesses
Knowledge	Agriculture, Street Smarts, History, Geography
Marksman	Firearms, Bow, Thrown Weapons
Might	Strong Grip, Grappling, Pushing, Pulling
Perception	Specific sense (Sight, Hearing, etc.), Search, Resist Pick-pocketing
Perform	Acting, Singing, Dancing, Instrument
Persuade	Seduction, Oratory, Leadership
Speed	Travel time, Racing the clock, Quick Thinking
Stealth	Shadowing, Hiding in Crowds, Hiding in Shadows
Survival	Tracking, Foraging, Navigation, Terrain Type (desert, jungle, urban, etc.)
Travel	Horses, Unique Steeds, Wagons, Ships, Sharp Turns, Spotting a Tail

SKILLS

As the player takes their character through the life path-style character creation system, each stage provides certain Skills to reflect the lessons they've learned. There are 20 Skills in total, each with their own uses and Specialties that answer questions about the character, including how charming a character is (Persuade), how stealthily they can operate (Stealth) or even how good they are with a bow (Marksman). Each Skill has certain combos it gravitates to, but GMs and players are encouraged to come up with new combos on the fly. For rules on how to use Skills, see pg. 133. Skills are rated 0-5, roughly equating to the following:

Level 0 - Clueless
Level 1 - Novice
Level 2 - Practiced
Level 3 - Expert
Level 4 - Veteran
Level 5 - Master

It should be noted that using Skill points from Step Six: Temple or XP to raise a Skill to Level 5 costs double, as this represents a true mastering of the Skill. However, if the character reaches Level 5 from their selections through Steps One to Five (each selection giving +1 Level), then it proves that living a devoted life can be a reward in itself. The character keeps this Level 5 without any additional cost.

SKILL LIST

ATHLETICS

The Skill of physical prowess. Ninja use Athletics to run, jump and climb. Athletics commonly forms combos with:

- ◆ +Might to lift heavy objects or win contests of strength.
- ◆ +Perform to roll and tumble acrobatically.
- ◆ +Speed to dodge attacks or outrun an opponent.

Failing an Athletics check could mean the ninja did not achieve the physical feat they attempted, but could also mean something else:

- ◆ Become exhausted (suffer a -1 Athletics until the ninja can eat and rest).
- ◆ Suffer 1 physical damage or mental damage.
- ◆ Suffer a Pain 1 Condition (pg. 152).

On a Critical Failure the ninja doesn't achieve the attempted feat, and must choose: The ninja is injured (unable to combo with Athletics until healed with Holistics) or the feat is blocked, and cannot be attempted again until conditions change.



Common or useful Boosts include:

- ◆ **Heightened Effect:** The ninja gains a free Sprint/Rush or Find Cover.
- ◆ **Style:** An opponent is so shocked by the amazing feat they lose -2 initiative.
- ◆ **Streak Bonus:** Gain momentum for attacks, dodges or movement.

CRAFTS

The Skill of forge and hammer, as well as the brush and quill. Ninja use Crafts to make goods, smith weapons and armor, create works of art or repair damaged items. Crafts commonly forms combos with:

- ◆ +Deception to create disguises that stand up to scrutiny.
- ◆ +Fighting to forge weapons.
- ◆ +Perform to impress nobles with intricate calligraphy

Failing a Crafts check costs the ninja time or materials, whichever they have less of. If the ninja has an abundance of both (or neither), the item appears complete but has a hidden flaw instead (choose below):

- ◆ One of the item's properties (such as damage or armor) decreases by 1.
- ◆ One Quality doesn't work at all.
- ◆ Failure with the item becomes a Critical

Failure instead.

On a Critical Failure, all available time and materials are used and the ninja must choose: the resulting item is completely useless, or the item is created with a fatal flaw and it is destroyed when a check fails.

Common or useful Boosts include:

- ◆ **Additional Targets:** The ninja makes two items instead of one.
- ◆ **Heightened Effect:** The item is a masterwork. It gains the Master-Crafted Quality.
- ◆ **Style:** The item is aesthetically amazing and worth five times as much as normal.

DECEPTION

The Skill of sincerity and lies. Ninja use Deception to confuse opponents, create plausible cover stories and convince people they are telling the truth. Deception commonly forms combos with:

- ◆ +Discipline to feign being unconscious or dead.
- ◆ +Empathy to tell if someone may be lying.
- ◆ +Perform to pretend to be someone else convincingly.

Failing a Deception check doesn't mean it's an obvious lie, but usually makes the target suspicious of the ninja's true intent. Alternatively, the ninja may appear sincere,

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but suffer other consequences:

- ◆ Target believes the ninja, but interprets the lie in the most inconvenient possible way.
- ◆ The ninja leaves a clue, and it is only a matter of time before the lie will collapse and incriminate them.
- ◆ The ninja tells two different lies to different people. If they compare notes, the ninja will be trapped.

On a Critical Failure the target clearly suspects the ninja's actual motive and the player must choose: the ninja is directly caught lying in front of others (increasing suspicion and Difficulties) or the ninja reveals too much of the truth as part of the lie (the ninja must truthfully answer a question from the target).

Common or useful Boosts include:

- ◆ **Heightened Effect:** A coincidence backs up the ninja's lie with circumstantial evidence.
- ◆ **Style:** Suspicion is transferred onto one of the ninja's opponents.
- ◆ **Streak Bonus:** The ninja has earned the target's trust for future interaction.

DISCIPLINE

The Skill of patience, meditation and willpower. Ninja use Discipline to resist pain, emotions and exert absolute control over their bodies. Discipline affects the ninja's starting Psyche, and commonly forms combos with:

- ◆ +Empathy to resist fear.
- ◆ +Fortitude to suffer pain without screaming.
- ◆ +Stealth to remain motionless in a difficult hiding place.

Failing a Discipline check usually means the ninja gives up on the method chosen for the check, and must try something different. Alternatively, the ninja can keep trying at a cost:

- ◆ Procrastinate the task in favor of doing something fun. The ninja may retry the same method after a day or after being caught by a superior.
- ◆ Whine constantly, drawing a cumulative -1 penalty on any social or Stealth checks for the remainder of the Scene.
- ◆ They get overemotional and suffer 1 mental damage.

On a Critical Failure, the ninja must give up on the method and choose: fall asleep or lose 1 ki instantly.

Common or useful Boosts include:

- ◆ **Heightened Effect:** Eliminate any pain affecting the ninja (page 152).
- ◆ **Streak Bonus:** Perfect technique applies the bonus to any check, not just a Discipline combo.
- ◆ **Style:** The ninja's perfect control impresses foes as well as friends.

EMPATHY

The Skill of emotional understanding. Ninja use Empathy to discern lies, understand a target's true desires and console distressed allies. Empathy commonly forms combos with:

- ◆ +Holistics to heal mental damage.
- ◆ +Perception to determine the target's emotional state.
- ◆ +Persuade to approach a negotiation from a place of understanding.

Failing an Empathy check usually means the ninja doesn't understand the target's emotions. Alternatively, the ninja could still gain understanding at the cost of other consequences:

- ◆ A negative reaction to the ninja due to their carelessness.
- ◆ An awkward revelation of the ninja's own true feelings.
- ◆ The target's feelings change suddenly without the ninja noticing.

A Critical Failure means the ninja senses nothing from the target and must choose: become embroiled in a loud, emotional argument with the target or become too sympathetic to the target and suffer a penalty on any contest against them until their emotional state changes.

Common or useful Boosts include:

- ◆ **Additional Targets:** Read a room or organization to see who is really in charge.
- ◆ **Bonus Info:** Learn who or what the target cares the most about.
- ◆ **Heightened Effect:** Predict the target's next action accurately and gain a bonus on any check to counter it.

FIGHTING

The Skill of close combat, with or without weapons. Ninja use Fighting to strike with fists and feet, grapple opponents and master deadly weaponry. This Skill commonly forms combos with:

- ◆ +Deception to Feint (pg. 142).
- ◆ +Knowledge to analyze an opponent's fighting or weapon style.
- ◆ +Stealth to make a sneak attack while hidden.

Failing a Fighting check in battle usually means a miss, but alternatively the ninja could still deal damage and suffer another consequence:

- ◆ Lose their weapon.
- ◆ Suffer a free counterattack from the opponent.
- ◆ Reveal a weakness (grant all opponents a Streak Bonus).

On a Critical Failure, the ninja misses the attack and must choose: become open to attacks (suffer a -1 penalty on all Defenses for the Round) or become too defensive (all damage reduced by 1 for the

Round, but they cannot attack).

Common or useful Boosts include:

◆ **Bonus Damage:** Gain +1 damage to the attack.

- ◆ **Bonus Info:** Identify the target's clan or master by their fighting style.
- ◆ **Streak Bonus:** The ninja gains the upper hand against the opponent.

FORTITUDE

The Skill of physical endurance. Ninja use Fortitude to resist exhaustion, poisons and sicknesses, and the effects of extreme climates. Fortitude affects the ninja's starting Health, and commonly forms combos with:

- ◆ +Athletics to avoid becoming exhausted after extended activity.
- ◆ +Holistics to heal oneself from physical damage or illness.
- ◆ +Survival to resist the effects of hostile environments.

Usually a failed Fortitude check means the ninja cannot finish the task in time (or at all), but alternatively, the ninja could finish, but suffer another consequence:

- ◆ Suffer 1 physical damage.
- ◆ Lose consciousness for 1 Round.
- ◆ Soreness for the next day, suffering a -1 penalty on all Fortitude checks.

On a Critical Failure, the ninja suffers 1 physical damage and must choose: immediately fall unconscious or fall ill (suffer a -1 penalty until the ninja gets bedrest and attention from Holistics).

Common or useful Boosts include:

- ◆ **Streak Bonus:** The ninja gets a second wind.
- ◆ **Style:** Enemies and allies are impressed by the ninja's endurance and physique.
- ◆ **Time Crunch:** Get the job done in half the time, or absorb a failure consequence from someone else working on the same task.

HOLISTICS

The Skill of the medicinal arts. Ninja use Holistics to heal damage and reduce Conditions (pg. 153), create potions and poultices and deal with deadly poisons. Holistics commonly forms combos with:

- ◆ +Crafts to make potions and elixirs to aid healing.
- ◆ +Fight to apply poisons during a battle.
- ◆ +Knowledge to identify injuries and diseases.

Failing a Holistics check usually costs time without improving the target's condition, and prevents another attempt for one day. Alternatively, the ben-

NEGOTIATING COMBOS AND CONSEQUENCES

Common Skill combos and consequences listed with each write-up are just suggestions. Describing how the character is attempting to perform a Skill should suggest the two most relevant Skills based on that description. A combo that makes sense for one situation may not work for another, and the Difficulty may be different based on the methods chosen. On a failed check, the consequences could be drawn from whichever Skill makes the most sense or completely unique to the situation. Players can negotiate consequences with the GM, especially if they have a cool idea that fits the situation. When in doubt, the GM can give a choice between two appropriate consequences, but those choices do not need to be equal.

efit can occur at a cost:

- ◆ Expend healing materials, which must be replaced.
- ◆ The target loses consciousness.
- ◆ The target suffers an infection and the Difficulty for all healing checks increase by +1.

On a Critical Failure, the target may not be assisted again for another day and the ninja must choose: rare materials are used with no effect at all, or the effect of treatment is the opposite of what was desired.

Common or useful Boosts include:

- ◆ **Additional Targets:** Spread healing effects among multiple allies.
- ◆ **Bonus Damage:** If crafting a poison, it is especially toxic and deals +1 damage.
- ◆ **Heightened Effect:** Heal both Health and Psyche.

INTIMIDATION

The Skill of creating and using fear. Ninja use Intimidation to cow opponents, awe allies and dominate anyone else. Intimidation commonly forms combos with:

- ◆ +Might to physically bully someone.
- ◆ +Persuade to interrogate someone.
- ◆ +Survival to stare down wild animals.

Failing an Intimidation check usually means the target isn't impressed, and is immune to further attempts until circumstances change. Alternatively, they may still cow the target at a cost:

- ◆ The ninja went too far and loses approval from their clan- or squadmates.

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- ◆ The ninja loses control and suffers 1 mental damage.
- ◆ The ninja frightens everyone, and suffers a -1 penalty on social checks that don't combo with Intimidation for the remainder of the Scene.

On a Critical Failure, the target isn't impressed and the ninja must choose: become psyched out (suffer a -1 penalty against that opponent until the opponent suffers a Critical Failure) or suffer an Embarrassed 1 Condition.

Common or useful Boosts include:

- ◆ **Additional Targets:** Other opponents who witness the intimidation must also resist or flee.
- ◆ **Bonus Info:** To appease the ninja, the target shares everything they know.
- ◆ **Heightened Effect:** The target is psyched out or embarrassed as above.

INTUITION

The Skill of instinct and investigation. Ninja use Intuition to guide their actions when their senses fail them. Intuition affects a ninja's Initiative and commonly forms combos with:

- ◆ +Crafts to thump a mechanism to get it working again.
- ◆ +Empathy to beat an opponent at a game of chance.
- ◆ +Marksman to make a wild attack against an unseen foe.

Failing an Intuition check usually forces the ninja to act on an incorrect instinct. Alternatively, the ninja can stop short of acting at a cost:

- ◆ The ninja's act has an unforeseen and unfortunate side effect.
- ◆ The ninja is filled with doubt, and suffers a -1 penalty to all Intuition checks until a Style Boost counters the effect.
- ◆ Fate pays the ninja back. The GM may increase any one check's Difficulty by +1.

On a Critical Failure, the ninja suffers a -2 penalty to Initiative and a doom follows the ninja. The GM can invoke the doom before a check to increase the Difficulty +2

Common or useful Boosts include:

- ◆ **Bonus Info:** The ninja gains insight about what the target will do next and why.
- ◆ **Style:** They are obviously lucky, possibly favored by fate.
- ◆ **Time Crunch:** Instinct leads the ninja on the most efficient path possible.

KNOWLEDGE

The Skill of knowledge and learning. Ninja use Knowledge to recall historical and geographical facts, analyze evidence and accurately solve complex calculations. Knowledge commonly forms combos with:

- ◆ +Crafts to identify a rare item and its unique history.

- ◆ +Discipline to remember subtle details from experience, books or scrolls.
- ◆ +Travel to plot how long a trip will take or predict potential dangers to prepare for.

Failing a Knowledge check usually means the ninja has no helpful information. Alternatively, the ninja might know something at the cost of another consequence:

- ◆ What the ninja knows is a mixture of truth and dangerous misinformation, but which is which?
- ◆ The ninja needs outside stimulus to remember, such as being drunk, seeing a particular image or hearing a key word.
- ◆ In time, the ninja can find the information if they have access to a library.

On a Critical Failure, the ninja has no relevant information and must choose: the ninja becomes obsessed with trying to remember the information (suffer a -1 penalty until a Bonus Info Boost suddenly brings the answer to mind) or the ninja may not combo with Knowledge again until they spend a Scene resting.

Common or useful Boosts include:

- ◆ **Bonus Damage:** Know a weakness in the target's style, and gain +1 damage against that target each Round they use analyzed style.
- ◆ **Bonus Info:** There is no limit to what the ninja may know or be able to find out about the subject.
- ◆ **Streak Bonus:** They have studied extensively.

MARKSMAN

The Skill of bows, firearms and thrown weapons. Ninja use Marksman to aim weapons precisely or throw objects with accuracy and power. Marksman commonly forms combos with:

- ◆ +Athletics to attack with thrown weapons.
- ◆ +Crafts to make/repair ranged weapons.
- ◆ +Perception to spot a target's vulnerable spot.

Failing a Marksman check in Battle usually means a miss, but alternatively, the ninja could still deal damage and then suffer a consequence:

- ◆ An engaged opponent hits the ninja with a weapon attack without using an action
- ◆ Further ranged attacks are impossible until the ninja changes position
- ◆ Their weapon is damaged, and takes on the Fragile Quality (pg. 146).

On a Critical Failure, the ninja misses the shot and must choose: Strike an ally with an errant shot, or the ninja is out of arrows and may only fire again when an arrow is recovered from a defeated foe (or caught).

Especially useful Boosts include:

◆ **Additional Targets:** The ninja's attack penetrates the original target and strikes someone behind them for half damage.

- ◆ **Bonus Damage:** In place of dealing extra damage, the arrow strikes a leg and causes an Injured 1 Condition.
- ◆ **Heightened Effect:** The arrow may not be deflected or caught, only Dodged.

MIGHT

The Skill of physical strength. Ninja use Might to lift heavy objects and overpower foes. Might commonly forms combos with:

- ◆ +Fighting for grappling and throwing.
- ◆ +Fortitude to do manual labor. Even ninja occasionally have to dig a ditch.
- ◆ +Travel to carry heavy loads on long journeys

Failing a Might check usually indicates the ninja cannot move the target. Alternatively, the ninja could summon the power to lift something at a cost:

- ◆ Directly after the feat of strength, the ninja suffers a Knockout 1 Condition.
- ◆ The object being moved is damaged or becomes unusable.
- ◆ The ninja is trapped in place (no movement or Defens-

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es) until pressure is no longer being exerted on them.

On a Critical Failure, the ninja cannot affect the target and must choose: reduce damage by 1 until the ninja can eat and rest, or sprain a muscle (suffer a -1 penalty on Might combos for a day).

Common or useful Boosts include:

- ◆ **Bonus Damage:** Deal +1 damage to a grappled target.
- ◆ **Heightened Effect:** The ninja can lift an object double their normal load.
- ◆ **Streak Bonus:** The ninja gains leverage.

PERCEPTION

The Skill of noticing nuance and detail. Ninja use Perception to detect enemies, remain alert and find subtle clues. Perception commonly forms combos with:

- ◆ +Discipline to make a thorough, methodical search.
- ◆ +Intuition to find clues or detect imminent danger.
- ◆ +Survival to notice hazardous environmental conditions.

Failing a Perception check usually means the ninja misses an important detail. Alternatively, the ninja still learns the information at an extra cost:

- ◆ Lost time (if time is important).
- ◆ Encounter danger (find something the hard way).



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- ◆ The ninja is too obvious; opponents are aware both of what the ninja has detected and that the ninja spotted it.

On a Critical Failure, the ninja receives random irrelevant information and must choose: suffer a Confused 1 Condition, suffer a -2 penalty to Initiative in the next battle or trigger the most dangerous nearby hazard.

Common or useful Boosts include:

- ◆ **Bonus Info:** Spot the least difficult method for completing a task.
- ◆ **Heightened Effect:** Increase the ninja's Initiative by +2 next Round.
- ◆ **Streak Bonus:** The ninja spots a weakness; could provide a bonus to any check, not just +Perception.

PERFORM

The Skill of public spectacle. Ninja use Perform to enact complex rituals, impress bystanders with flashy moves and entertain an audience. Perform commonly forms combos with:

- ◆ +Crafts to play a musical instrument.
- ◆ +Intimidation to panic a crowd.
- ◆ +Persuade to sway a crowd with a speech.

Failing a Performance check has a consequence, whichever is least convenient:

- ◆ The audience becomes disgruntled or possibly leaves.
- ◆ The ninja fails to execute a crucial technique, ruining the performance.
- ◆ The ninja attracts the wrong kind of attention.

On a Critical Failure, the ninja suffers an Embarrassed 1 Condition and must choose: suffer 1 physical or 1 mental damage, depending on the type of performance being attempted.

Common or useful Boosts include:

- ◆ **Heightened Effect:** The ninja attracts an appreciative audience.
- ◆ **Style:** The target is literally stunned by beauty and suffers a -2 penalty to initiative.
- ◆ **Time Crunch:** The ninja can either satisfy an audience in half the time, or negate a partner's failure consequence.

PERSUADE

The Skill of gentle influence. Ninja use Persuade to negotiate bargains, win over public opinion and subtly get what they want. Persuasion commonly forms combos with:

- ◆ +Deception to seduce someone.
- ◆ +Intimidation to lead impressionable followers.
- ◆ +Knowledge to debate with a compelling argument.

Failing a Persuade check can mean the ninja fails to influence the target or, if appropriate, the target is swayed at the cost of other consequences:

- ◆ A powerful opponent notices the ninja's manipulation.
- ◆ The target becomes obsessed with the ninja, to gain either revenge or show affection at the most inopportune moments.
- ◆ The ninja must offer an equal concession.

On a Critical Failure, the ninja may not use Persuade against the target again until a Style Boost is gained, and they must choose: the target detects the ninja's ploy and goes directly against their wishes, or the ninja offers a concession without gaining anything in return.

Common or useful Boosts include:

- ◆ **Additional Targets:** Neutral audience members who can hear the ninja are also persuaded.
- ◆ **Heightened Effect:** The target is completely convinced and will try to convince others.
- ◆ **Style:** The argument or emotion is so powerful that counter arguments have +1 Difficulty.

SPEED

The Skill of quickness and reflex. Ninja use Speed to strike first, avoid attacks and escape chasing opponents. Speed affects the ninja's Initiative and commonly forms combos with:

- ◆ +Fighting to make a quick jab or to parry an attack.
- ◆ +Stealth to shift from one hiding spot to another while an opponent isn't looking.
- ◆ +Travel to make a journey at a quick pace.

Failing a Speed check usually means the ninja isn't fast enough; the attack hits or an opponent beats them to the punch. The ninja can push to keep pace at a cost:

- ◆ The ninja may not use any Defense (other than Brace) for 1 Round.
- ◆ The ninja stumbles and suffers a -1 penalty to physical checks for the rest of the Scene.
- ◆ The ninja leaves an opening, and a different opponent may make an immediate free attack.

On a Critical Failure, the ninja hesitates and suffers a -2 penalty on their next Initiative, and must choose: suffer 1 damage, or freeze in place (no Sprint/Rush or Retreat actions for 1 Round).

Common or useful Boosts include:

- ◆ **Heightened Effect:** Gain a free Retreat action.
- ◆ **Streak Bonus:** Momentum keeps the ninja one step ahead of danger.
- ◆ **Time Crunch:** Whatever the ninja is doing, they do it in record time.



STEALTH

The Skill of being silent and unseen. Ninja use Stealth to conceal themselves, hide objects or slip past guards. Stealth commonly forms combos

with:

- ◆ +Athletics to silently creep across rooftops without disturbing any tiles.
- ◆ +Deception to make sounds or throw a pebble to draw a guard away.
- ◆ +Intuition to find a suitable hiding place quickly.

Failing a Stealth check doesn't necessarily mean the ninja is captured or seen. Other consequences could include:

- ◆ Opponents become aware someone is sneaking around (increase Difficulties by +1).
- ◆ The ninja is seen as they escape.
- ◆ The ninja is not seen, but their current approach is blocked.

On a critical failure, the ninja is seen and must make a choice: escape without achieving their objective or finish the job, but be captured.

On the other hand, useful Boosts include:

- ◆ **Additional Targets:** The ninja can hide something or someone else, or counter another ninja's failure consequence.
- ◆ **Bonus Info:** Discover a new Stealth approach with lower security or because the ninja overhears important secrets.
- ◆ **Style:** The ninja leaves evidence incriminating someone else for the intrusion.

SURVIVAL

The Skill of thriving in the wilderness. Ninja use Survival to find food and shelter in dangerous environments, identify useful or dangerous plants and avoid natural hazards. Survival commonly forms combos with:

- ◆ +Holistics to milk poisons or antitoxins.
- ◆ +Marksman to hunt game animals and acquire meat.
- ◆ +Perception to notice and follow tracks

Failing a Survival check may cause a Deprived 1 Condition or simply inflict 1 damage from hunger and exposure. Alternatively, the ninja could avoid harm from the environment at an appropriate cost:

- ◆ Lose a valuable piece of equipment.
- ◆ Get overheated or frostbitten (suffer a -1 penalty on all checks until the ninja finds shelter).
- ◆ Draw unwanted attention from wild animals or opponents in the area.

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On a Critical Failure, the ninja suffers 1 damage and must choose: suffer 2 more damage from a disastrous accident or become completely lost (lose time and suffer a Confused 1 Condition until back in civilization).

Common or useful Boosts include:

- ◆ **Bonus Info:** learn about other animals, useful plants or threats in the area.
- ◆ **Heightened Effect:** The ninja finds or builds an excellent shelter.
- ◆ **Style:** Befriend a local creature.

TRAVEL

The Skill of planning and executing great journeys. Ninja use Travel to efficiently move long distances by foot, horse or operate wagons and boats. Travel commonly forms combos with:

- ◆ +Intuition to find a location or a shortcut without a map.
- ◆ +Stealth to avoid unwanted attention during a journey.
- ◆ +Survival to cross dangerous wilderness without incident.

Failing a Travel check costs valuable time. If the ninja has an abundance of time, they can choose an alternative consequence:

- ◆ Unwanted attention; they are spotted going to or from the location.
- ◆ Someone helps the ninja out, but then asks for something in return.
- ◆ The ninja becomes exhausted and must stop their journey earlier than planned.

On a Critical Failure, the ninja arrives at the wrong destination and must choose: either the new destination is very dangerous or the ninja must acquire something (i.e. a map, official papers or boat fare) before resuming their journey.

Common or useful Boosts include:

- ◆ **Bonus Info:** Learn about an entirely new destination or about something happening at the target destination.
- ◆ **Style:** The ninja has comfortable accommodations and reaches the destination well rested, gaining a +1 bonus to the Temple phase of their Journey (pg. 138).
- ◆ **Time Crunch:** Get to the destination in half the time, or compensate for another failure consequence on the same Journey.

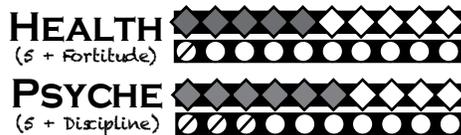
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HEALTH AND PSYCHE

A character can only take so much punishment before being broken, whether physically or mentally. This is represented in *The Ninja Crusade 2nd Edition* by two different damage tracks:

- ◆ **Health:** This displays the character's physical condition and how much of a beating their body can take. Physical damage takes away from Health. Characters begin with (Fortitude +5) Health.
- ◆ **Psyche:** This is the character's mental condition, showing the strength of their mind. Mental damage takes away from Psyche. Characters begin with (Discipline +5) Psyche.

Each damage track has its own section, and is scaled from 1 to 10. Each tracker has two rows, the top showing the maximum Health or Psyche the character possesses, and the bottom row being where the player marks any incoming damage. Damage is recorded with a "/" through one of the bubbles, starting from the left and going to the right. Shown is an example of a character with Health 5 and Psyche 6 who has taken 1 physical damage and 3 mental damage.



HEALING NATURALLY

When passing from one major Scene to another, (minor or connected Scenes should not have an effect) or if a day passes in game time, a character can heal up to $(\text{Fortitude} + \text{Discipline} + 1)/2$ damage from either Track they choose. For example, a character with Fortitude 3 and Discipline 2 could heal up to 3 damage when moving to a new Scene or resting for a day. Conditions (pg. 150) heal at a different rate.

THE ELEMENTAL ROUTE

Elements are what make a character tick. Fulfilling a task related to one's Element is the easiest way to influence the story or how the character can recover Health or Psyche. If they spend a Scene pursuing their elemental Temperament (pg. 49) to blow off steam, they can heal damage again as above. This could be anything from peacefully arranging one's knife collection to wandering a museum in search of mesmerizing art.

KI

Ki, also sometimes called chi, is an invisible energy that resonates through every person, animal or thing in the world. There are two types of ki: Yin and Yang, representing the positive (Yang) and negative (Yin) nature of the universe. Though they are opposites, one is not stronger than the other is and ki could not exist at all without a balance of Yin and Yang.

Yang is the power of life itself, the overwhelming positive force that brings the sun out during the day, allows things to grow and gives the courage to carry on. Yin, on the other hand, represents the opposite forces of Yang, like the fear of one's ultimate death, the still night where the moon hangs overhead and a keen, sharp mind.

Characters begin with three points of ki, determined by their Choices during character creation. Specifically, these values come from their Element (pg. 49), their Tragedy (pg. 57) and their Clan (pg. 64). Otherwise, ki levels only raise when a character reaches a new Rank (pg. 92).

Both Yin and Yang range from 0 to 5, and jutsu need certain ki levels to utilize. Basic Jutsu require at least 1 ki of the corresponding type, while Median Jutsu require at least 2 ki of that type and Advanced Jutsu at least 4 of that type. Techniques known only to true ninja masters have been rumored to require certain levels of both Yin and Yang just to use.

RESTING KI

One's resting ki is the number of ki points they possess when not actively molding. Regardless of how much ki they spend or mold, they always return back to this amount after resting (or between Scenes). This is especially important, as it represents the ki the ninja actually carries with them. Any other ki is drawn in from their environment and combined with their spirit to formulate their jutsu. A ninja's beginning Yang and Yin can tell the player a number of things about the character and their ability to use certain jutsu on the fly.

MOLDING KI

Molding ki takes only moments outside of combat, usually with a mixture of breathing and focusing hand motions. The display is quite obvious, as energy swirls around the ninja, so strategic molding is advised. Once molded, ki remains useable by the ninja for approximately 30 minutes before it returns to its natural state of being (their resting ki levels). This means, few ninja walk around all day with the maximum 10 points of ki. It's just not practical. However, molding ki during a Battle is costly, so it is a delicate balancing act of strategy and luck.

Some believe ki is infinite, but nothing could be farther from the truth. In many cases, environments have a limited amount of ki that can be

RANK

A ninja's rank is more than just their collective experience. It is a representation of the path they've walked until now. Ninja exist in the night, in silence, and thus their Rank displays this proudly. Most ninja are more than happy to reveal their Rank tattoo to an opponent just to strike fear in them.

A character who has only recently begun their career with 0 XP begins at Rank 1. With every 50 XP they gain, they raise to another Rank. Rank is the only way a character increases their resting ki and gains more Dynamic Actions. It is suggested that all players' characters begin at the same Rank to help with balance. Higher-ranking ninja receive a +1 bonus to Intimidation against lower-ranking ninja for each step they are greater. For instance, an Emerald Moon (Rank 3) would have +2 Intimidation against an Emerald Star (Rank 1).

- ◆ **Emerald Star (Rank 1):** Beginning ninja receive the rank of Emerald Star. They have trained enough to become full-fledge ninja, but have not spilled enough blood to have moved up the ranks. They begin with ki Balance listed with their Elements, Tragedy and Clan, 1 Dynamic Action every Round for free and may roll 3 dice for more.
- ◆ **Ruby Star (Rank 2):** Having gained the respect of their clan, the ninja has bloodied their star and achieved a Ruby Star Rank. They receive +1 ki of choice, 2 Dynamic Actions every Round and may roll 3 dice for more.
- ◆ **Emerald Moon (Rank 3):** They have grown more important than a mere star, becoming an Emerald Moon. They receive another +1 ki of Choice, 2 Dynamic Actions every Round and may roll 4 dice for more.
- ◆ **Ruby Moon (Rank 4):** The ninja has bloodied their moon, turning it Ruby and mastering the night's landscape. They receive another +1 ki of Choice, 3 Dynamic Actions every Round and may roll 4 dice for more.
- ◆ **Shadow Eye (Rank 5):** Only master ninja achieve this level, forgoing the moon and star entirely to become the night's sky, the Shadow Eye, itself. They receive another +1 ki of Choice, 4 Dynamic Actions every Round and may roll 4 dice for more.

INITIATIVE

Initiative represents the character's reflexes when something bad is occurring around them, whether it be a trap or an ambush. Characters have an Initiative of Intuition + Speed + 3. This is a static number, but can be raised or lowered with Dynamic Actions or other abilities. More Initiative information is on pg. 140.

drawn in any given Scene, depending on the type and abundance of ki lines.

TYPE	ELEMENT	# OF TAPS
At Sea	Water	6
Deserts	Fire	4
City	Metal	6
Forest	Wood	4
Jungle	Wood	6
Mountains	Earth	6
Shoreline	Water	4
Tunnels	Earth	4
Village	Metal	4
Volcano	Fire	6

The above chart depicts how many times an environment can be tapped before it is depleted. Any location near a ki line, flowing energy that travels in lines, can be tapped more often (+2 times), but those far away will have less (-2 times). This makes using Dynamic Actions to increase the amount of ki drawn with a single tap important (Zen Mind, pg. 141). High-ranking ninja often hold so much personal ki that molding is just for emergencies.

If the character's personal Element aligns with the environment in question, they can draw from the environment at least twice per scene, regardless if there are any taps left. For example, if Kino is in a battle against four enemies in a forest and each of them chooses to Mold Ki with their actions, then she may still do the same because her Element is Wood. Any of the characters in the battle with the Wood Element could do so a second time as well without penalty.

SPENDING KI

The active spending of ki is not always necessary in *The Ninja Crusade 2nd Edition*. Some novice ninja go years without needing to actually expend ki, using only the simplest of jutsu. However, ki can be spent in the following ways in a pinch:

- ◆ If the ninja fails a jutsu activation check, they may spend up to (Rank) ki of the corresponding type to add +1 success to their results.
- ◆ 1 ki point (either type) may be used in place of a Dynamic Action. May only be done once per Round.
- ◆ Ignore target's Armor for one attack
- ◆ Half damage from an incoming attack
- ◆ May be given to another ninja with a touch.

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STRENGTH

Strength represents the character's raw power for lifting, pushing or breaking things. Characters have a Strength of Athletics + Might. In times of need, they can make a Strength check to do things above their normal capabilities. More Strength information on pg. 138.

MOVEMENT

Movement is the character's speed at which they travel on foot. Characters have a Movement of Athletics + Speed + 5. This number represents how many feet can be traveled easily within a single Round. More Movement information is on pg. 137.

EXPERIENCE POINTS (XP)

Ninja fight through all manner of adversity and battle truly terrible foes, all in the goal of becoming a stronger person and ninja overall. Some do nothing but train, day in and day out, but physical lessons are not the only kind to be taught by life. Wherever they begin their journey, characters come out the other end with personal growth befitting their experience. A ninja once considered unlucky could have a series of fortunate events happen to them, raising their Intuition. Likewise, another character may begin to better understand their Wartime Role, enhancing their Gift bonus.

A character's growth is measured in Experience Points (XP), also often called Wisdom, given to players for a variety of reasons during a Session or Story. These reasons include good roleplaying and involvement in the story, but also lessons learned and other objectives.

AFTER A GAMING SESSION

When the events of the gaming Session have concluded, the GM and players discuss the events of the evening to figure out who are worthy of achieving Wisdom. Below are five examples, but not all of them will apply for every Session. The average number of XP accrued per session is 3 XP per player, depending on the length and quality of the session. GMs are encouraged to come up with unique criteria if other options work best for their group or even raise or lower the amount of XP players receive, since every gaming group has a different style. For instance, some GMs offer extra XP when players spend time to write expanded background stories for their characters. Another GM may double the XP given if their group doesn't get to-

gether often, but want to continue to improve.

- ◆ **1 point - Those Who Play:** If a player shows up to play, they receive 1 XP. Without them, the game doesn't happen, and they deserve some reward for that.
- ◆ **1 point - Using Triggers:** If the player used their character's Triggers to affect the Session by adding drama, giving the group a way out of a problem or introducing new ones, they should receive 1 XP. See Triggers on pg. 133 for more.
- ◆ **1 point - Taking the Spotlight:** If one character took charge of a situation or was an effective leader during the Session, they receive 1 XP. It's a good idea for the group to vote on which player deserves this honor.
- ◆ **1 point - Memorable Moment:** If a player did something to make the group say something like "That's so awesome!", "Man, dude, what, no, really?" or made the GM speechless from how cool or clever it was, they receive 1 XP. This shouldn't happen every Session, or it loses its flavor.
- ◆ **1 point - Lesson to be Learned:** If the character has learned something from the Session, it is important to award Wisdom for growth, in the form of 1 XP. The GM should go around the table and ask each player "What did your character learn?" It could be anything from "My character will not underestimate a guard ever again" or "My character will never again double-cross Ibiki-sama. He's scary."

AFTER A STORY

At the end of a major story arc (usually several sessions that tell a single story), the character should have earned additional Experience on top of their normal Session XP. After all, they've worked hard to solve some great mystery, defeated a legendary enemy or have gone through huge personal life events to get where they are. This additional Wisdom should range between 1-5 XP, depending on how much danger they were in, how effectively they executed plans and the overall outcome. Awarding more than this often leads to characters who advance too quickly.

SPENDING XP

After players have gained enough Wisdom accumulated from playing, they can spend it to improve aspects of their character's abilities and reflect growth. Any XP spent must be justified through the events happening in the story. For instance, battling one's way through multitudes of Izou soldiers is definitely a reason to raise the character's Fighting Skill, but they cannot enhance their Overconfident Trigger if all their enemies were easy to defeat.



SKILLS

Skills are the core of any character, representing exactly what they can and cannot do and where their talents truly lie. Raising Skills usually requires a healthy amount of time (or downtime). This means a character who sleeps in and shirks their training responsibility shouldn't even think of raising their Athletics Skill. Skill levels cost 6 XP per level for level 1-4 or 10 XP for Level 5.

SPECIALTIES

Specialties (pg. 136) are certain uses of a Skill where a character can gain a +1 bonus. Specialties costs 3 XP, but no skill can have more than 2 Specialties.

GIFTS AND TRIGGERS

When creating a character, players have their pick from several Gifts and Triggers based on their choices through their life path. These are inherent talents the character has, similar to Specialties, or tragic flaws the character can give in to in exchange for Karma and to add drama to a scene. With Experience, a player can raise these traits even further. For 5 XP, they may add a +1 bonus to any Gift (up to +2) or may add +1 to the number of Karma produced by a Trigger (may only be raised once).

MARTIAL TRAINING

Fighting and Weapon Styles are composed of Techniques that range from Level One to Level Three. Characters' lives are often filled to the brim with physical and mental martial arts training and battles, making these easy to justify raising. Learning a new Technique costs 10 XP and can take months to perfect. Enhancing a Technique they already know only costs 7 XP and training time is reduced to weeks instead of months.

CONTACTS

A character's Contacts can shift through the story, as their relationships grow and change over time. Players may add a new Ally for 5 XP or a new Rival for 3 XP. Like with Gifts, they may spend 3 XP to enhance their Ally with a +1 bonus up to two times. If the situation warrants it, they may also change a Rival into an Ally for the cost of 3 XP. This should be organic in its implementation, and these relationships never change if the characters don't engage their Contacts on a regular basis.

JUTSU

The Ways the character knows during creation are assumed to have already been learned by the ninja, for them to not only learn the jutsu, but also the core training that comes along with it. After that, they can continue purchasing jutsu by spending 7 XP for Basic Jutsu, 14 XP for

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Median Jutsu and 20 XP for Advanced Jutsu. If the jutsu is from a new Way, the player must spend +5 XP to reflect them undergoing the core training as well.

Of course, the time required to learn each one should be approximately one week for Basic, one month for Median or anywhere between six months to a year for Advanced. This training time extends by around three months if they are learning from a Way they do not already know.

EXPERIENCE SPENDING CHART

XP EXPENDITURE	COST
Skill Level (Level 1-4)	6 XP
Skill Level (Level 5)	10 XP
New Specialty	3 XP
+1 to Gift	5 XP
+1 Karma from Trigger	5 XP
New Style Technique	10 XP
+1 Level to Style Technique	7 XP
Basic Jutsu	7 XP
Median Jutsu	14 XP
Advanced Jutsu	20 XP
First Jutsu of a Way	+5 XP
New Ally	5 XP
Enhance Ally	3 XP
New Rival	3 XP
Rival to Ally	3 XP

CHANGING CHOICES

When a character reaches a new Rank, used to mark significant character milestones, the player has the option to switch out up to two of their Choices to reflect what is going on in the story. If, for instance, the character has taken less of a Scout role in the Ninja Crusade and wants to become a Foot Soldier, or even if they want to simply switch from an Observer Scout to a Pathfinder Scout, they can do so at this time. However, if they've spent XP to raise the Gift or Trigger for their old Choice, they have lost that XP in the process. The character loses the Gift and Trigger they received from the old Choice and replaces it with the new Choice. Their natural Ki Balance also changes, but their Skills received from prior choices remain the same. XP can be spent to raise other Skills however.





CREATION QUICK REFERENCE



STEP ONE: OCEAN

Choose the character's birth Element, as well as a Temperament that colors the character's personality. Then record Ki Balance, Skills provided, Gift and Trigger.

- ◆ **Earth:** Collector, Indulgent, Linguist or Responsible
- ◆ **Fire:** Confident, Expressionist, Hotheaded or Silver Tongued
- ◆ **Metal:** Authoritative, Honorable, Meticulous or Quiet
- ◆ **Water:** Calm, Devious, Resourceful or Wise
- ◆ **Wood:** Loquacious, Perfectionist, Youthful or Wanderer

STEP TWO: VILLAGE

Choose the job the character performs for society and one Focus for their Profession. Record Skills, Gift and Trigger provided by the Choice.

- ◆ **Artisan:** Artist, Builder or Smith
- ◆ **Dedicant:** Altruist, Monk or Revolutionary
- ◆ **Entertainer:** Actor, Musician or Tumbler
- ◆ **Farmer:** Gardener, Harvester or Herder
- ◆ **Healer:** Counselor, Gekai or Herbalist
- ◆ **Merchant:** Con Artist, Moneylender or Traveler
- ◆ **Noble:** Elder, Kuge or Magistrate
- ◆ **Outsider:** Drifter, Hermit or Untouchable
- ◆ **Scholar:** Historian, Sage or Scribe
- ◆ **Warrior:** Marauder, Sellsword or Soldier

STEP THREE: RIVER

Choose a Tragedy the character fought through. Then choose one Affliction and record Skills, Gift, Trigger and Ki Balance.

- ◆ **Civil Discord:** Conscripted, Favors Owed, Star Crossed or Wanted
- ◆ **Ravaged Body:** Impaired Sense, Runt of the Litter, Slow to Speech or Scarred
- ◆ **Tormented Mind:** Escapist, Hair Trigger, Paranoid or War Wary
- ◆ **Unending Stigma:** Enemy, Former Bandit, Pariah or Singing For Supper
- ◆ **Victim of Circumstance:** Disaster Magnet, Displaced, Plague Survivor or Orphaned

STEP FOUR: FORGE

Choose the position the character has taken during the Ninja Crusade. Then choose one Wartime Role and record provided Skills, Gift and Trigger.

- ◆ **Commander:** Officer, Strategist or Trainer
- ◆ **Communications:** Diplomat, Messenger or Spy

- ◆ **Foot Soldier:** Bowman, Champion or Enforcer
- ◆ **Medic:** Bonesetter, Kusuriya or Savior
- ◆ **Mercenary:** Assailant, Rebel or Trader
- ◆ **Pacifist:** Objector, Recluse or Refugee
- ◆ **Scout:** Observer, Pathfinder or Sleeper
- ◆ **Striker:** Assassin, Gladiator or Raider
- ◆ **Supplier:** Dealer, Hoarder or Steward
- ◆ **Villager:** Custodian, Guardian or Shepherd

STEP FIVE: MOUNTAIN

Choose the character's Clan, followed by recording their Gift, Trigger, Skills, Contacts and Bonds.

- ◆ **Bamboo Herbalists** - Healers and thrill-seekers
- ◆ **Blazing Dancers** - Entertainers and illusionists
- ◆ **Grasping Shadows** - Assassins and thieves
- ◆ **Living Chronicle** - Historians and observers
- ◆ **Pack of the Black Moon** - Ranchers and bumpkins
- ◆ **Recoiling Serpents** - Snakes and survivalists
- ◆ **Virtuous Body Gardeners** - Artists and warriors
- ◆ **Wardens of Equilibrium** - Merchants and monks
- ◆ **Will of Iron** - Judges and sheriffs
- ◆ **Ronin** - Loners and outcasts

STEP SIX: TEMPLE

Players receive 10 Skill points to spend to enhance their character, as well as 2 Specialities of choice. Then they get to select two levels of Martial Training from the following:

FIGHTING STYLES

(each clan gives access to 2 Fighting Styles)

- ◆ **Bear:** Angry Mother Protects the Young, Inescapable Embrace or Thick Skin
- ◆ **Crane:** Healing of the Mother, Patience as Reward or Pushing on Crane Wings
- ◆ **Dragon:** Dragon Whips Tail, Flailing Body or Master of Surroundings
- ◆ **Eagle:** Beating My Wings, Flying into Battle or Raptor Needs to Feed
- ◆ **Horse:** Cannot Be Tamed, Horse Kick or To Run Free
- ◆ **Mantis:** Catching Prey, Mantis Feasts Well or Mantis Stands Steadfast
- ◆ **Monkey:** Baby Monkey Has a Fit, Rolling Attack/Retreat or Vanishing
- ◆ **Snake:** Coil and Strike, Poison Striking or Immunity to Poison
- ◆ **Tiger:** Never Forget a Taste, Tasting Your Own Blood or Tiger Claws
- ◆ **Wildcat:** Flurry of Blows, Lands on Feet or Pounce

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WEAPON STYLES

(available for anyone)

- ◆ **Blunt:** Bone Crusher, Force of Nature or Shatter Weapons
- ◆ **Chain:** Chain Dance, Chain Lightning or Flying Chains
- ◆ **Paired:** Absolute Defense, Unstoppable Attack or Yin and Yang
- ◆ **Ranged:** Blackout the Sun, Firing Blind or Living Missiles
- ◆ **Sharp:** Armor of Baldes, Blade Storm or Splitting Arrows

99 STYLES

(available for anyone)

- ◆ **Alchemy:** Alertness, Dreams, Healing, Mind, Sight or Voice
- ◆ **Master of Spies:** Assassins, Gatherers or Thieves
- ◆ **Portents:** Mastery of omens and sensing ki
- ◆ **Summoning:** Kinship with Celestial Animals - choose one animal type
- ◆ **Trap Mastery:** Expert use of all types of traps

STEP SEVEN: SKY

Choose the jutsu the character has been taught. Players receive 6 points to spend (or 4 points for Ronin), with a cost of 1 point for Basic Jutsu, 2 points for Median Jutsu and 3 points for Advanced Jutsu. Can select from up to three separate Ways to start (their Clan-Specific counts as one of these).

ELEMENTAL GENERAL

Way of Earth, pg. 105	Way of Beasts pg. 111
Way of Fire, pg. 106	Way of Movement pg. 112
Way of Metal pg. 108	Way of Survival pg. 114
Way of Water pg. 109	Way of the Unseen pg. 115
Way of Wood pg. 110	Way of the Warrior pg. 116

CLAN-SPECIFIC JUTSU

Way of Balancing Scales, pg. 118	Way of the Immaculate Show, pg. 125
Way of Caring Hands, pg. 119	Way of Inked Skin, pg. 127
Way of Ebony Clutches, pg. 121	Way of Kept Lore, pg. 128
Way of Great Serpents, pg. 122	Way of Spun Threads, pg. 129
Way of Heaven's Judgement, pg. 124	Way of Twin Beasts, pg. 130

OTHER

HEALTH

Fortitude + 5

PSYCHE

Discipline + 5

RANK

Rank 1 (0 XP)	1 Dynamic Action, 3 Dynamic Dice
Rank 2 (50 XP)	2 Dynamic Actions, 3 Dynamic Dice, +1 Ki Balance
Rank 3 (100 XP)	2 Dynamic Actions, 4 Dynamic Dice, +1 Ki Balance
Rank 4 (150 XP)	3 Dynamic Actions, 4 Dynamic Dice, +1 Ki Balance
Rank 5 (200 XP)	4 Dynamic Actions, 4 Dynamic Dice, +1 Ki Balance

INITIATIVE

Intuition + Speed + 3

STRENGTH

Athletics + Might

MOVEMENT

Athletics + Speed + 5

EXPERIENCE SPENDING CHART

XP EXPENDITURE	COST
Skill Level (Level 1-4)	6 XP
Skill Level (Level 5)	10 XP
New Specialty	3 XP
+1 to Gift	5 XP
+1 Karma from Trigger	5 XP
New Style Technique	10 XP
+1 Level to Style Technique	7 XP
Basic Jutsu	7 XP
Median Jutsu	14 XP
Advanced Jutsu	20 XP
First Jutsu of a Way	+5 XP
New Ally	5 XP
Enhance Ally	3 XP
New Rival	3 XP
Rival to Ally	3 XP

CHARACTER CREATION EXAMPLE

After reading most of *The Ninja Crusade 2nd Edition* and watching a ton of anime for inspiration, Kristen takes a moment to consider what kind of character she wants to create. The goal is to have a character devoted to her mentors over anything else. She comes up with the following:

Atsuko Anzai was raised by the Atsuko Twins of the Blazing Dancers, notorious warriors for the clan. She is as beautiful as she is dangerous, and has a score to settle with the Empire. You see, her mentors were incarcerated and thrown into Nanchou, the prison city. She has joined forces with the Lotus Coalition and is looking for just the right comrades to help her break them out.

STEP ONE: OCEAN

The first step is for Kristen to decide on Anzai's Element, which will tell a lot about her composure and personality. She sees her character as a definite Fire-type, and chooses Confident as her Temperament, since Anzai is going to be brave.

She then marks down 1 point of Yang, as well as Athletics 1, Fighting 1, Intimidation 1 and Perception 1. Then she jots down the Gift, which gives Anzai +1 Empathy against fear, and the Trigger, which gives 1 Karma if she becomes overconfident.

STEP TWO: VILLAGE

Now, Kristen needs to decide the profession Anzai has taken up in her life. She is immediately drawn to the Dedicant and chooses the Revolutionary for Anzai's Focus. This means her character is devoted to a single cause and won't stop until it is achieved. For her, it is the destruction of Nanchou.

She marks down the Skills provided by Dedicant, Discipline 1, Intuition 1, Persuade 1 and Stealth 1. Kristen also marks down the Gift, which gives +1 Fighting if specifically for her cause, and the Trigger, which gives 1 Karma if she choose her cause over her squad.

STEP THREE: RIVER

This is where Kristen has to choose a terrible thing that happened to Anzai at some point in her life. She decides Anzai was once also imprisoned, explaining her obsession with getting the Atsuko Twins out of such a fate. She selects Tormented Mind and Escapist to fit this idea.

Kristen then marks +1 Yang that Escapist gives her and the Skills for Tormented Mind: Empathy 1, Fortitude 1, Knowledge 1 and Stealth 1. Then she jots down info on the Gift, which gives +1 travel to find an escape route, and the Trigger, which gives 1 Karma if her need to keep on the move brings danger to her squad.

STEP FOUR: FORGE

Now, Kristen decides what role Anzai has taken in the ongoing war. She sees her as fighting on the front lines first and foremost. Anzai is always taking on greater and greater odds, so she chooses Mercenary and Assailant, as they are perfect for this concept.

She makes note of the provided Skills: Fortitude 1, Intimidation 1, Marksman 1 and Persuade 1. Then she writes down the Gift, which gives +1 Fighting if she is ever outnumbered, and the Trigger, which gives 1 Karma if she loses something important to her.

STEP FIVE: MOUNTAIN

This step is easy, since Kristen has already decided she wants to be a Blazing Dancer. It just makes sense for her concept. She makes note of the Skills given by her training: Fortitude 1, Marksman 1, Perform 1 and Speed 1, and then marks her final Ki type: Yang. For her Gift she needs to choose a performance focus, so she chooses dancing, as the Atsuko Twins taught her how combat is a dance itself. She also marks down the Disrespected Trigger as well.

When it comes to Anzai Contacts, Kristen chooses Sachiko as her Ally, an Empire engineer who may prove helpful in her cause. She then chooses Hidetoshi as her Rival, an elder in the clan who dislikes her ability to ignore orders when it suits her. She leaves her Bonds open, waiting for her group to assemble and assign them.

STEP SIX: TEMPLE

Now, she gets 10 extra Skill points to spend to enhance Anzai. Kristen spends a few to really raise some fundamental skills she'll need to break into (and possibly fight her way out of) a prison. She raises the following: Athletics +1, Deception +2, Fighting +1, Knowledge +1, Might +1, Perform +1, Speed +1, Stealth +1, Travel +1

For her Martial Training, she has two levels to spend. Kristen looks at Eagle and Monkey Fighting Styles available to her, but wants to focus on Weapon Styles instead. She's had a great idea for Anzai being a twin sword wielding ninja, so she chooses Unstoppable Attack. Level 1 lets her attack twice with a -2 penalty. She decides to take Level 2 as well, reducing that penalty to -1, instead of selecting Level 1 of a second technique, and is very happy with this decision. She also marks down Twin Swords into her Weapon slot, swapping out the Quick Quality for Paired, leaving her with Sharp and Paired.

STEP SEVEN: SKY

The next to last step is for Kristen to decide what jutsu Anzai knows. She gets 6 points to spend and decides Anzai would not worry about Basic Jutsu, and jumps right to Medi-an level ones. She picks Beautiful Show, giving more options during combat, and Strength Boost, which helps her deal more damage and break down barriers. Kristen is quick to grab Flashing Exit, as well, just in case Anzai gets into something she really can't handle.

OTHER

The last step is calculating all the final values for Anzai, but this is fairly quick:

Health is 8 (Fortitude +5)

Psyche is 6 (Discipline +5)

Rank 1 provides 1 Dynamic Action and 3 Dynamic Dice

Initiative is 6 (Speed 2 + Intuition 1 + 3)

Strength is 3 (Athletics 2 + Might 1)

Movement is 9 (Athletics 2 + Speed 2 + 5)

And then she's done and ready to play!

THE NINJA CRUSADE

SECOND EDITION

NAME: Atsuko Anzai PLAYER: Kristen
 DESCRIPTION: As beautiful as she is dangerous, with a focus on saving her mentors. Anzai is a great dancer, but rarely smiles anymore. Not until the Twins are safe.

SKILLS

ATHLETICS	FIGHTING	KNOWLEDGE	PERSUADE
CRAFTS	FORTITUDE	MARKSMAN	SPEED
DECEPTION	HOLISTICS	MIGHT	STEALTH
DISCIPLINE	INTIMIDATION	PERCEPTION	SURVIVAL
EMPATHY	INTUITION	PERFORM	TRAVEL

SPECIALTIES: _____

OCEAN

ELEMENT: Fire - Confident

TEMPERAMENT GIFT: +1 Empathy vs Fear

TEMPERAMENT TRIGGER: 1 Karma if she becomes Overconfident

What is your birth element? (mark Ki Balance, gain Skill Lvl, choose Temperament, record Gift and Trigger)

VILLAGE

PROFESSION: Dedicant - Revolutionary

FOCUS GIFT: +1 Fighting when for her cause

FOCUS TRIGGER: 1 Karma if she chooses cause over her squad

What is job to you perform for society? (gain Skill Lvl, choose Focus, record Gift and Trigger)

RIVER

TRAGEDY: Tormented Mind - Escapist

AFFLICTION GIFT: +1 Travel to find an escape route

AFFLICTION TRIGGER: 1 Karma if her need to be on the move leads to danger

What is a tragedy or hardship you have endured? (mark Ki Balance, gain Skill Lvl, choose Affliction, record Gift and Trigger)

FORGE

WARTIME ROLE: Mercenary - Assailant

TITLE GIFT: +1 Fighting when outnumbered

TITLE TRIGGER: 1 Karma if she loses something important to her

What is your role in the Ninja Crusade? (gain Skill Lvl, choose Title, record Gift and Trigger)

MOUNTAIN

CLAN: Blazing Dancers

CLAN GIFT: +1 to checks where dancing skills help. +2 for Perform.

CLAN TRIGGER: 1 Karma if her clan's bad reputation causes issues

What clan do you belong to? (record Favored Jutsu and fighting styles, mark Ki Balance, gain Skill Lvl, record Gift and Trigger, select one Ally and one Rival)

CONTACTS

OWE A FAVOR

BONDS

A/R: Sachiko (Marksman)

A/R: Hidetoshi (Intuition)

A/R: _____

A/R: _____

TEMPLE

STYLE: Paired - Unstoppable Attacks: May attack twice with one Action, but suffer a -1 penalty to both

STYLE: _____

STYLE: _____

What martial arts training do you possess? (Spend 10 Skill pts., Gain 2 Specialties, Record 2 Martial Training Lvl)

HEALTH (5 + Fortitude)

PSYCHE (5 + Discipline)

CONDITIONS

SKY

(CLAN) WAY OF Immaculate Show WAY OF the Warrior WAY OF _____

TRAINING: Illusions tell their story for added effect TRAINING: +2 damage for the next Dynamic Action spent TRAINING: _____

BACKFIRE: -2 Initiative BACKFIRE: Suffer Broken 1 BACKFIRE: _____

YANG YIN

JUTSU NAME	LEVEL	DICEPOOL	EFFECT
<u>Beautiful Show</u>	<u>Med</u>	<u>Yang + Speed</u>	<u>+1 Dynamic Action for (Successes) Rounds</u>
<u>Flashing Exit</u>	<u>Med</u>	<u>Yang + Stealth</u>	<u>Ninja disappears until their next Turn, showing up somewhere within (Movementx2 yards)</u>
<u>Strength Boost</u>	<u>Med</u>	<u>Yang + Might</u>	<u>x2 Strength and inflicts +1 damage Boost = x3 Strength</u>
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

What Jutsu flows through you? (6 pts. to spend: Basic = 1 pt., Median = 2 pts., Advanced = 3 pts., Ronin get 4 pts.)

WEAPON

TYPE: Twin Swords

QUALITIES

Sharp (Boost=Bleeding)

Paired (+1 Defense)

OTHER

RANK	1
INITIATIVE	6
DYNAMIC ACTIONS	1
DYNAMIC DICE	3
STRENGTH	3
MOVEMENT	9
XP GAINED	_____
XP SPENT	_____

RANDOM CHARACTER CREATION

STEP ONE: OCEAN STEP TWO: VILLAGE

Roll	Result
1-2	Earth, pg. 50 1 - Roll again 2-3 - Collector 4-5 - Indulgent 6-7 - Linguist 8-9 - Responsible 10 - Player's choice
3-4	Fire, pg. 50 1 - Roll again 2-3 - Confident 4-5 - Expressionist 6-7 - Hotheaded 8-9 - Silver Tongued 10 - Player's choice
5-6	Metal, pg. 51 1 - Roll again 2-3 - Authoritative 4-5 - Honorable 6-7 - Meticulous 8-9 - Quiet 10 - Player's choice
7-8	Water, pg. 51 1 - Roll again 2-3 - Calm 4-5 - Devious 6-7 - Resourceful 8-9 - Wise 10 - Player's choice
9-10	Wood, pg. 52 1 - Roll again 2-3 - Loquacious 4-5 - Perfectionist 6-7 - Youthful 8-9 - Wanderer 10 - Player's choice

Roll	Result
1	Artisan, pg. 53 1-3 - Artist 4-6 - Builder 7-9 - Smith 10 - Player's choice
2	Dedicant, pg. 53 1-3 - Altruist 4-6 - Monk 7-9 - Revolutionary 10 - Player's choice
3	Entertainer, pg. 54 1-3 - Actor 4-6 - Musician 7-9 - Tumbler 10 - Player's choice
4	Farmer, pg. 54 1-3 - Gardener 4-6 - Harvester 7-9 - Herder 10 - Player's choice
5	Healer, pg. 54 1-3 - Counselor 4-6 - Gekai 7-9 - Herbalist 10 - Player's choice
6	Merchant, pg. 55 1-3 - Con Artist 4-6 - Moneylender 7-9 - Traveler 10 - Player's choice
7	Noble, pg. 55 1-3 - Elder 4-6 - Kuge 7-9 - Magistrate 10 - Player's choice
8	Outsider, pg. 56 1-3 - Drifter 4-6 - Hermit 7-9 - Untouchable 10 - Player's choice
9	Scholar, pg. 56 1-3 - Historian 4-6 - Sage 7-9 - Scribe 10 - Player's choice

10	Warrior, pg. 56 1-3 - Marauder 4-6 - Sellsword 7-9 - Soldier 10 - Player's choice
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STEP THREE: RIVER

Roll	Result
1-2	Civil Discord, pg. 57 1 - Roll again 2-3 - Conscripted 4-5 - Favors Owed 6-7 - Star-Crossed 8-9 - Wanted 10 - Player's Choice
3-4	Ravaged Body, pg. 58 1 - Roll again 2-3 - Impaired Sense 4-5 - Runt of the Litter 6-7 - Slow to Speech 8-9 - Scarred 10 - Player's Choice
5-6	Tormented Mind, pg. 58 1 - Roll again 2-3 - Escapist 4-5 - Hair Trigger 6-7 - Paranoid 8-9 - War Weary 10 - Player's Choice
7-8	Unending Stigma, pg. 59 1 - Roll again 2-3 - Enemy 4-5 - Former Bandit 6-7 - Pariah 8-9 - Singing for Supper 10 - Player's Choice
9-10	Victim of Circumstance, pg. 59 1 - Roll again 2-3 - Disaster Magnet 4-5 - Displaced 6-7 - Plague Survivor 8-9 - Orphaned 10 - Player's Choice



RANDOM (CONTINUED)

STEP FOUR: FORGE

Roll	Result
1	Commander, pg. 61 1-3 - Officer 4-6 - Strategist 7-9 - Trainer 10 - Player's choice
2	Communications, pg. 61 1-3 - Diplomat 4-6 - Messenger 7-9 - Spy 10 - Player's choice
3	Foot Soldier, pg. 61 1-3 - Bowman 4-6 - Champion 7-9 - Enforcer 10 - Player's choice
4	Medic, pg. 62 1-3 - Bonesetter 4-6 - Kusuriya 7-9 - Savior 10 - Player's choice
5	Mercenary, pg. 62 1-3 - Assailant 4-6 - Rebel 7-9 - Trader 10 - Player's choice
6	Pacifist, pg. 62 1-3 - Objector 4-6 - Recluse 7-9 - Refugee 10 - Player's choice
7	Scout, pg. 63 1-3 - Observer 4-6 - Pathfinder 7-9 - Sleeper 10 - Player's choice
8	Striker, pg. 63 1-3 - Assassin 4-6 - Gladiator 7-9 - Raider 10 - Player's choice
9	Supplier, pg. 64 1-3 - Dealer 4-6 - Hoarder 7-9 - Steward 10 - Player's choice

10	Villager, pg. 64 1-3 - Custodian 4-6 - Guardian 7-9 - Shepherd 10 - Player's choice
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STEP FIVE: MOUNTAIN

Roll	Result
1	Bamboo Herbalists, pg. 26
2	Blazing Dancers, pg. 28
3	Grasping Shadows, pg. 30
4	Hidden Strands of Fate, pg. 32
5	Living Chronicle, pg. 34
6	Pack of the Black Moon, pg. 36
7	Recoiling Serpents, pg. 38
8	Virtuous Body Gardeners, pg. 40
9	Wardens of Equilibrium, pg. 42
10	Will of Iron, pg. 44

*Can always choose to be Ronin, pg. 46

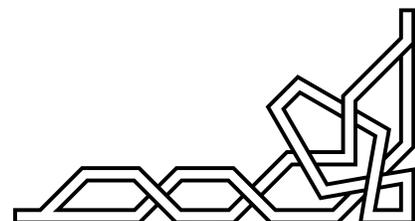
STEP SIX: TEMPLE

Roll	Result (roll Twice)
1	Roll again
2-4	Fighting Style, pg. 66 1-5 - Option #1 1 - Reroll 2-4 - Technique #1 5-7 - Technique #2 8-10 - Technique #3
6-10	Option #2 1 - Reroll 2-4 - Technique #1 5-7 - Technique #2 8-10 - Technique #3
5-7	Weapon Style 1-2 - Blunt, pg. 71 1 - Reroll 2-4 - Technique #1 5-7 - Technique #2 8-10 - Technique #3
3-4	Chain, pg. 72 1 - Reroll 2-4 - Technique #1 5-7 - Technique #2 8-10 - Technique #3
5-6	Paired, pg. 72 1 - Reroll 2-4 - Technique #1 5-7 - Technique #2 8-10 - Technique #3

7-8	Ranged, pg. 73 1 - Reroll 2-4 - Technique #1 5-7 - Technique #2 8-10 - Technique #3
9-10	Sharp, pg. 74 1 - Reroll 2-4 - Technique #1 5-7 - Technique #2 8-10 - Technique #3
8-10	99 Styles 1-2 - Alchemy, pg. 74 3-4 - Master of Spies, pg. 77 1 - Reroll 2-4 - Assassins #1 5-7 - Gatherers #2 8-10 - Thieves #3
5-6	Portents, pg. 79
7-8	Summoning, pg. 80 1 - Bears, pg. 169 2 - Canines, pg. 169 3 - Felines, pg. 171 4 - Hedgehogs, pg. 172 5 - Monkeys, pg. 172 6 - Rams, pg. 173 7 - Rats, pg. 174 8 - Roosters, pg. 175 9 - Snakes, pg. 175 10 - Turtles, pg. 176
9-10	Trap Master, pg. 81

STEP SEVEN: SKY

Jutsu are so personalized to a particular character that making this part of character creation random just isn't possible. Even random characters need a little bit of attention.



Katashi tossed the latest bloody board aside and shoved his hands into the salt-water herb solution next to the sawhorse. The mixture stung his blistered fingers. Red colored the water as he rinsed. Katashi cursed himself again for failing the exercise, even though Master told him it would take years before he succeeded. Katashi had bloodied his fingers every day for the past three years with nothing to show for it but calluses and frustration.

He needed to pull a nail from a board... with his fingers.

That was all. It would show him worthy. It would show Master he could grow. Yesterday, he overheard Master talking with the other teachers.

"Katashi is not living up to the potential he once showed. His classmates surpass him in almost every way. It might be time to send him home to his family."

Sweaty and still hurt over the remarks, Katashi set up another board on the sawhorse. Katashi used the board until it became too bloody. He made new boards every week. He wondered why he couldn't reuse old ones when they dried and said as much to Master one day.

"Discipline," Master said.

Hadn't he shown discipline by now? Hadn't he shown he wouldn't give up? What more did he need to do? A light breeze played across the practice ground, blowing the grass around in a soft dance. It cooled his skin. He paused for a moment to appreciate the feeling.

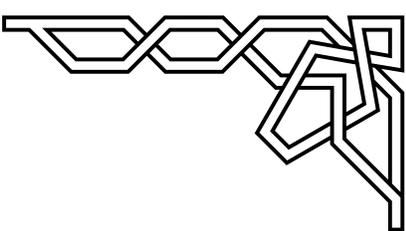
Katashi eyed his target. If they sent him away, he would do this before he left. He wouldn't do it for Master and he wouldn't do it for his family. He would do it for himself. He could walk away knowing he had finished something.

His hands moved to position. His feet slid into stance. Another cool breeze caressed his face. Katashi breathed deep. The pressure in his soul released a little with each breath and careful touch of the wind. Failure might mark his future, but he would not let it take his dignity. The relief of letting go blew the last part of pressure away in a small, but important, breath.

His hands flashed toward the nail. Katashi could not feel the earth underneath him. The air held him up and focused down his fingers toward the nail. It rose a small way out of the wood to meet his hand.

The sound of movement brought Katashi's head up. Master's robes disappeared around the greenhouse before Katashi could say anything.

Katashi held his head up to the sky, smiled, and thanked the breeze for reminding him of peace.



CHAPTER FOUR

EXPRESSIONS OF KI

Just as having paints and brushes means nothing without a canvas on which to express one's art, the ability to manipulate ki is nothing without jutsu. Every ninja is trained in the ways of taking the energy that flows through the world and using it to enhance their life, battle their enemies and defend the things they care about. Each clan teaches special jutsu to their members, which are kept secret from all other ninja, but the vast majority of jutsu fall under either General or Elemental categories. Some ninja, especially Ronin, take the lessons they've learned to forge new jutsu the world has never seen before, often founding their own clan in the process.

SELECTING JUTSU

Step Seven of character creation, Sky, is where the player gets to select the jutsu their character has learned. The player receives six (6) points to spend, with Basic Jutsu costing 1 point, Median Jutsu costing 2 points and Advanced Jutsu costing 3 points. As long as there are no requirements, the player may select from any level (Basic, Median or Advanced) without limitation. They can select from any jutsu in the General and Elemental categories, as well as their clan's Clan-Specific jutsu. At least one jutsu must be from the ninja's Clan-Specific Way, but it need not be from any specific level. Learning new jutsu (pg. 94) is a long and arduous process, so players should think carefully about their initial selections.

ACTIVATING JUTSU

Each jutsu follows the trend of being attuned to either Yin or Yang ki. Yang jutsu usually involve growth, enhancements or healing, while Yin jutsu are about diminishing, mental abilities or death. Neither is more powerful than the other, but each is a tool utilized for a different purpose. Mechanically, this means the character's Yin and Yang become part of their Skill combos when activating jutsu. The Flame Arrow jutsu from the Way of Fire, for instance, is a Yang + Marksman roll.

To activate a jutsu, the character must have the minimum amount of ki of the corresponding type. Using Flame Arrow, again as an example, is a Basic Yang jutsu, so the ninja must have at least 1 Yang to use it. If they do not have 1 Yang, they can Mold Ki (pg. 143) to produce more. Median and Advanced jutsu have higher minimums. With effects dependent on ki types, such as jutsu that affects (Yang) targets, the character's current ki when activating the jutsu is used. If it changes afterward, the jutsu effect does not change.

Difficulties are slightly different for jutsu. As long as the character receives at least one success on a non-opposed activation check, the jutsu occurs. However, if they did not achieve a minimum number of successes, this results in a Backfire. Backfire effects are different depending on what Way the jutsu is derived from, but none of them are good. When the check is Opposed, the jutsu can still Backfire even if they are successful in affecting their target.

Note: Ninja magic is fleeting by nature, and most effects are quick. They happen, and then they end. Unless otherwise stated, jutsu or backfire effects largely do not carry over from Scene to Scene.

This rule, however, should be ignored if a different duration fits the story better. Some durations are left vague for this very reason.

Type	Min Ki	Difficulty
Basic	1	2
Median	2	3
Advanced	4	4

Example: Minori sees his target and wants to use Flame Arrow to strike the elusive man, which requires a Yang + Marksman check. His Yang is currently 2 and his Marksman is 3, so he has 5 dice to roll. He gets 1, 3, 4, 5, 9 (1 success). His opponent gets 4, 6, 6 (0 successes) to Dodge. This means he hits his target for 3 damage (2 from Flame Arrow + 1 net success), but since he only got 1 success on a jutsu with a minimum requirement of 2 successes, it also Backfires and sets flame to his surrounding area and starts a forest fire.

DETERMINING SUCCESSES

GMs and players should pay special attention to their rolls when using jutsu, as many descriptions state that their effects range based on the number of successes gained. When there is no set Difficulty, such as with jutsu affecting only the ninja or their environment, the statement is at face value. How many successes they roll is how many successes there are. They only activate the Backfire effect if they roll less than the Difficulty for its level. This



CHAPTER FOUR - EXPRESSIONS OF KI

is called a Soft Difficulty, since the power succeeds even if it doesn't hit the value needed.

Example: The ninja activates an Advanced jutsu which has a Soft Difficulty of 4. They get 3 successes on their activation check, which means they get 3 successes worth of benefit, but also activate the Backfire effect.

However, when targeting a specific victim who has the ability to resist with a Dodge or Resistance check, the check is a Hard Difficulty (instead of Soft). This means successes gained are those above and beyond the target's Resistance check. Of course, as long as they receive the minimum number of successes for the Soft Difficulty, they do not activate the Backfire effect.

Example: The ninja fires an Advanced jutsu at their target, gaining 4 successes, but their target Dodges with 2 successes. This means they only benefit from 2 successes, but there is no Backfire since they got the minimum 4 successes.

THE ELEMENTAL BONUS

Some characters have a higher affinity for using certain jutsu. If the character's Element matches the jutsu's Element, they receive a +1 bonus when activating that jutsu. This should not dissuade players from selecting jutsu outside of their Element, but it definitely rewards those who stay true to their inner nature.

THE DESTRUCTION CYCLE

When two ninja come into contact, there is often a time when jutsu are used against one another. Like the very elements they are built upon, these jutsu have a natural cycle of destruction that allows one to destroy another quite easily. The destruction cycle is as follows:

- Wood Parts Earth
- Earth Dams Water
- Water Extinguishes Fire
- Fire Melts Metal
- Metal Chops Wood

This becomes important when jutsu are used against each other. When a destroying element jutsu is used to attack or defend against its lesser counterpart, the ninja enjoys a +2 bonus to their activation check. Likewise, the effects of a defending lesser element jutsu are halved against the element that destroyed it.

Example: Tadao launches Spitting Earth (pg. 105) against Kaede who is using Like Water (pg. 109) to help defend. Not only does Tadao's player gain +2 dice to his dicepool, but Kaede only gets a +1 bonus to Defense (instead of the normal +2 the jutsu usually provides).

CHAPTER FOUR - EXPRESSIONS OF KI

RESISTING JUTSU

There are three different kinds of jutsu: ones that affect the ninja themselves, ones that affect the environment and others that must be resisted by a target. The first two types cannot be resisted, as the ninja won't harm themselves and the environment is but a tool in the hands of a ninja. However, jutsu that specifically target a living being force a Resistance check.

Most villagers and everyday citizens have no protection from the power a ninja wields with jutsu. They have no mastery of their ki aspects to help them push off the effects, and are thus powerless to avoid the terrible consequences. If the ninja targets a person such as this, the effect happens as long as they get 1 success.

Other ninja and specially-trained Extras are another story entirely. These enemies know how to push off ninja effects when they need to. The process is quite easy, the target makes the same check as the attacker, but uses the reverse ki type. If the jutsu being resisted is an Advanced jutsu, the target must also spend a ki (of either type) to make the check.

Example: *Kaede thinks Tadao has gotten out of line and decides to use Perfect Stillness (pg. 129) to keep him still. Her check is Yin + Stealth and her jutsu is Advanced, so Tadao must spend 1 ki and then make a Yang + Stealth check to resist. If he is successful, he is unaffected.*

ELEMENTAL JUTSU

WAY OF EARTH

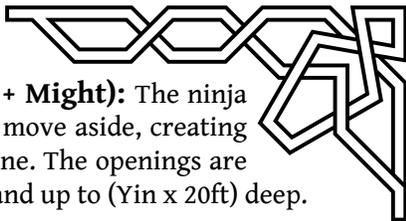
Element: Earth

Training: Ninja with this jutsu have control over the element of earth, the most ancient and stable of all elements. Masters of the Way of Earth have learned to bolster their own strength and fortitude with their elements and can endure anything. With a Boost during activation of a Way of Earth jutsu, the ninja gains +1 Armor against their choice of mental or physical damage for the rest of the Scene, stacking normally.

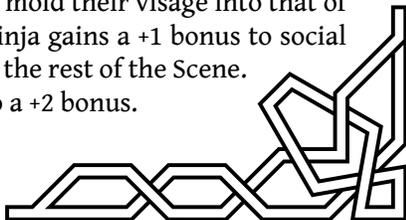
Backfire: Failed use of the Way of Earth results in the ninja weakening their own fortitude and resolve. They suffer a cumulative -1 penalty on all rolls to defend or resist incoming attacks.

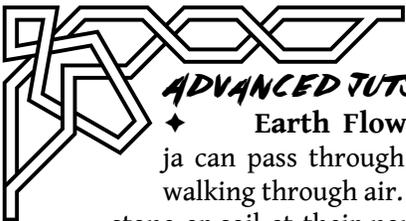
BASIC JUTSU

- ◆ **Muddied Steps (Yang + Deception):** The ninja changes a (Yang x 10ft) area of earth into thick, muddy terrain. This forces a Moderate (2) Athletics + Speed check to remain standing to anyone in the area when the effect occurs, and then again every time they perform any action that requires movement. Those who fail take a Slowed 1 Condition.

- 
- ◆ **Open the Earth (Yin + Might):** The ninja commands the earth to move aside, creating holes or openings in stone. The openings are (Yin x 5ft) in diameter, and up to (Yin x 20ft) deep.
 - ◆ **Stone Fists (Yin + Fortitude):** The ninja conjures stone around their fists, allowing them to block weapon attacks as though armed. The ninja gains +1 Fighting and can Block weapons with their fists without suffering penalties for Rounds equal to successes gained.
 - ◆ **Stone Like Clay (Yin + Crafts):** Ninja with this jutsu treat even the hardest stone, rock and non-metallic earth as if it were soft clay. The stone is still hard for anyone other than the ninja. Lasts for the Scene.
 - ◆ **Stone Lung (Yang + Survival):** The ninja compels the earth to fill their target, suffocating them. For a number of Turns equal to successes gained, the target finds it harder to breathe and suffers a -1 penalty to all physical actions. With a Boost, the target suffers a Deprived 1 Condition.

MEDIUM JUTSU

- ◆ **Earthen Slumber (Yang + Holistics):** The ninja lies upon the earth and soaks up its strength. They heal (Yang -1) damage (physical or mental) instantly.
 - ◆ **Pillars of Stone (Yang + Crafts):** The ninja creates pillars of stone, using the terrain around them to gain advantages in combat. The ninja crafts a total of (Yang x 20ft) tall pillars. In combat, the pillars can be used to Knock Down or Knock Back an opponent with a +1 bonus on their check, or the ninja can rise quickly on a pillar affording them a +1 bonus to Dodge against incoming attacks.
 - ◆ **Spitting Earth (Yang + Marksman):** Must have Muddied Steps. The ninja blasts bits of earth and stone at their opponent, attacking with a +1 bonus and inflicting 2 damage. With a Boost, the ninja can instead deal half damage to (Yang) separate targets at one time.
 - ◆ **Stone Skin (Yin + Fortitude):** The ninja is surrounded by swirling bits of sand and rock, encasing the body. The ninja gains +2 Armor against physical damage and +1 Health for the Battle.
 - ◆ **Stoney Face (Yin + Intimidation):** The ninja draws upon the earth to mold their visage into that of unyielding stone. The ninja gains a +1 bonus to social attacks and defenses for the rest of the Scene. On a Boost, this raises to a +2 bonus.
- 



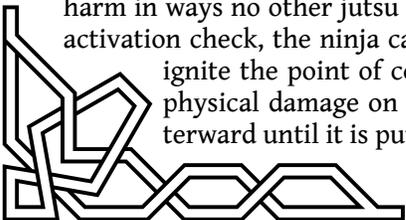
ADVANCED JUTSU

- ◆ **Earth Flow (Yin + Travel):** The ninja can pass through earth and stone as though walking through air. The ninja can move through stone or soil at their normal walking speed, but can never run. The ninja must be moving while passing through the earth. If they stop for any reason, the ninja is shunted out of the earth immediately.
- ◆ **Quake (Yang + Might):** Must have Pillars of Stone. The ninja causes the earth to shake and rock beneath their feet in a 50ft diameter area for (Yang) Rounds. Anyone near the edges of the affected area may make a Dodge check with a -2 penalty to escape. If they cannot escape, they are immediately knocked down, and take 2 damage per Round as shifting rocks slice and cut.
- ◆ **Quicksand (Yin + Deception):** Must have Muddied Steps. The ninja targets an area (Yin x 15ft) in diameter which becomes a sinking quicksand for the Scene. Anyone in the area when the effect occurs may attempt to Dodge out of the way. Anyone caught in the quicksand sinks at a rate of 1ft per Round and cannot use Move Actions. If they are unable to leave the quicksand before being covered, they will eventually die of suffocation.
- ◆ **Stone Form (Yang + Fortitude):** Must have Stone Skin. The ninja becomes a creature made entirely of stone and fights with the power of the mountains. They receive +3 Armor against physical damage and +2 Health, and deal +1 damage on all attacks made with their fists for the Battle.
- ◆ **Terracotta Soldier (Yang + Crafts):** The ninja summons forth a small army of stone soldiers to fight for them, resulting in a Squad of 4 under their control. They use half the ninja's dice pool for Attacks and Defense, have 1 Action, Armor 2 and Health 20, but no Psyche or Dynamic Actions. With a Boost, the ninja can summon two more soldiers, giving them an additional +1 to attack and +5 Health. Lasts the Battle.

WAY OF FIRE

Element: Fire

Training: The ninja with this jutsu has control over fire, the rawest and most dangerous of elements. With it, they can destroy their enemies or defend their loved ones. The Way of Fire has a number of effects that can deal out harm in ways no other jutsu can. On a Boost during their activation check, the ninja can choose whether or not to ignite the point of contact in flames and deal +1 physical damage on impact and every Round afterward until it is put out.



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Backfire: Failing a check for the Way of Fire can have disastrous results. It could mean the ninja takes the damage they intended for their enemy or possibly set their environment on fire. On a Critical Failure, they take a Burned 1 Condition.

BASIC JUTSU

- ◆ **Bright Star (Yang + Persuade):** The ninja surrounds themselves with a bright light, making it harder to see and attack them and causing a (Yang) penalty to opponents' attempts for the Round. This penalty does not apply to Grapple checks. This jutsu also illuminates everything within Near Range. On a Boost, it lasts for the Scene or Battle.
- ◆ **Extinguishing Seal (Yin + Intuition):** The ninja gets rid of any fire in the surrounding area. Ongoing flames are immediately extinguished. If used to Deflect (pg. 141) fire damage, success completely nullifies the attack.
- ◆ **Fire Punch (Yang + Might):** The ninja summons fire around their fists and hand-to-hand attacks now deal +1 damage. Lasts for a number of strikes equal to successes gained.
- ◆ **Flame Arrow (Yang + Marksman):** The ninja summons their ki and fires a flaming arrow at their target from their palm. The arrow deals 2 damage on a successful hit. On a Boost, the target suffers a Burned 1 Condition as well.
- ◆ **Flame Wall (Yang + Intimidation):** The ninja creates a wall of flame to separate themselves from others, which remains for a number of Rounds equal to successes gained. Though the wall has no substance itself, it expands up to (Yang x10ft) wide. Opponents who pass through take 1 damage and must succeed at a Moderate (2) Fortitude check or suffer another 2 physical damage and a Burned 1 Condition.

MEDIAN JUTSU

- ◆ **Cauterize (Yin + Holistics):** With a touch, the ninja heals 1 Health and removes Bleeding Conditions from the target for the Battle. Can affect up to (Yang) targets at once with a Boost.
- ◆ **Dulled Spirit (Yin + Empathy):** The ninja reduces the fiery spirit inside their target, creating a (Yin) penalty to resist the next mental attack.
- ◆ **Face in the Fire (Yin + Empathy):** With meditation, the ninja makes their face appear in a fire anywhere within (Yin) miles to see and communicate with

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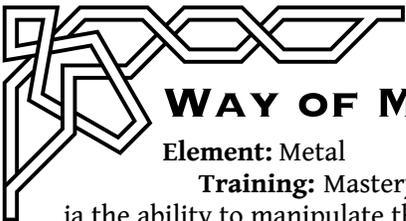


those around the flame.

- ◆ **Fire-Proof (Yin + Fortitude):** Requires Extinguishing Seal. This jutsu reduces any Burned Conditions the ninja has taken this Scene by 1 and reduces damage from future fire attacks or flame in the general area by (Yang) for the Battle or Scene.
- ◆ **Red Mantle (Yang + Crafts):** Must have Bright Star. The ninja surrounds their body with a mantle of flame, giving them +1 Fighting and +2 Intimidation for the Battle.

ADVANCED JUTSU

- ◆ **Burst Defense (Yin + Fortitude):** The ninja infuses their skin with fire, sending out waves of heat any time they are struck. If an opponent successfully deals damage to the ninja within Close Range, they also take 2 damage. Lasts for a number of hits equal to the activation successes.
- ◆ **Fire-Breather (Yang + Discipline):** The ninja takes a deep breath, summoning their Yang in their chest, and then breathes it out as intense fire. This attack can target up to (Yang) enemies in the same direction at once with the same check, who may Dodge normally. Victims suffer 2 damage and a Burned 1 Condition.
- ◆ **Fire Form (Yang + Fortitude):** Must have Fire Mantle. The ninja's body turns to flame itself, allowing them to move faster and deal more damage. They receive a +2 Fighting, Persuade and Initiative, and +1 damage to close combat attacks. Any Boost on an attack creates a Burned 1 Condition in addition to their normal Boost effect. Lasts for a number of Rounds equal to successes gained.
- ◆ **Ride the Flame (Yang + Travel):** Must have Face in the Fire. The ninja can jump into one fire and appear out of another fire within (Yang) miles. They always leave the smell of burnt flesh behind them. On a Boost, they may take one other along for the ride.
- ◆ **Rise From the Ashes (Yang + Holistics):** Any object that has been destroyed by fire damage can be restored, whether it is a wagon or a house. Items simply return to their previous form, taking (10 - Yang) minutes to do so. Each success after the first reduces the speed by 1 minute. If reduced to 0 minutes, it occurs instantly. This does not affect living things.



WAY OF METAL

Element: Metal

Training: Mastery of this jutsu affords a ninja the ability to manipulate the element of metal, the element of war. Weapons and armors are like extensions of the ninja's body, and they are able to control the element with exquisite precision. With a Boost during activation, the ninja gains a +1 bonus to all use of metal weapons/tools.

Backfire: Failure to activate the Way of Metal jutsu creates a dissonance between the ninja and metallic objects. The ninja suffers a cumulative -1 penalty when wielding a weapon made of metal, and has -1 to Block or Brace against metal weapons for the rest of the Scene or Battle.

BASIC JUTSU

- ◆ **Blade Dance (Yang + Athletics):** The ninja moves and dances like a blade in combat and gains +2 Perform. If used during combat, the ninja is harder to hit, giving a -1 penalty to anyone attempting to strike them for a number of Rounds equal to their successes.
- ◆ **Hover Disk (Yang + Crafts):** The ninja molds available metal to create a disk they can stand upon and hover up to (Yang + 20ft) in the air. The ninja can direct the disk to move at twice their normal speed, and it can carry up to 500lbs. Lasts for the Scene or Journey.
- ◆ **The Metal Within (Yin + Fortitude):** The ninja can integrate metal into their body. They can keep knives in their forearms, spikes in their knuckles or artifacts in their abdomen. The jutsu is used once to place the item, and then again to retrieve it.
- ◆ **Mold Metal (Yin + Crafts):** For the rest of the scene, the ninja is able to mold metal as though it were clay. This does not actually change the malleability of the metal for anyone other than the ninja.
- ◆ **Sharpen Blade (Yang + Fighting):** The ninja immediately improves even the sharpest blade. While using the blade, the ninja gains +1 Fighting and deals +1 damage for a number of strikes equal to (Yang). Anyone else who attempts to wield the blade does not gain this bonus.

MEDIAN JUTSU

- ◆ **Cage (Yang + Crafts):** The ninja summons a metal cage that springs forth and encircles a single target on the ground. The target can attempt to Dodge the attack at a -1 penalty. The cage has a Durability of 5. On a Boost, the ninja can enclose up to (Yang) targets.
- ◆ **Iron Mind (Yin + Discipline):** The ninja steels their mind against insults or verbal

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attacks. They gain a +2 bonus to Resistance checks during social combat.

- ◆ **Melting Touch (Yin + Knowledge):** Must have Mold Metal. The ninja using this jutsu can instantly smolder up to (Yin x5ft) of metal with a touch. In combat, this allows the ninja to make a special Block attempt with a -2 penalty to melt the opponent's weapon.
- ◆ **Mend Bones (Yin + Holistics):** The ninja can use metal to reinforce bones or mend broken limbs. Upon use of this jutsu, the ninja reduces all of their target's current physical Conditions by 1. Can only be used once per Scene.
- ◆ **Tough as Nails (Yang + Fortitude):** Must have The Metal Within. The ninja hardens their skin to emulate metal, giving their hair and eyes a metallic sheen. They receive a +1 Armor and can Block weapons with their fists without the normal -2 penalty for the rest of the Battle or Scene.

ADVANCED JUTSU

- ◆ **Total War (Yang + Knowledge):** The ninja conjures an animate blade that follows their directions in Battle. The blade deals 3 damage and has the Sharp Quality. It uses the ninja's base dice pool for melee attacks, and acts at -1 Initiative of the ninja.
- ◆ **Magnetic Pull (Yang + Fortitude):** The use of this jutsu adjusts the ninja's ki to make them more attractive to metals. Any metal within (Yang x10ft) of the ninja is instantly attracted to them, allowing the ninja to pick up weapons at a distance or draw smaller items in. The ninja can also pull on a large piece of stationary metal to move towards it, even if they would normally be denied movement. A living target, such as one in a suit of armor, can make a Fortitude + Discipline check to resist the ninja's pull, otherwise they are under the ninja's power. This same resistance may be necessary to avoid disarmament as well.
- ◆ **Magnetic Repulsion (Yin + Discipline):** The ninja changes their ki to repulse metals. They can push metal weapons faster (gaining +1 damage) or throw armored opponents backward, giving a +2 bonus to rolls for Knock Back. Attackers wielding metal weapons suffer a -2 penalty to hit the ninja as their weapon is deflected away.
- ◆ **Metal Form (Yin + Fortitude):** Must have Tough as Nails. The ninja becomes a being of pure metal, appearing armored in metal from head to toe. The ninja receives +3 Armor against physical damage and deals +2 damage with their fists for the duration of the Battle.
- ◆ **Wall of Blades (Yang + Crafts):** The ninja summons forth a wall (Yang x25ft) long made entirely of blades. Anyone who touches the wall immediate-

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ly takes 2 damage as the blades are extremely sharp. With a Boost, the wall receives the Sharp Quality, causing a Bleeding 1 Condition in addition to damage.

WAY OF WATER

Element: Water

Training: Ninja trained in the Way of Water are as fluid and flexible as the element they have mastery over. Mastery over this jutsu allows the ninja to become one with the water, commanding it to respond to their every whim. On a Boost during activation, the ninja gains a +2 bonus to their next Defense against physical or mental attacks.

Backfire: The ninja loses their connection to the element and grows slightly dehydrated and desiccated through improper ki channeling. They suffer a cumulative -1 penalty to all Movement and Defense checks.

BASIC JUTSU

- ◆ **Liquid Breath (Yang + Fortitude):** The ninja is able to stay fully submerged under water for a Scene without the need to breathe.
- ◆ **Roar of the Shore (Yin + Perception):** The ninja confuses their target with sounds of the ocean and crashing waves. The target is effectively deafened, and they suffer a -1 penalty to Discipline and Perception checks. On a Boost, this also deals 1 mental damage to the target.
- ◆ **Summon Water (Yin + Crafts):** The ninja conjures water either in a puddle or into a vessel designed to contain water. The ninja can summon (Yin) gallons of water with this jutsu.
- ◆ **Water Walking (Yin + Athletics):** This jutsu allows the ninja to stand on and move across the surface of water without falling in or incurring penalties, no matter how choppy or uneven the water is. This lasts for the Scene.
- ◆ **Wind at the Back (Yang + Travel):** The ninja is able to call upon currents and winds while traveling over water to aid their travel speeds. With each use of this jutsu, the ninja gains a +2 bonus for checks during either the River or Mountain stage of a Journey (pg. 138) over water.

MEDIAN JUTSU

- ◆ **The Ink Blurs (Yin + Perception):** Must have Roar of the Shore. The ninja alters their target's perceptions to make their vision blur and waver. The target is effectively blinded and suffers a -2 penalty to all checks (including combat) for the Scene or Battle.
- ◆ **The Jagged Edge (Yang + Crafts):** The ninja instantly freezes nearby water into a spear or kunai of ice. The weapon is similar in all aspects to a mundane weapon of the same type, except the ninja takes

a -1 penalty to Block with the weapon, and it shatters after its fifth successful strike or Block. Boosts while using the weapon inflict a Slowed 1 Condition as well.

- ◆ **Like Water (Yin + Intuition):** The ninja moves and flows like water, and even creates a cushion of water around them that buffers incoming damage. The ninja gains a +2 bonus to Block, Brace, Dodge or Find Cover for the rest of the Battle.
- ◆ **Pull of the Deep (Yin + Perception):** The ninja increases the humidity in an (Yin x10ft) area creating mists that cling to everyone except the ninja. Anyone in the area is slowed as though moving through rising water and suffers a -1 penalty to any Action that requires a Move Action for the rest of the Scene or Battle.
- ◆ **Soothing Waters (Yin + Holistics):** The ninja resonates their ki with the flows of water within living things to soothe and heal. The ninja must touch their target, but can heal (Yin) Physical or Mental damage on a single target. With a Boost, the ninja can spread that healing to up to (Intuition) targets.

ADVANCED JUTSU

- ◆ **Call to Water (Yang + Might):** Must have Summon Water. The ninja calls upon a body of water and draws it to them. They can redirect rivers, create corridors in lakes or oceans, and can even pull the water from living things around them. If used on a living target within sight, this jutsu deals 2 Physical damage as the water is stripped from the creature's body.
- ◆ **The Hidden Mist (Yang + Discipline):** Must have Wind at the Back. The ninja creates a thick fog extending (Yang x50ft) around them, obscuring everyone's vision except for theirs. Within the fog, others can only see a few feet in front of them, making it impossible to have any accuracy with ranged attacks. All ranged attacks suffer a -3 penalty, and everyone in the fog benefits from a +1 bonus to Find Cover.
- ◆ **Read the Flow (Yin + Perception):** With this jutsu, the ninja is able to watch the flow and eddies of the social atmosphere. They can tell the temperament and moods of everyone in a room. Additionally, they gain a +2 bonus to all social checks, including social combat, for the Scene.
- ◆ **Tidal Wave (Yang + Might):** Must have Summon Water. With this jutsu, the ninja summons a wall of water (Yang x10ft) in length and height that pushes down everything in its path. Those hit by the wave are dealt 3 damage, knocked down and pushed back (Yin x10ft).

◆ **Water Form (Yin + Fortitude):** Must have Like Water. The ninja completely liquefies into a puddle of water. They can travel at half their normal Movement over land, and triple their Movement within water. The ninja is immune to all physical damage while using Water Form, though they can still be affected by mental attacks and illusions.

WAY OF WOOD

Element: Wood

Training: The element of Wood affords a ninja a connection with the life force of the world, able to influence the life and growth of all things. Masters of this jutsu can step inside one tree and exit another miles away, or can simply create a plant growth to suit their own needs. A Boost on activation of the jutsu gives the ninja a +2 bonus to checks to use any wooden object.

Backfire: The ninja's life force is slowly drained away through improper use of this jutsu. The ninja suffers a cumulative -1 penalty to Might and Athletics checks.

BASIC JUTSU

◆ **Harvest (Yang + Crafts):** The ninja infuses their ki into a fruit bearing tree to make it instantly produce enough food for a full meal. With a Boost, the ninja can create enough food to feed (Yang) number of people.

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- ◆ **Hidden Door (Yin + Travel):** The ninja infuses their ki into a wooden structure, making it move and bend to their will. They create an opening in the wood large enough for a person to pass through.
- ◆ **Instant Growth (Yang + Crafts):** This jutsu allows the instant growth of a single plant into any shape the ninja chooses. They may create ladder rungs to climb, or branches to catch their fall. Some even use this to create furniture or elaborate plant sculptures.
- ◆ **Tree Hopping (Yang + Athletics):** The ninja infuses their ki into the soles of their feet to increase their jumping distances as long as the platform is wood. They can move at three times their normal Movement when jumping across wooden structures. This works just as well in a forest as across a wooden pier.
- ◆ **Unfolding Gift (Yang + Knowledge):** Upon the first time the ninja meets someone, they can use this jutsu to create an elaborate origami figure to present as a gift. The ninja gains a bonus to Persuade, equal to the number of successes gained, against the receiver of this gift for the rest of the Scene. With a Boost, the target also takes a Convinced 1 Condition.

MEDIAN JUTSU

◆ **Hiding Place (Yang + Holistics):** The ninja melds into a tree large enough to encompass their entire body. While there, they heal 1 Mental and 1 Physical damage



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every 10 minutes they spend within the tree.

- ◆ **Immaculate Bridge (Yang + Crafts):** The ninja creates a wooden bridge to access areas otherwise unattainable. For instance, the ninja may create a bridge over a lake or chasm. The bridge can extend over an area up to (Yang x50ft) and can hold up to 1,000 lbs.
- ◆ **Wall of Wood (Yang + Might):** The ninja summons an instant wall made of thick wood up to (Yang x5ft) tall and wide. The wall has a Tough (3) Difficulty to break through. On a Boost, this is raised to Challenging (4).
- ◆ **Weapon Craft (Yang + Crafts):** The ninja reaches into a tree and pulls out a weapon created just to their liking. This can be any completely wooden weapon. The ninja using it gains a +1 bonus to attack and damage while using it.
- ◆ **Wooden Visage (Yin + Deception):** The ninja hardens their visage into a mask depicting a single emotion of their choosing regardless of what they are really feeling. For example, the ninja may harden their face to appear neutral while internally raging, or to appear sad when they are anything but. Others who attempt to sway the ninja socially suffer a -2 penalty.

ADVANCED JUTSU

- ◆ **Bend Like the Willow (Yin + Athletics):** The ninja is flexible like the willow tree. They gain a +3 bonus to Defense checks in both physical and social combat for a number of Rounds equal to successes.
- ◆ **Forest Walk (Yang + Travel):** Must have Tree Hopping. The ninja steps into a tree, and can exit from another tree up to (Yang x100ft) away. If the trees are within the same forest or jungle, the ninja ignores the distance requirement, they can step between any two trees within the same forested area.
- ◆ **Maze of Trees (Yin + Deception):** The ninja infuses their ki into a jungle or forested (Yang x100ft) area, creating illusions within the trees that make it nearly impassable. Anyone who enters the area suffers a -3 penalty on checks to navigate or travel through the space. Additionally, anyone who enters combat while in the area suffers a -2 penalty to all combat checks as the illusions disrupt their perceptions.
- ◆ **Regrowth (Yang + Knowledge):** With only a few seeds or cuttings, the ninja can restore vegetation to the earth in an area (Yang x200ft). They can regrow entire forests, create bountiful fields or even cause jungles to arise from plains. The plants last for a number of days equal to successes gained, but wither and die unless sufficient water or sunlight is available to maintain the new growth. If someone is in the area when the plants begin to grow, they suffer a -2 penalty to Actions (or -4 Movement)

until the growth stops within (Yang) Rounds.

- ◆ **Wood Form (Yang + Fortitude):** Must have Hiding Place. The ninja becomes a being of pure wood. Thick bark covers their skin, and vines extend in a tentacle-like fashion from their body. The ninja gains +2 armor and +1 Health for the duration of the Battle or Scene. Additionally, the ninja gains a +2 bonus to Initiate Grab, Disarm and Catch Actions.

GENERAL JUTSU

WAY OF BEASTS

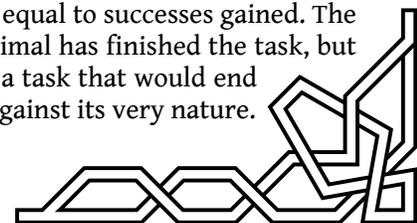
Element: Earth

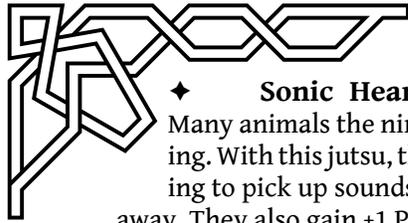
Training: Much of the training involved in the Way of Beasts revolves around surviving in the wilderness among the wild animals of the world. Reaching mastery means the ninja is at ease with the animal within, and converses with animals like friends. On a Boost during a Way of Beasts jutsu, the character gains a cumulative +1 Initiative and +1 Fighting as they show more of their animal side.

Backfire: Accepting more of the animal inside makes the ninja lose themselves. They suffer a cumulative -1 penalty to all social checks for the Scene.

BASIC JUTSU

- ◆ **Bloodhound (Yang + Perception):** Taking aspects of animals with a strong sense of smell for the Scene, the ninja now gains +1 Perception for smell/taste related checks and can pick up scents anywhere within (Yang x100ft). On a Boost, this distance is extended up to 1/2 mile.
- ◆ **Calming Presence (Yin + Empathy):** If ever faced with an angry or attacking animal, the ninja simply looks at the creature to return it to a calmed position. Grants +1 Persuade for further interaction with the animal.
- ◆ **Eagle Eye (Yang + Perception):** Embodying the spirit of the eagle, the ninja enhances their sight to see perfect details at up to (Yang x100ft). They also gain +1 Perception checks while active. On a Boost, this distance is extended up to 1/2 mile.
- ◆ **Favor (Yin + Persuade):** The ninja learns how to speak to animals as if they are people, each species having their own personalities and quirks. When using this jutsu, the character can give the animal an order with a number of steps equal to successes gained. The effects last until the animal has finished the task, but they will not complete a task that would end with its death or goes against its very nature.





◆ **Sonic Hearing (Yin + Perception):**

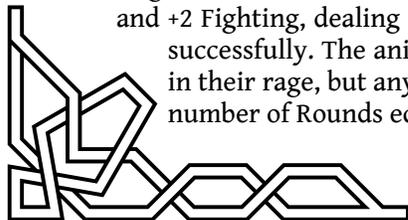
Many animals the ninja studied have expert hearing. With this jutsu, the ninja enhances their hearing to pick up sounds perfectly up to (Yin x100 ft) away. They also gain +1 Perception for hearing checks while the jutsu is active. On a Boost, the distance is extended up to 1/2 mile.

MEDIAN JUTSU

- ◆ **Animal Stance (Yang + Might):** The ninja draws on the essence of the animal matching a fighting style they possess, and gains bonuses accordingly. Bonuses are either +1 Health or +1 Psyche, as well as a +2 bonus to a related Skill. These bonuses last for a number of Rounds equal to successes rolled. For instance, Wildcat Style may give +1 Health and +2 Speed, while Eagle Style may give +1 Psyche and +2 Perception.
- ◆ **Beast Form (Yang + Fortitude):** The ninja transforms into an animal type (chosen when learned), taking on any natural abilities and weaknesses the animal may have. For instance, turning into an eagle would grant flight, but would reduce their Health. Transforming into a Bear would grant great strength and extra damage from claws, but would make it hard to exist in regular society. May be taken multiple times for different animals.
- ◆ **Control Beast (Yin + Intimidation):** Must have Favor. The ninja locks eyes with an animal to link their minds, taking control of the animal for the rest of the Scene. They may direct the animal's Actions with a Quick Action. Does not work on the ninja dogs of the Pack of the Black Moon.
- ◆ **Night Eyes (Yin + Perception):** The ninja becomes accustomed to operating at night, reducing any penalties due to darkness by 2. The eerie glow to their eyes also grants them +1 Intimidation for the Scene.
- ◆ **Tunneler (Yang + Crafts):** The ninja grows digging claws like that of moles and other burrowing animals. This allows them to tunnel through rock and stone at a rate of (Yang x10ft) per Round of concentration. If used in combat, they deal +1 damage with attacks and may block weapons attacks without penalty.

ADVANCED JUTSU

- ◆ **Animal Warrior (Yang + Persuade):** The ninja touches an animal near them, making them grow larger and much deadlier. The animal gains +3 Health and +2 Fighting, dealing +1 damage when they attack successfully. The animal will not attack the ninja in their rage, but anyone else is fair game. Lasts a number of Rounds equal to successes gained.



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- ◆ **Stampede (Yang + Discipline):** Must have Control Beast. All of the animals in the surrounding area start to run amuck, attacking anything in their way and destroying everything in their wake. Anyone within Far Range of the ninja using this jutsu must make a number of Moderate (2) Defense checks equal to activation successes. Failed checks inflict 2 damage.
- ◆ **Steed (Yang + Persuade):** From nowhere, the ninja summons a riding mount for travel. When using the steed during a Journey, they gain a number of bonus dice equal to their successes +2 to be split among the Journey stages however they wish.
- ◆ **Swarm Form (Yang + Fortitude):** Must have Beast Form. Instead of turning into a single animal, the ninja transforms into a swarm of that animal type. This allows them to spread their presence over (Yang x50ft) and they cannot be killed unless all of the swarm is destroyed. They also gain +2 Intimidation, due to perceived strength in numbers.
- ◆ **Wild Ward (Yin + Intimidation):** After using this jutsu, animals cannot enter an area within Far Range of the ninja. Ninja dogs get to resist with Discipline + Fortitude due to their special breeding, but no other animal may approach the ninja.

WAY OF MOVEMENT

Element: Fire

Training: A ninja with this jutsu has endured rigorous spiritual training to enhance their ability to move with quickness. Reaching mastery of this Way means instant relocation and even ignoring obstacles entirely. On a Boost of any jutsu activation, the ninja gains +2 Movement and +1 Initiative. These bonuses are cumulative.

Backfire: The ninja's body atrophies from its internal energy releasing incorrectly. They suffer a cumulative -1 penalty to Initiative and -2 penalty to Movement for the Scene.

BASIC JUTSU

- ◆ **Air's Embrace (Yin + Travel):** When falling, the ninja need only will themselves to stop just before they hit the ground. This jutsu negates all falling damage regardless of the height.
- ◆ **Lightfoot (Yin + Speed):** The ninja becomes as light as a feather for the Scene, doubling their jump distance and leaving no tracks as they travel. They can even stand weightless at the end of a sword or motionless on water, and gain +1 Stealth.

CHAPTER FOUR - EXPRESSIONS OF KI

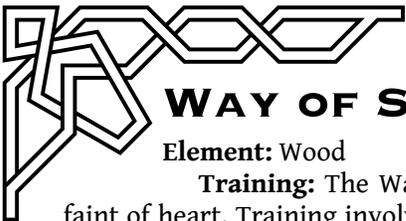
- ◆ **Surface Running (Yang + Speed):** The ninja has learned how to maintain a steady flow of ki to their feet and hands, allowing them to run along walls or ceilings with ease. Active for the Scene, regardless of how many times they attach or reattach to a surface. On a Boost, they can even move over water, though they may require Speed + Travel checks to avoid tripping if the water is too choppy.
- ◆ **Tiger's Leap (Yang + Might):** The ninja uses their Yang to launch themselves into the sky with a masterful leap. They multiply their jump distance by (Yang +1) for a single Jump.
- ◆ **Unmoving Stance (Yin + Discipline):** The ninja fills their body with Yin, making themselves almost impossible to move. They automatically succeed against Knock Back or Knock Down effects for a number of Rounds equal to their successes.

MEDIAN JUTSU

- ◆ **Float (Yang + Travel):** Must have Air's Embrace. Breaking the laws of the universe, the ninja can now hover for the Scene. This can instantly negate damage from falling, like Air's Embrace, but also allows them to float up to 10ft per Rank off the ground. When floating, they move at only half Movement. If they get a Boost, their Movement returns to normal.
- ◆ **Lightning Fists (Yang + Fighting):** In an instant, the ninja can make 3 Attacks against a single opponent in close combat with a single check. Each attack is defended against separately. Cannot be used with large or Unwieldy weapons.
- ◆ **Rotation Defense (Yin + Speed):** By spinning incredibly fast, the ninja affects the space around them, making it harder to hit them with ranged weapons. Ranged attacks on the ninja while they are spinning suffer a (Yin) penalty. The ninja can remain spinning for 1 Round per success rolled. If they stop to attack, they must reactivate the jutsu.
- ◆ **Speed's Gift (Yin + Intuition):** Must have Unmoving Stance. The ninja may grant their increased speed to another by remaining completely still. Add the ninja's Movement to another's for as long as they do not move.
- ◆ **Swift Soul (Yang + Travel):** The ninja infuses their soul with the speed of Yang, allowing them to add Speed to any Defense check. If the check already uses Speed (i.e. Dodge), they may double their Speed instead. Lasts for a number of Defense checks equal to their successes.

ADVANCED JUTSU

- ◆ **10,000 Fists (Yang + Speed):** Must have Lightning Fists. The ninja disappears and reappears around the battlefield in a blur of movement, striking one opponent after another. They may make a number of additional attacks this Round equal to their activation successes, at no penalty. Targets must be within Near Range. All attacks occur on the character's Initiative.
- ◆ **Intangibility (Yin + Fortitude):** The ninja inhales deeply, and the power of Yin allows them to pass through any solid object like it were nothing. They must hold their breath during this time, and the jutsu ends the moment they release their air.
- ◆ **Lightning Speed (Yang + Speed):** The ninja's body has reached its maximum speed potential. They may add their Yang to their Movement and Initiative for the Battle; using Interruptions only costs 1 Dynamic Action (pg. 141) and they suffer no penalty when using Quick Actions. In addition, they have a number of bonus dice to add to Actions/Defenses equal to their successes. These bonus dice can be split between many checks or used on a single die roll (player's choice).
- ◆ **Teleportation (Yang + Travel):** The ninja learns to inscribe a special kanji on items, people or locations (no limit to how many they may inscribe). If one of these symbols is within (Yang) miles, they may use this jutsu to instantly teleport to it. Some ninja put this marking on their kunai, throwing them into the battlefield to give themselves an advantage in combat. On a Boost, they may teleport one additional time per Scene without a check.
- ◆ **Upward (Yang + Travel):** Must have Float. While a rare jutsu, some ninja have mastered the power of flight itself for the Scene. They may soar into the sky at any height, multiplying their Movement by (Yang -1, minimum 2).



WAY OF SURVIVAL

Element: Wood

Training: The Way of Survival is not for the faint of heart. Training involves spending weeks, or even months, alone and naked in the wilderness, using only one's jutsu and wits to survive. Once mastered, the ninja learns how to survive any trouble. On a Boost during an activation check, they may heal 1 damage done to Psyche. If they Boost three times in the same Scene, they may reduce a Condition by 1 instead.

Backfire: A failure causes them to become a target, putting them in constant trouble. The next threat to the group will instead target only the ninja, who suffers a -2 penalty to Resistance or Defense checks against it.

BASIC JUTSU

- ◆ **Danger Sense (Yang + Intuition):** The ninja becomes hyper-aware of their surroundings for the Scene. This makes them immune to surprise attacks and grants a +2 Initiative bonus for the first Round of Battle.
- ◆ **Escape Technique (Yin + Speed):** This jutsu releases the ninja from binding. Rope snaps, chains budge and cages are mysteriously unlocked. Note that it is only usable if the ninja is trapped themselves, not to free others.
- ◆ **Foraging Technique (Yang + Survival):** When using this jutsu, bugs become numerous and non-poisonous plants abound. They receive +3 Survival for finding food and clean water.
- ◆ **Trackless Movement (Yin + Stealth):** Moving silently and without a trace becomes second nature to the ninja. They leave no footsteps behind and any slight disturbances are ignored (i.e. snapping a branch is silent, brushing a painting doesn't move it, etc.). They also receive +2 Speed vs traps.
- ◆ **Weather Tracking (Yin + Intuition):** The ninja gains insight into the weather patterns and the most probable natural occurrences. This provides +1 Survival for (Yin) days for living in the wilderness. Does not predict jutsu or otherworldly changes.

MEDIAN JUTSU

- ◆ **Camouflage (Yin + Deception):** The ninja becomes one with their environment, blending in with a trick to the eye. This grants a Stealth bonus equal to successes gained. If they leave the area, they must use the jutsu again.
- ◆ **Instant Break (Yin + Marksman):** The ninja can simply break an object they see within Near Range. This works best on handheld items, which shatter instantly. On larger items, it deals 3 damage,

CHAPTER FOUR - EXPRESSIONS OF KI

ignoring any Armor.

- ◆ **The Perfect Tool (Yang + Crafts):** There is a tool for every job, and this jutsu summons that tool to the ninja's hands instantly. When using the tool, they gain a +2 bonus to its corresponding Skill.
- ◆ **Realm of Warning (Yin + Empathy):** They create an invisible field, extending up to (Yin x50ft) in all directions, which instantly alerts the ninja to anyone (or anything) that enters or exits the area. The ninja even receives a mental image of who passed through. Lasts for the Scene.
- ◆ **Summon Shelter (Yang + Crafts):** The ninja's power brings into creation an instant shelter in the form of an unfurnished, small wooden shack, capable of accommodating up to (Yang) people comfortably.

ADVANCED JUTSU

- ◆ **The Ground Speaks (Yang + Perception):** By kneeling down and conversing with the earth, the ninja can get a lay of the land within (Yang) miles. This provides a +3 bonus to any checks to construct strategies and allows them to ignore any traps within their range.
- ◆ **Guardians (Yin + Persuade):** Must have Realm of Warning. Once Realm of Warning has been activated, this jutsu creates up to (Yin) Guardians to defend the perimeter. Each has 3 Health and 1 Armor, and 4 dice for both Attack and Defense. With a Boost, the Guardians have 6 dice for Attack and Defense instead.
- ◆ **Resist the Elements (Yin + Survival):** The ninja can withstand any force of nature without harm. For example, they are now immune to the effects of wild-fires, tornadoes or earthquakes. This removes all environmental penalties, and the ninja receives a +2 bonus to Defense or Resistance checks against Elemental jutsu for the Scene.
- ◆ **Safe Travels (Yin + Travel):** Saying goodbye is never easy, but the ninja can give their blessings of travel onto their comrades. This provides bonus dice equal to successes gained to another character's Journey. The bonus dice can be split between the various rolls however they wish. The ninja may not be traveling along though.
- ◆ **Second Wind (Yang + Discipline):** Surviving the worst conditions is what these ninja do best. Gaining their Second Wind, they heal damage (of either type) equal to successes rolled, up to half their total damage taken. For instance, if the ninja had lost 4 Health and 2 Psyche, they could heal 3 damage in any combination.

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WAY OF THE UNSEEN

Element: Water

Training: Ninja who train in the Way of the Unseen must undergo rigors to separate their being from their identity. Practitioners of this jutsu are masters of misdirection and illusion who can completely disappear or appear as though they are in one place while really being in another. A Boost on activation allows the ninja to create a distraction giving opponents -2 Perception to notice them.

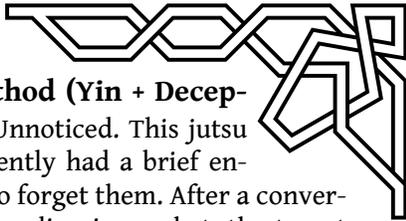
Backfire: Improper use of this jutsu causes a ninja to lose their sense of self for a short period. The ninja is overwhelmed with distraction and takes a -2 penalty to all Stealth or Perception based actions for the rest of the Scene.

BASIC JUTSU

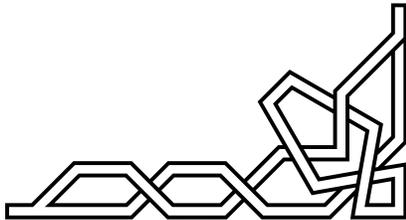
- ◆ **Blank Face (Yin + Perform):** The ninja is able to remove all traces of emotion or feeling from their face. In a social setting, this makes it very hard for others to gain an advantage against them. Anyone attempting a social attack on the ninja suffers a -2 penalty.
- ◆ **Unarmed Position (Yin + Deception):** The ninja is able to conceal an object in their clothes, making it invisible to anyone searching for it. This affects small, hand-held items, or slightly larger items (i.e. swords) with a Boost. If the ninja pulls the object out, the jutsu ends.
- ◆ **The Unheard (Yin + Stealth):** The ninja uses this jutsu to cancel all sound in a (Yin x5ft) radius area centered on the ninja. With a Boost, the ninja can instead make up to (Yin) specific individuals quiet.
- ◆ **The Unnoticed (Yin + Stealth):** The ninja is able to blend perfectly with any background. As long as they are standing still, they are perfectly hidden and cannot be seen. The ninja can move at walking speed or slower, but has a chance of being spotted. They have +2 Stealth checks when moving. With a Boost, the ninja can run or sprint without ending the jutsu.
- ◆ **The Unscented (Yin + Stealth):** The ninja removes all traces of their passing, including scent. Anyone attempting to track by scent automatically fails.

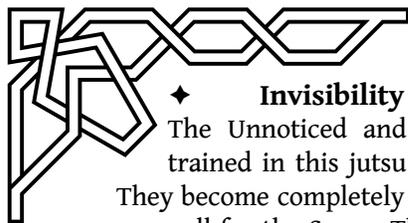
MEDIAJAN JUTSU

- ◆ **Artful Exit (Yin + Empathy):** Must have Blank Face. As long as the ninja is not in physical combat, they can leave any social situation without backlash. For instance, if someone was angry with the ninja, they could use this jutsu to leave the situation, and the other would rationalize the ninja's departure as socially acceptable.

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- ◆ **Easily Forgotten Method (Yin + Deception):** Must have The Unnoticed. This jutsu causes anyone who recently had a brief encounter with the ninja to forget them. After a conversation not involving or ending in combat, the target forgets who they were talking to and/or what they were talking about. With a Boost, the ninja can affect up to (Yin) targets.
 - ◆ **Illusory Object (Yang + Deception):** The ninja touches an object, and makes it disappear. In its place, a simple illusion of the same object appears. This illusion is static and cannot move. If the object normally has moving parts, the illusion does not mimic it. The invisible object can be moved or taken, but the illusion remains in its original place for the rest of the Scene.
 - ◆ **Invisible Blade (Yang + Crafts):** The ninja pulls forth a weapon from thin air. The weapon is completely invisible, even to the ninja wielding it. The weapon functions just like its mundane counterpart, except it grants the ninja a +1 bonus to attack and targets suffer a -1 penalty to Block.
 - ◆ **Reflection Defense (Yang + Deception):** This jutsu creates a mirror image of the ninja so close in proximity that they appear blurred. This affords the ninja +2 bonus to Dodge or Find Cover. If used with Deflect Attack (pg. 141), the ninja Defends with a +3 bonus instead.

ADVANCED JUTSU

- ◆ **10,000 Masks (Yin + Empathy):** Must have Easily Forgotten Method. The ninja changes their face to appear as someone else. They can make themselves look like a person who belongs in the setting they find themselves in. For example, if walking through a palace in the Empire, they may be mistaken for a guard or a scribe. With a Boost, the ninja can mimic a specific person.
 - ◆ **Element's Embrace (Yin + Survival):** This jutsu allows the ninja to use the very elements as a hiding place. They can meld into a tree, sink into the earth or even become translucent underwater, breathing normally within their chosen element. They can move at 1/4 their normal speed within the element, but cannot move through other elements or make attacks out of the element. The ninja chooses an element when learning the jutsu.
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◆ **Invisibility (Yin + Stealth):** Must have The Unnoticed and The Unscented. The ninja trained in this jutsu is a master at concealment. They become completely undetectable by sight, sound or smell for the Scene. The ninja can move at normal speed, or even run while using the jutsu, but if they interact with another person, the jutsu ends immediately.

◆ **No Exit (Yin + Deception):** With a touch, the ninja causes a structure to become imperceptible. This jutsu can affect a small structure, such as a door or gate, making it look as though only wall exists on either side, or it can affect something as large as a building causing those outside the building to be unable to see it. Only the structure, not those inside, are invisible, and the jutsu is not broken if someone leaves.

◆ **Ultimate Deception (Yang + Deception):** Must have Reflection Defense. The ninja becomes invisible (per the Invisibility jutsu above) for 1 Round and leaves behind a perfect illusory copy. The ninja can direct the copy to take any action they wish with a thought. The illusion is ephemeral, and cannot deal or take damage. The ninja can move about and act as normal regardless of what directions they give to their copy. The copy lasts for the Scene.

WAY OF THE WARRIOR

Element: Metal

Training: This is the jutsu of martial combat. Many ninja practice some of these forms, but true masters make their hands, body and even the essence of their ki into weapons for battle. On a Boost, they may gain +2 damage by spending a Dynamic Action (instead of the usual +1) to their next attack.

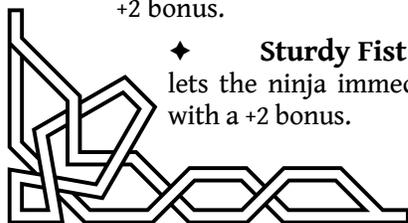
Backfire: The ninja begins to lose themselves in a red haze of violence. They suffer a cumulative Broken 1 (Perception) Condition for the Scene. A Boost during the Scene may reduce this special Condition.

BASIC JUTSU

◆ **Fighter's Focus (Yin + Perception):** The ninja synchronizes with a single opponent. For the rest of the Battle the ninja gains a +1 bonus on attacks and defenses against the target. On a Boost the ninja deals +1 damage against the target as well.

◆ **Precise Eye (Yin + Marksman):** Success allows the ninja to make an immediate Marksman attack with a +2 bonus.

◆ **Sturdy Fist (Yang + Fighting):** Success lets the ninja immediately roll a Fighting attack with a +2 bonus.



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◆ **Summon Weapon (Yang + Discipline):** The ninja is bonded with a weapon. As long as the weapon has a path to travel, the ninja may draw it to their hand as a free action from anywhere within line of sight. If someone else holds the weapon, they can resist with a Fortitude + Might check. On a Boost the weapon may travel (Yang) miles in an instant.

◆ **War Face (Yin + Discipline):** The ninja's resolve is bolstered by their ki. For the remainder of the Scene the ninja gains +2 Armor against mental damage, or +3 Armor on a Boost.

MEDIAJ JUTSU

◆ **Cannon Punch (Yang + Fighting):** Energy concentrates into the ninja's fists and then detonates upon an impact. For a number of punches equal to successes gained, they deal +1 damage and Knock Back (pg. 143) to target, adding yang to the ninja's Strength.

◆ **Deflect Missiles (Yin + Perception):** The ninja can feel arrows and thrown weapons coming, and swat them out of the air. The number of successes when Activating is the number of missiles that may be deflected. For each missile the ninja rolls a normal Block, they completely stop the attack with only 1 net success. On a Boost, firearms count as missiles the ninja may deflect.

◆ **Strength Boost (Yang + Might):** Pure ki courses through the ninja's muscles, massively increasing their physical power. For the rest of the Scene, their Strength is doubled, and they gain +1 damage on close combat attacks. On a Boost, Strength is tripled.

◆ **Thrown Barrage (Yang + Marksman):** The ninja quickly draws and hurls handfuls of small bladed weapons. The successes gained determine the maximum number of Distant targets that may be hit with 1 damage each, or the entire barrage may be directed at a single target for full damage. On a Boost the barrage can do full damage to up to (Yang) nearby targets.

◆ **Weapon Morph (Yang + Crafts):** Requires Summon Weapon. For the ninja, rope becomes a whip, and a plucked reed is a sword. When this power is activated on an object the ninja may add or remove Qualities (pg. 146) equal to the number of successes until the Battle ends. On a Boost the weapon deals +1 damage as well.

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ADVANCED JUTSU

- ◆ **Battle Fury (Yang + Fortitude):** Requires War Face. Ki can keep the ninja standing and fighting long after the limits of human endurance. For the remainder of the Battle the ninja gains +1 Armor and does not stop fighting at 0 Health. They can take additional Health damage equal to the number of successes, and then collapse after the Battle ends. If that number of Health is exceeded the ninja may choose to collapse immediately, or continue fighting but die when the Battle is over.
- ◆ **Energy from the Blade (Yang + Fighting):** Requires Cannon Punch. A cascade of ki streams from the ninja's weapon. The activation check becomes an attack against a Distant target with all the Qualities of the ninja's melee weapon. On a Boost, the cascade of energy will affect an additional target on the line of attack for full damage.
- ◆ **Fighter's Trance (Yin + Discipline):** The ninja gives themselves completely to the flow of ki in the area. For the rest of the Battle the ninja gains +4 Initiative, ignores penalties from the environment (including lack of visibility), and scores a Boost with only 2 additional success on combat checks.
- ◆ **Flying Weapon (Yang + Discipline):** A floating weapon harasses the ninja's target. It follows the target for Rounds equal to successes gained. Each Round, during the ninja's turn, it attacks the target with a +2 bonus. If the target attacks the ninja, the weapon adds this bonus to Block in addition to any defense the ninja offers. On a Boost, they may control up to (Discipline) weapons at once.
- ◆ **Pain Conversion (Yin + Fortitude):** The ninja can harness the energy of their own pain. Any Pain Condition the ninja is suffering is eliminated and becomes Yang. If the ninja does not currently have pain, they may instead suffer 1 Health to generate 3 Yang.



CLAN-SPECIFIC JUTSU

WAY OF BALANCING SCALES

Element: Earth

Training: These techniques are usually taught in pairs, each emphasizing the contrast and similarities. Students are teamed with opposites until they find harmony. The exertion for this training isn't obvious, it focuses more on introspection and internal energies, rather than the flashier practices of other Ways. On a Boost the ninja may convert 1 ki from one type to the other, as if using Ki Conversion.

Backfire: Balance must be restored. If the ninja has more of one type of ki, they lose ki until both are the same. If both are already the same they take 1 damage to either Health or Psyche.

BASIC JUTSU

- ◆ **Balanced Mind (Yin + Discipline):** The ninja eliminates levels of Mental Conditions equal to the successes gained (up to the ninja's Intuition). Can only be attempted once per Session.

- ◆ **Harmonic Flow (Yin + Survival):** In all places there is a finite amount of ki that may be drawn and molded. This jutsu redirects and frees some of that energy. For the rest of the Scene the environment is treated as though a ki line is present, allowing anyone to Mold Ki two extra times. On a Boost the ki in the environment also resets to its starting value.
- ◆ **Ki Conversion (Yin or Yang + Discipline):** The ninja picks Yin or Yang and rolls with that energy. The ninja may lose ki of that type up to the number of successes gained and receive an equal amount of ki of the opposite type.
- ◆ **Many Tongues (Yin + Knowledge):** There is understanding that goes beyond words, and the ninja taps into it. For the rest of the Scene they hear what others intend to communicate regardless of language, and others hear the same from them. Lying is still possible, but misunderstandings are not.
- ◆ **Penetrating Senses (Yin + Perception):** The ninja can see through (Yin) feet of barriers or materials for as long as they concentrate. This allows them to see contents concealed within containers or on people, or overhear snippets of conversation through walls. Gold is the only known material this jutsu can't penetrate.

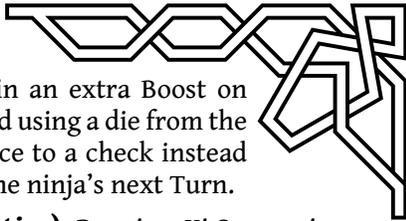
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MEDIAN JUTSU

- ◆ **Drain Ki (Yin + Discipline):** Must have Ki Conversion. Unarmed blows now steal a target's energy, affecting a number of attacks equal to successes gained. Eliminate 1 ki from the target (ninja's choice of type), and the ninja gains 1 ki of the same type.
- ◆ **Mind's Eye (Yin + Intuition):** The ninja sees with ki rather than with their eyes. For the rest of the Scene, the ninja ignores any Penalty for blindness or visibility and can see through any Basic Jutsu that obscures or makes someone invisible. On a Boost, the ninja may see through Median Jutsu as well.
- ◆ **Perceive Ki (Yang + Perception):** Requires Penetrating Senses. Ki movement generates patterns that the ninja can see and exploit. The ninja chooses a target they can see, and learns that target's birth Element, current ki levels and any active jutsu they have. They gain a +2 bonus on any attempt to detect or track that target, but may not recover Yang while this jutsu remains active.
- ◆ **See Price (Yin + Intuition):** Requires Perceive Ki. The ninja asks a target to do something, and this jutsu reads from that target the minimum bribe that would entice the target to agree, giving them +2 Persuasion against the target. The bribe might be in currency, but more likely is a favor or something else the target desires. The price isn't always something the ninja can actually offer at the time.
- ◆ **Tainted Ki (Yang + Holistics):** Must have Ki Conversion. With a touch the ninja disrupts the target's energy flow. If the touch is not avoided, the effect lasts for Rounds equal to successes gained. While affected, the target must use the opposite type of ki to activate any jutsu, and any jutsu used creates a Backfire effect.

ADVANCED JUTSU

- ◆ **Deactivate Jutsu (Yin + Discipline):** The power of an active jutsu is dispersed when the ninja touches either the wielder or the target. The jutsu's Duration immediately ends unless the original wielder wins an Opposed check between this activation and the original power's activation.
- ◆ **Destroy Ki (Yang + Might):** Requires Drain Ki. The ninja's unarmed blows now disrupt a target's energy. A number of attacks equal to successes gained are imbued with this effect, eliminating 1 ki of each type from the target and causing a Pain 1 Condition for each successful hit. If the target has no more ki to lose it deals +2 damage per hit instead.
- ◆ **Harmonic Resonance (Yin + Empathy):** Requires Harmonic Flow. All nearby allies gain focus and energy from the ninja's chanting. For the rest of the Scene, when the ninja uses an Action to resonate, all allies



(including the user) gain an extra Boost on any successful check, and using a die from the Karma Pool adds two dice to a check instead of one. This lasts until the ninja's next Turn.

- ◆ **Poison Ki (Yin + Holistics):** Requires Ki Conversion and Tainted Ki. The ninja's own ki becomes disruptive and harmful to others, affecting a number of attacks equal to successes gained. When the ninja hits or is hit by an attack, the opponent's ki becomes poisoned. For the rest of the Battle the opponent suffers 1 damage to activate a Basic Jutsu, 2 damage to activate a Median Jutsu, and 3 damage to activate a Advanced Jutsu.
- ◆ **Reflect Jutsu (Yang + Discipline):** The ninja may use a Dynamic Action to send an opponent's jutsu back at them, avoiding the effects entirely with a successful activation. The attacker suffers the full effect of the original jutsu, even needing to defend against their original activation check. A failure means the ninja still suffers half the effect.

WAY OF CARING HANDS

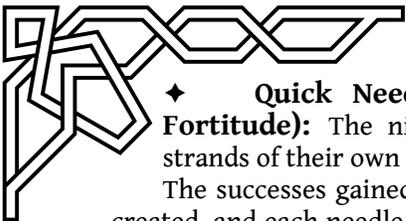
Element: Wood

Training: The secret jutsu used by Bamboo Herbalists. Practitioners tirelessly experiment with ki pathways, natural medicines and alchemical formulas to perfect their understanding of body and spirit. Ninja who know this way tend to be healthy and age gracefully. On a Boost the ninja may lower a Condition rating by 1 for themselves or the target within Near Range of their jutsu.

Backfire: Chaotic ki reversal causes a Condition to increase by 1 (GM's choice) on the ninja or the target of any healing.

BASIC JUTSU

- ◆ **Diagnostics (Yin + Holistics):** On a success the ninja understands any diseases, injuries, physical or mental ailments affecting the target and gains +1 Holistics to treat them.
- ◆ **Healing Trance (Yin + Discipline):** Deep meditation allows the ninja to focus their ki into mending their own wounds. The ninja heals 1 Health for each hour spent in the trance. On a Boost, all the ninja's bodily functions appear to stop during the trance, including breathing, bleeding and digestion.
- ◆ **Pure Touch (Yin + Holistics):** A link to the target's ki allows the ninja to filter out toxins. The touch eliminates any mundane Poison Condition and allows the ninja to Support (pg. 137) checks against jutsu empowered poisons. On a Boost, the ninja may purge jutsu poisons as well.



◆ **Quick Needle Technique (Yang + Fortitude):** The ninja can pluck and harden strands of their own hair into ki charged needles.

The successes gained are the number of needles created, and each needle may be thrown as a weapon (Qualities: Quick and Ranged) or used in acupuncture to gain +1 Holistics. On a Boost, the needles also gain the Piercing Quality.

◆ **Soothing Touch (Yang + Empathy):** Ki warms the ninja's hands and spreads into the target, eliminating any Pain or Broken Conditions and giving them a +1 bonus on their next check. On a Boost, the target recovers 1 Psyche.

MEDIAN JUTSU

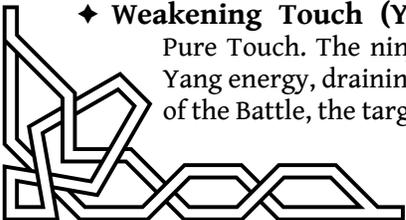
◆ **Confusion Touch (Yin + Fighting):** Requires Pure Touch. With a strike to a Chakra point the ninja disrupts the target's ki flow and scrambles their muscle control. Attempting to speak may cause the target's legs to twitch instead, or turning their head may lash out with a punch. The effect lasts for Rounds equal to the successes. For the duration the target only gains dice from the lowest Skill in any Combo. On a Boost any failure counts as a Critical Failure.

◆ **Death Trance (Yin + Fortitude):** Requires Healing Trance. The trance's duration is set when it begins, and may last days up to the successes rolled. The ninja is aware of their surroundings during the trance, but may not end it early unless they are damaged. During the trance the ninja does not require air, food or water, and appears as a corpse to any observers. On a Boost the ninja may initiate the trance in a willing ally.

◆ **Heal Wound (Yang + Holistics):** Requires Diagnostics. Ki is projected from the ninja's hands into the wounds of others to mend them. The target heals Health equal to successes gained, and the ninja may Support the target's Fortitude checks with Holistics. On a Boost, the ninja may use this jutsu on themselves.

◆ **Paralysis Needles (Yin + Marksman):** Requires Quick Needle Technique. Precise strikes to the target's deactivation pressure points, either at range or in close combat, render them immobile. The target may use Defenses normally, and loses a Turn for each success that gets through. On a lost Turn the target may attempt a Tough (3) Discipline + Fortitude check to break free of the paralysis. On a Boost the target is paralyzed for the entire Scene.

◆ **Weakening Touch (Yin + Holistics):** Requires Pure Touch. The ninja's touch cools the target's Yang energy, draining their strength. For the rest of the Battle, the target's Strength is halved, deals



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-1 damage on all attacks and suffers a -2 Might penalty. On a Boost the damage penalty is increased to -2 (other penalties stay the same).

ADVANCED JUTSU

◆ **Corpse Puppet (Yin + Perform):** A fresh corpse is animated with precise acupuncture and projected ki. For the remainder of the Scene, the ninja controls the corpse's movements with their own Actions and Skills, and can see through the corpse's eyes. The ninja may speak through the corpse's mouth, but must make a Deception + Persuade check to sound natural.

◆ **Lasting Life Technique (Yang + Holistics):** Requires Diagnostics, Pure Touch, Heal Wound. The ninja channels ki into a recently dead body to jumpstart it back to life. The target must be physically intact as this jutsu does not heal damage; it only restores life. The target may be dead for a number of Rounds up to the number of successes, and they awaken with 1 Health and 1 Psyche. On a Boost, the target may have been dead for hours up to the number of successes.

◆ **Morph Ingredients (Yang + Holistics):** Ki energy alters the composition of a potion ingredient. The ingredient may be changed to any other with an equal or lesser value. When used with Alchemy (pg. 74), they can raise or lower the Difficulty to resist the potion by 2. If the character does not have Alchemy, it instead grants +3 Holistics to their next check.

◆ **Regeneration Technique (Yang + Fortitude):** Requires Healing Trance. The ninja infuses their body with warm mending ki. For the remainder of the Battle the ninja regains 1 lost Health or Psyche at the beginning of every Round. On a Boost, the ninja regains 2 Health or Psyche (or 1 of each) instead.

◆ **Transfer Ailments (Yin + Discipline):** Requires Diagnostics and Heal Wound. A touch connects the ninja to the target and transfers any damage, Conditions or jutsu effects desired. This could be used to pull harmful effects away from an ally, or bestow those effects on a foe with a Touch. The victim resists with Yang + Fortitude against the ninja's activation check.

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WAY OF EBONY CLUTCHES

Element: Water

Training: Members of the Grasping Shadows Clan must enter into the realm of shadows as part of initiation into this jutsu. Those who survive the rigors of training have a mastery over the shadows and its realms. A Boost on activation gives the ninja a +2 bonus to their next Stealth check.

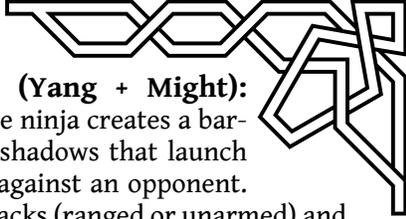
Backfire: The shadows abandon the ninja who fails to activate this jutsu properly. The ninja suffers a -1 cumulative penalty to checks involving Stealth for a Scene.

BASIC JUTSU

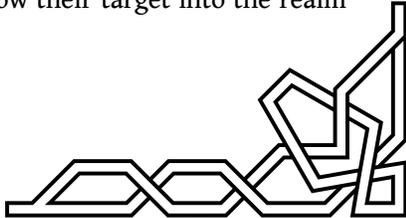
- ◆ **Dark Eyes (Yin + Perception):** The ninja infuses their ki into their eyes allowing them to see in any kind of darkness, even that imposed by other jutsu. If blinded, they can sense the surrounding shadows to reduce any penalties to partial blindness.
- ◆ **Master of Night (Yin + Survival):** The ninja creates a shadow that eclipses the sky and casts a (Yin x100ft) area into darkness as though it were nighttime that lasts for the rest of the Scene. Anyone in the area other than the ninja suffers a -2 penalty to Perception checks. The darkness provides a +1 bonus to further uses of Ebony Clutches jutsu. With a Boost, the ninja can inflict the Sensory Loss 1 Condition on a number of people in the area equal to successes.
- ◆ **Puppetry (Yang + Perform):** The ninja manipulates shadows to create a fantastical show. Detailed descriptions can entrance onlookers, giving the ninja a +2 bonus on checks to impress an audience. Alternately, the ninja can use the shadow play to distract others, instead inflicting a -1 penalty on Initiative checks.
- ◆ **Shadow Cloak (Yin + Stealth):** The ninja pulls a nearby shadow around their body to give them a +2 Stealth. The shadow obscures them enough to make it impossible for anyone to correctly identify them by sight. With a Boost, the ninja may affect (Yin) additional people.
- ◆ **Shadow Pocket (Yin + Knowledge):** The ninja is able to create a small space in the realm of shadows in which they can place a single object roughly half their size or smaller. Later use of this jutsu allows the ninja to pull forth the object. Only one object can be stored in the shadow pocket at a time. With a Boost, the ninja can store an object as large as themselves.

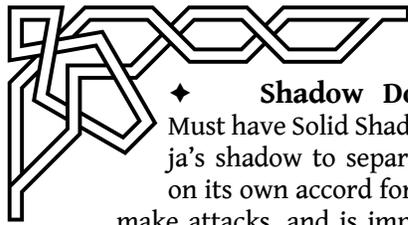
MEDIAN JUTSU

- ◆ **Blinding Darkness (Yin + Perception):** Must have Shadow Cloak. The ninja creates a deep darkness in a (Yin x10ft) area. Anyone inside the darkness is considered blind, and has a -3 penalty to all checks until they leave the darkness.

- 
- ◆ **Shadow Fist Attack (Yang + Might):** Must have Puppetry. The ninja creates a barrage of fists out of the shadows that launch into a flurry of attacks against an opponent. The fists have a +2 to attacks (ranged or unarmed) and inflict 2 damage. These fists act independently of the ninja, and make (Yang) number of attacks on a target before disappearing back into the shadows.
 - ◆ **Shadow Overwhelming (Yang + Intimidation):** Must have Puppetry. The shadows around the ninja move in such a way as to create a menacing effect for (Yang) Rounds. Anyone who sees the ninja and their shadow must make a Discipline + Empathy resistance check, or gain the Afraid Condition.
 - ◆ **Shadow's Tentacle (Yang + Crafts):** Must have Puppetry. The ninja creates (Yang) whip-like tentacles out of the surrounding darkness. The tentacles act independently of the ninja, and follow directions as a Quick Action from the ninja. Each tentacle can attack independent targets using half the ninja's dice pool for unarmed attacks, and deals 1 damage. They can lift objects up to 200lbs and carry them for the ninja. The tentacles last for a Scene or Battle.
 - ◆ **Solid Shadow (Yang + Discipline):** The ninja is able to solidify their target's shadow, making it an extension of the person's body. Attacks that hit the target's shadow deal damage to the target as though they were hit. The target suffers a -2 penalty to all Defense checks for a number of Rounds equal to successes.

ADVANCED JUTSU

- ◆ **Enter the Shadow Realm (Yang + Travel):** The ninja creates a corridor between the normal realm and the realm of shadows. The passage remains open for (Yang) Rounds, and anyone can pass through it during this time. If the ninja uses this jutsu to exit the realm of shadows, they appear anywhere in the world they have been to before that is currently in darkness. This allows the ninja to bypass the River, Forge and Mountain aspects of a Journey.
 - ◆ **Grasping Shadows (Yin + Might):** The ninja manipulates the shadows to encompass their target and drag them to the realm of shadows. The victim rolls Might + Speed against the ninja's jutsu activation check. If the target loses, they are sucked in to the realm of shadow and kept there for 1 day. After the duration, they are spit out in a random place up to 1 mile away. With a Boost, the ninja can follow their target into the realm of shadows.
- 



◆ **Shadow Double (Yin + Persuade):**

Must have Solid Shadow. This jutsu causes the ninja's shadow to separate itself from them and act on its own accord for a Scene. The shadow cannot make attacks, and is impervious to damage, but anything the shadow witnesses or hears is relayed perfectly back to the ninja. While using this jutsu, the ninja is immune to Way of the Ebony Clutches jutsu that would affect their shadow.

- ◆ **Shadow's Jump (Yang + Travel):** The ninja is able to teleport through shadows. Once activated, this jutsu allows the ninja to use a Move Action to travel to a single shadow within line of sight. They disappear from their current location, and appear out of the target shadow.
- ◆ **Unmoving Shadow (Yin + Persuade):** The ninja commands their target's shadow to become unmovable, causing the target to become semi-paralyzed. The target cannot move from their current position and is at a -2 penalty to all actions and defenses for (Yin) Rounds.

WAY OF GREAT SERPENTS

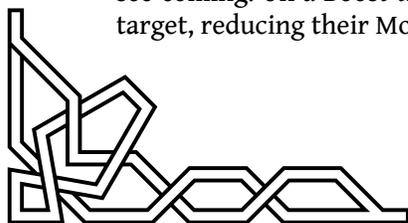
Element: Wood

Training: Other ninja whisper tales of the Recoiling Serpents, the secretive practitioners of this jutsu, meditating in snake pits or intentionally injecting themselves with exotic venoms. Students trained in this way are immune to the effects of poisons. On a Boost, they may instantly reduce a comrade's Poison Condition by 1.

Backfire: The ninja's ki is unbalanced by the toxins in their blood, and they suffer a cumulative 1 level Slowed Condition. A Boost during the Scene may reduce this special Condition.

BASIC JUTSU

- ◆ **Acid Spit (Yang + Holistics):** The ninja's saliva becomes poisonous and able to dissolve metal. When activated the ninja may either spit at a Near opponent dealing damage equal to successes, or lick a weapon to add +1 damage to attacks equal to the number of successes. On a Critical Failure with a licked weapon it is destroyed by the acidic toxin.
- ◆ **Hypnotic Eyes (Yin + Persuade):** A subtle transformation makes the ninja's eyes reptilian and fascinating. For the rest of the Scene the ninja may use Yin + Persuade as a Defense against any attack they can see coming. On a Boost the ninja may immobilize the target, reducing their Movement to 0 for a Round.



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- ◆ **Long Tongue (Yang + Fortitude):** A thick and serpentine tongue sprouts from the ninja's mouth up to (Yang x3ft) long. For the rest of the Scene it may be used to strike, block, or grab Near things without using the ninja's hands. A ninja grabbing with the tongue may still use weapons of any size.
- ◆ **Sip of Venom (Yin + Holistics):** A quick taste of a substance instantly identifies its ingredients and potential uses, and the ninja gains +2 Holistics to try to recreate the poison for the Scene. On a Boost, the ninja detects anyone nearby who has had recent contact with the substance or its ingredients.
- ◆ **Swallow (Yin + Fortitude):** The ninja's jaw unhinges, and they may swallow and later regurgitate any item half their size or smaller. The ninja chooses whether to digest the item, but may not recover Yin while the item is still inside. On a Boost, they can swallow something their same size.

MEDIAJ JUTSU

- ◆ **Adaptation Technique (Yin + Survival):** The ninja slides to the ground and takes on the coloration of the surrounding terrain, gains +1 Stealth and ignores terrain obstacles/ hazards for the Scene.
- ◆ **Serpent's Scales (Yin + Fortitude):** Skin transforms to scales, becoming tough, but slick. This grants +1 Armor and a +2 bonus to resist Grapple attempts for the rest of the Battle. On a Boost the scales provide +2 Armor instead.
- ◆ **Shed Skin (Yang + Fortitude):** The ninja's outer layer of skin disintegrates, revealing unmarked skin underneath. Cuts, bruises, and most tattoos simply peel off and disappear. The ninja restores 3 Health, and may additionally restore 2 Psyche on a Boost.
- ◆ **Snake Surprise (Yang + Discipline):** A ninja may activate this jutsu while grabbing or being grabbed. Poisonous serpents slither out of the ninja's clothing and pouches. The grappled foe suffers an Afraid 1 Condition per success gained (maximum of the ninja's Intimidation), and 1 damage each Round until the Grab is broken.
- ◆ **Venom Strike (Yang + Holistics):** Requires Sip of Venom. A fang dripping venom extends from each fingertip. Unarmed strikes deal +1 damage and +1 Poison Condition for the rest of the Battle, and they gain +1 Athletics for climbing checks.



ADVANCED JUTSU

- ◆ **Nagah Form (Yang + Fortitude):** Requires Shed Skin. The ninja's legs fuse and their body elongates into an unsettling serpentine form until the Scene ends. The ninja's Movement increases by +2, or by +4 across water or unbroken ground like grass, sand, or snow. If coiled around an opponent (a Grab) they may still use weapons of any size and use Defenses against other attacks. On any Boost the ninja may constrict the coiled foe for 2 damage.
- ◆ **Poison Body Technique (Yin + Holistics):** Requires Acid Spit and Venom Strike. A painful ritual allows the ninja to become completely toxic for a number of days equal to successes gained. The ninja suffers a Deprived 2 Condition and 3 physical damage, neither of which can be healed or converted while the jutsu is in effect. Any contact with the ninja's skin, blood, or other fluids removes the target's ability to heal physical damage for days equal to the ninja's (Fortitude +2). Each day, the target must also make a Tough (3) Fortitude + Holistics check or suffer 1 physical damage and a Pain 1 Condition that does not fade until the poison runs its course.
- ◆ **Shed Body (Yang + Fortitude):** Requires Shed Skin and Swallow. A fully formed new body grows in the pit of the ninja's stomach. The new body bursts out of the ninja's mouth, sloughing off the hollowed out old body. Takes 1 Round to complete the process. All physical and mental damage is healed and any lost limbs are restored. The old skin may be used to grant a +1 bonus to crafting masks and disguises.
- ◆ **Up the Sleeves (Yang + Fighting):** Requires Snake Surprise. Snakes spring from the ninja's sleeves, coiling and striking a Near foe, who suffers -1 penalty to Defense. If the snakes hit, they not only deal damage but the foe is considered Grabbed for Rounds equal to successes gained, and deal 1 damage each Round. The ninja may execute grappling moves using the snakes from up to Far Range as a Quick Action.
- ◆ **Venomous Spew (Yang + Fortitude):** Requires Swallow. The ninja vomits a deadly spray of poison and acid on a Near target. The potent spray deals damage and a Poison Condition equal to net successes gained, ignores armor and Find Cover is the only defense. On a Boost, the spray can hit another Near target for full effect.



WAY OF HEAVEN'S JUDGEMENT

Element: Metal

Training: Students must first exercise their mind, displaying a keen understanding of justice, law and the fragility of both before even being allowed to touch a weapon. Many practitioners carefully memorize wanted posters and penal tattoos so they can be ever alert against wrong-doers. On a Boost, the ninja gains +1 damage against an active criminal. This training is especially coveted (and warped) by the Golden Lions since technically all ninja are criminals in the eyes of the Empire.

Backfire: The ninja suffers a cumulative Confused 1 Condition, and they can't determine guilt while Confused.

BASIC JUTSU

- ◆ **Deception Proof (Yang + Perception):** Lies cause a slight tremble in ki that the ninja can detect. For the rest of the scene the ninja automatically detects if the target's statement is true or false. This does not reveal the actual truth, nor does it detect lies by omission.
- ◆ **Detect Disturbance (Yin + Empathy):** The ninja reaches out with their feelings and is drawn to injustice. Usually the nearest crime or tragedy will pull the ninja towards it, but more significant events may overwhelm nearer milder events. A Boost adds a feeling of the kind of disturbance, and they can select which to follow if there is more than one.
- ◆ **Hunt the Guilty (Yin + Intuition):** The ninja attunes to a particular criminal case, and gains a +1 bonus on any check to discover clues, track perpetrators or convince others to help resolve it. The bonus remains until the case is solved, a new case is chosen or the ninja stops believing that the event was a crime.
- ◆ **Righteous Objection (Yang + Intimidation):** A criminal or unjust act the ninja sees is halted with just a shout, regardless of range. Treat successes gained as an Opposed check against the action. On a Boost, the act is halted instantly. The target of the objection must be able to hear the ninja.
- ◆ **Sense the Guilty (Yin + Empathy):** With just a glance, the ninja gets feelings and images of the crime the target feels most guilty about. Note that a crime only registers if the target actually feels guilty about it. On a Boost the images of the crime are clear enough to discern details about the circumstances.

CHAPTER FOUR - EXPRESSIONS OF KI MEDIAN JUTSU

- ◆ **Blind Justice (Yin + Intuition):** Requires Sense the Guilty. The ninja perceives opponents and attacks through ki, rather than by sight. For the remainder of the Battle the ninja ignores any penalties from blindness or darkness. On a Boost the ninja also gains a +1 Perception with another sense.
- ◆ **Eye for an Eye (Yang + Empathy):** Ki surrounds the ninja in a visible aura of retribution. For the rest of the Battle when the ninja suffers damage to Health or Physical Conditions, the attacker (up to Near Range) loses the same amount of Health and takes on the same Conditions. On a Boost, the aura damages Distant attackers as well.
- ◆ **Instant Justice (Yin + Empathy):** Requires Hunt the Guilty. An uttered curse forces a karmic backlash against a wrong-doer. The ninja must witness a criminal or unrighteous act in progress. Once affected by this jutsu, up to (Yin) perpetrators will fall victim to the same crime within days. On a Boost this happens within hours.
- ◆ **Mark of Guilt (Yin + Intimidation):** Requires Sense the Guilty. A tattoo appears on a touched target's face, declaring the crime they feel most guilty about. The tattoo fades after a number of days equal to successes gained, or until the target performs some act of reparation. While the mark appears, the target suffers a -1 Penalty to social checks for minor crimes such as "Liar" or "Thief", or a -2 for more serious crimes.
- ◆ **Part the Mystery (Yin + Intuition):** Requires Hunt the Guilty. A mystical vision imparts prophetic clues to a mystery. As the vision ends the ninja chooses one thing to learn: who committed the crime, how it was done or why it was done. On a Boost, the ninja learns two of the three. Visions are not accepted as evidence in most Imperial courts.

ADVANCED JUTSU

- ◆ **Avenging Spirits (Yin + Persuade):** Requires Hunt the Guilty and Instant Justice. A specific crime must be avenged, and the ninja's dedication is so absolute that even the dead help. Only perpetrators and the ninja can see the angry ghosts, which imbue a Dazed 1 Condition on perpetrators, and an Afraid 1 Condition on those who roll a Critical Failure. If the ninja is killed while this is in effect, they continue as a ghost that can affect only the perpetrators. Until the ninja ends the effect they may not recover or Mold Ki.
- ◆ **Dark Mark (Yin + Intimidation):** Requires Sense the Guilty and Instant Justice. The ninja brands a guilty target with a mystical sign. Until the target atones for the guilt in some way, any Failure becomes

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a Critical Failure, and any jutsu Backfires unless they use a Boost to counter this effect.

- ◆ **Divulgence (Yang + Intimidation):** Requires Deception Proof. Righteous fury forces full and truthful answers. The ninja may ask a number of simple (yes or no) questions equal to successes gained, and the target is compelled to answer them completely. On a Boost the ninja may ask a single complex question instead.
- ◆ **Judgement Blade (Yin + Empathy):** Requires Eye for an Eye and Instant Justice. This legendary and signature jutsu allows the ninja to attune a weapon to a single wronged victim. The weapon passes harmlessly through targets that have nothing to do with the crime. Against those complicit it deals normal damage, and +1 damage if they are directly responsible. Damage inflicted by the weapon ignores Armor, and any Condition caused counts as 1 step higher than normal. The ninja may not recover ki until they end this effect and the weapon returns to normal.
- ◆ **Mark of Atonement (Yin + Empathy):** Requires Sense the Guilty and Mark of Guilt. A magical symbol appears on the target. It tells everyone what the target must do to atone for the crime they feel most guilty about. If that is done, the mark and their guilt disappears. However if the same crime is committed again they suffer 3 Health. Each time the Mark triggers it deals 3 more Health than before.

WAY OF THE IMMACULATE SHOW

Element: Fire

Training: A disciple of this Way has spent countless hours before audiences honing their craft, especially tumbling, juggling and feats of balance. They know the plays, poetry, and music of Izou by heart. On a Boost during a performance or while telling a story the imagery or characters spring to life as an illusion all can see, drawing and impressing crowds.

Backfire: Performance anxiety overwhelms the ninja. Their Initiative drops by 2 and half of any audience disperses in displeasure.

BASIC JUTSU

- ◆ **Conjuring Hands (Yin + Stealth):** Small objects within reach vanish or reappear with a flourish. Anything unattended that the ninja could reach and grasp inside a closed fist disappears without the ninja ever actually touching it. As a Quick Action the ninja may summon the item back into their hand. Until the item reappears the ninja may not recover Yin. Producing the jailer's keys from a cellmate's ear is a favorite trick with this jutsu.

- ◆ **Hypnotic Voice (Yin + Perform):** The intoxicating voice of the ninja transfixes an audience until a violent Action or loud noise snaps them out of it. This may not be activated during a Battle. Anyone who attempts to do something other than listen to the ninja's tales must make a Moderate (2) Discipline + Speed check, otherwise all their attention remains focused on the performance. On a Boost the difficulty to snap out of it becomes Tough (3).
- ◆ **The Perfect Show (Yang + Perform):** The ninja's voice and movements become more captivating and precise. For the remainder of the scene, they gain +2 Perform before an audience, and their allure is noted by friends and foes.
- ◆ **The Poet's Ear (Yin + Knowledge):** The ninja learns lyrics, notes and dance steps quickly. Any such art may be reproduced or mimicked accurately, and the ninja may recite an entire overheard conversation as if it were a performance.
- ◆ **Trick Shots (Yang + Marksman):** Objects and weapons thrown by the ninja bend, bounce and even return through unexpected trajectories. Affected ranged attacks gain a +1 bonus to hit, ignore any Penalty for cover, may follow an indirect path to the target and the thrown weapon returns to the ninja. This affects a number of ranged attacks equal to successes gained.

MEDIAJUTSU

- ◆ **The Beautiful Dance (Yang + Speed):** An ever quickening beat fills the ninja's ears, accelerating their movements until limbs seem to blur. They gain +1 Dynamic Action each Round, for Rounds equal to the number of successes gained.
- ◆ **Flashing Exit (Yang + Stealth):** With a burst of sparkling lights, blaring noise and smoke the ninja vanishes. The ninja counts as being nowhere at all until the start of their next turn, where they reappear nearby (somewhere within Movement x2 yards), hidden if desired.
- ◆ **Juggling Hands (Yang + Marksman):** Several sets of illusionary arms sprout from the ninja, each seeming to juggle dozens of objects. The ninja may equip one-handed weapons equal to the number of successes, plus double that number of random small objects. Each time the ninja chooses to use a weapon (melee or thrown) it gains a +2 bonus, and then is removed from the juggling. Once all weapons or items have been used the effect ends.



- ◆ **Phantom Switch (Yin + Perform):** Requires Conjuring Hands. Once out of sight, the ninja immediately teleports somewhere else nearby. They reappear where no one else can see without actually traveling between the two points. The ninja may use practically anything to slip out of sight, such as slipping behind a single stalk of bamboo or diving into a straw basket.
- ◆ **Star of the Show (Yang + Perform):** Requires The Perfect Show. A glowing aura begins to shine brightly around the ninja, drawing attention and amplifying their natural charisma. Normal audience members are awed and rendered dumbstruck. For the rest of the Scene the aura illuminates a (Yang x10ft) area and the ninja may attempt to Block any attack (against themselves or someone else) using Yang + Perform. If the ninja suffers damage this effect ends.

ADVANCED JUTSU

- ◆ **Dazzling Display (Yang + Intimidation):** Requires Star of the Show. Explosive bursts of light emanate from the ninja when they are struck. When the jutsu is first activated all Close opponents suffer a Confused 1 Condition unless they make a Tough (3) Fortitude + Perception check. For the Battle, anyone who deals physical damage to the ninja is Confused as above. They may shield their eyes to avoid this effect, suf-

fering a -2 Penalty to the attack itself.

- ◆ **Destroyer's Dance (Yang + Perform):** Requires Beautiful Dance. The primal energy of the dance at the beginning of the universe flows through the ninja. They slip into a trance and are sheathed in fire providing +2 Armor against Health and Psyche damage, and which deals +2 damage to anyone touching or touched by the ninja. The ninja's movements are quickened and strange, granting a +2 bonus to physical attacks and Defense checks. These effects last for Rounds equal to successes gained.
- ◆ **Shattering Song (Yin + Perform):** Requires Hypnotic Voice. The ninja's voice rises to a note resonating with destructive ki. If used against a single target, the activation check becomes the attack roll and it deals double damage to a non-living target. If projected outward on the area, the note can be heard for (Yin) miles, and animals within this range panic and flee unless a trainer succeeds at a Moderate (3) check to control them. On a Boost, inanimate objects are outright destroyed.
- ◆ **Thundering Drums (Yang + Fortitude):** Unseen drums begin pounding in time with the ninja's movements. When the ninja or any ally describes how their actions are timed to the beat, such as an attack striking to the rhythm or a speech with words emphasized

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on each thrum, they gain a +1 bonus and deal an extra +1 Psyche damage if the Action was an attack. While the drums play, any die used from the Karma pool generates +1 bonus die. The drums continue for the Scene, until the Karma pool is empty, or until another jutsu that produces sound or silence counters them.

- ◆ **Understudy (Yang + Perception):** Requires Poet's Ear. The ninja inhabits a studied target so completely that they begin to transform into them. For the remainder of the Scene the ninja may mimic the target's voice and mannerisms, and roll any Skill at a level the target has used. The ninja may attempt to Activate any jutsu the target has demonstrated, but always activates it with their own Perception. The ninja also gains a +2 bonus to any attempt to disguise themselves as the target.

WAY OF INKED SKIN

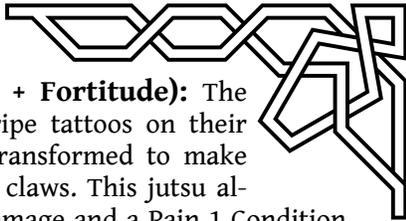
Element: Fire

Training: Known only to the Virtuous Body Gardeners, the ninja of this clan are able to manipulate tattoos like no other. Their basic training allows them to assimilate small, non-living items onto their skin as tattoos with a simple 5-minute ritual to make it part of their skin. On a Boost during a jutsu activation check, they may choose to withdraw any of these items as a free action as if they had used Withdraw Weapon.

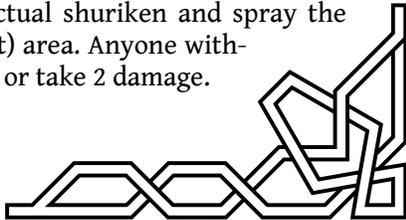
Backfire: A failed check for the Way of Inked Skin renders the ninja's skin too tough to manipulate, stiffening their movements and giving them a cumulative -1 Speed.

BASIC JUTSU

- ◆ **Artful Defense (Yin + Speed):** Using their mastery of tattoos, the ninja thwarts incoming attacks, turning a weapon that strikes them into a tattoo. This defensive jutsu negates any damage from the attack as well. This does not work against unarmed attacks or enchanted weapons.
- ◆ **Ink Touch (Yang + Crafts):** The ninja places a drop of ink on their target, which they can then manipulate into a temporary tattoo of their own design. On a Boost, the design may be made permanent.
- ◆ **Pain Killer (Yin + Fortitude):** Activating the spiral tattoos at each of the ninja's seven chakra severs their pain receptors. This reduces any Pain Conditions by 1 per Round for a number of Rounds equal to successes gained. If they have no Pain Conditions when activated, they are pumped full of adrenaline and can take more of a beating, gaining +1 Health for the Scene instead.

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- ◆ **Tiger's Claws (Yang + Fortitude):** The ninja receives tiger stripe tattoos on their hands, which can be transformed to make their hands into actual claws. This jutsu allows them to deal +1 damage and a Pain 1 Condition for a number of unarmed attacks equal to successes gained.
 - ◆ **Withdraw Weapon (Yang + Fighting):** Instantly draws weapons/tools from the ninja's skin. When they are done using the item, it becomes a tattoo once more (unless they were thrown). Any ninja can have up to (Fortitude) wieldable weapon tattoos at any given time, but almost unlimited shuriken tattoos. This jutsu may be used Reflexively and suffers no penalty to drawing and attacking on the same Action.

MEDIAJ JUTSU

- ◆ **Animal Friend (Yang + Persuade):** A small animal springs from a tattoo and can perform a task with a number of steps equal to successes gained. The animal friend is not combat-ready, but can grant the Ninja +1 Armor against physical damage for one hit if it jumps in the way of the attack to shield its master.
 - ◆ **Emotion Brand (Yin + Empathy):** Must have Inked Touch. The tattoo created with Inked Touch reaches the target's scalp and begins to affect their emotions. The target suffers a -2 penalty to resist Persuade, Intimidation or Deception (choose one) for a number of Rounds equal to successes gained.
 - ◆ **Follow the Ink (Yin + Intuition):** Some believe tattoos to be a spiritual tool, a divining rod if you will. If ever faced with multiple options, the ninja can simply leave fate to their ink, which will tell them which route to take. Once used, they can ask the fates (the GM) a number of yes or no questions equal to successes gained. Can only be used once per situation.
 - ◆ **Needles of Agony (Yin + Discipline):** Must have Inked Touch. The ninja moves ink implanted from Ink Touch to the target's pain centers and transforms them into needles. The victim resists with a Fortitude check, with a failure resulting in an instant Pain 3 Condition. The victim may only suffer Pain from this jutsu once at any given time, but it does stack with other penalties normally.
 - ◆ **Shuriken Explosion (Yang + Marksman):** Requires Withdraw Weapon. The kanji for shuriken is tattooed all over the ninja's body. With an activation, the tattoos turn into actual shuriken and spray the surrounding (Yang x10ft) area. Anyone within the area must Defend or take 2 damage.
- 



ADVANCED JUTSU

◆ Complete Control (Yang + Discipline):

Must have Inked Touch. The ink from Inked Touch spreads over the target's limbs, giving the ninja control over their movements for a number of Rounds equal to successes gained. They can be willed to do anything from drop a weapon to attacking their own comrade. Each command uses an Action, and the target may resist with Strength. On a Boost, the target suffers a -2 penalty to resist.

- ◆ **Extra Arm Technique (Yang + Fortitude):** By activating tattoos placed on the ninja's sides, they may sacrifice 1 Health to sprout an extra pair of arms. They gain a +2 Crafts and all times needed for Crafts checks are halved. In combat, they receive a +2 bonus to Block rolls and gain +1 Dynamic Actions every Round. On a Boost, all effects are doubled.
- ◆ **Loyal Servant (Yang + Intimidation):** Must have Animal Friend. The ninja summons forth a creature from their tattoo, which can be up to half their size. It can be a real creature or one from myth, but its abilities are all the same. The servant has 5 Health and 2 Armor, and acts independently on an Initiative 2 lower than the ninja's. Any checks are made using the ninja's Skills with a -2 penalty.
- ◆ **Mask of Fear (Yin + Crafts):** The ninja has a number of facial tattoos that swirl and alter their visage into something truly terrifying. They gain +3 Intimidation for the Scene. They may choose up to (Yin) enemies within Near range to instantly scare without a check.
- ◆ **Trapped in Skin (Yin + Fortitude):** Must have Artful Defense. With a touch, the ninja can draw a person into their skin and turn them into a tattoo. This last for (Yin) days, but they cannot regain Yin for the duration. The victim suffers a Deprived 1 Condition if trapped for 3 days and again after the fifth day.

WAY OF KEPT LORE

Element: Water

Training: The Way of Kept Lore belongs to the Living Chronicle and is their way of keeping, storing and recording information. Learning it involves years in libraries and monasteries, honing their jutsu craft. On a Boost during an activation check, they enjoy a cumulative +1 automatic success on their next Knowledge check.

Backfire: Often their intelligence can come at the detriment of their common sense. Failing an activation check creates a cumulative -1 penalty to Intuition checks.

CHAPTER FOUR - EXPRESSIONS OF KI BASIC JUTSU

- ◆ **Instant Reading (Yang + Speed):** By touching a book or scroll, the ninja can instantly absorb all of its knowledge. This information fades after a number of days equal to successes gained, unless they use Preserve the Words.
- ◆ **The Long View (Yin + Knowledge):** Their knowledge of historical battles gives them an edge in Battle. The ninja adds either (Yin) or Knowledge (whichever is greater) to Initiative. This bonus reduces by 1 each Round. On a Boost, their Initiative is increased by another +2.
- ◆ **Preserve the Words (Yin + Knowledge):** The ninja takes some piece of information, whether overheard, in a book/scroll or otherwise observed and records it on their skin as a new tattoo. They receive +3 Knowledge regarding the new info, which reduces by 1 per hour that passes.
- ◆ **Reading the Eyes (Yang + Perception):** Looking into their target's eyes, the ninja gets an immediate sense of motives and intent, gaining +2 Empathy to detect lies from the target for the Scene.
- ◆ **Setting the Words Loose (Yang + Crafts):** The ninja takes tattoos from their body and places that information into a book/scroll. This is the only way to remove one tattoo to make room for another and is also a convenient way to transfer information. Any Confused or Dazed Condition the ninja currently has is reduced by 1.

MEDIAJAN JUTSU

- ◆ **Information Consumption (Yin + Knowledge):** Must have Refusal of Bedlam. The target is placed in a ritual circle while the ninja recites mantras for half an hour, after which time the ninja can reach into the victim's mind and pluck memories or information from them. They may take as many pieces of info as successes gained. The victim resists with Discipline + Fortitude, but instantly forgets the information with a failure. Victims suffer a Dazed 2 Condition from the procedure.
- ◆ **Refusal of Bedlam (Yin + Discipline):** The ninja attunes their mind to the knowledge they hold, and will automatically succeed at any Discipline (Concentration) checks for a number of Rounds equal to successes gained. This also grants 1 Armor against mental damage for the Battle.
- ◆ **Rewriting History (Yin + Intuition):** There are times when something must be done exactly right the first time. This allows the ninja to make a check and then roll any failed dice a second time to hopefully ensure greatness. They may spend a Yin to use this jutsu reflexively.

CHAPTER FOUR - EXPRESSIONS OF KI

- ◆ **Work Smarter (Yang + Discipline):** Identifying an issue and the best approach to it is the ninja's specialty. They may replace a physical Skill in a combo with Knowledge. This can be done a number of times equal to successes gained. On a Boost, they add Knowledge to the combo as a bonus instead.
- ◆ **Worthy Borrower (Yang + Knowledge):** The ninja has an advanced understanding of ki, allowing them to transfer any amount of ki to another they can see.

ADVANCED JUTSU

- ◆ **Granting Power (Yang + Knowledge):** Must have Worthy Borrower. Just as they can transfer ki between themselves and their target, the ninja may now also transfer knowledge of any jutsu they know. Lasts for a number of Rounds equal to successes gained. On a Boost, the target receives a +1 bonus to activate the transferred jutsu.
- ◆ **Information Overload (Yang + Discipline):** Must have Setting the Words Loose. The ninja looks into the eyes of their target and forces more information into the victim's brain than they can handle. This inflicts (Knowledge) mental damage. Can only be used in Grapple or Close Range.
- ◆ **Perceive Weakness (Yin + Perception):** The ninja becomes great at anticipating weaknesses in structures and opponents, granting an (Intuition) bonus to their physical attacks. This bonus reduces by 1 for each Round that passes.
- ◆ **Perfect Stillness (Yin + Stealth):** As they understand the movement of ki, they understand how it infuses itself into every person and thing. As long as the ninja remains unmoving, they may pick another target who may also not move, regardless of weight or strength. Neither the ninja nor their target may move, take Actions or even Defend. The victim suffers a Slowed 1 Condition after being released.
- ◆ **Mind Removing Technique (Yin + Knowledge):** Must have Information Consumption. After the ritual is over, the victim is left without any recollection of the past (Yin) days. On a Boost, this extends to (Yin) weeks.

WAY OF SPUN THREADS

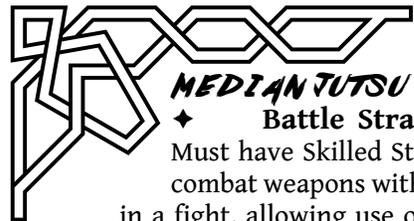
Element: Metal

Training: The signature jutsu for the Hidden Strands of Fate utilizes threads imbued with the ninja's ki to powerful effect. Most members have their own spools of thread with them to manipulate, but can easily imbue a new set of clothing or ball of thread by spending 1 ki of either type. Once that is done, they can use these new threads just like any others. On a Boost on any attack or defense they can deem there is a string attached to whatever they touched.

Backfire: A failed check while using Way of Spun Threads means the ninja's strings become tangled and much harder to use. They suffer a cumulative -1 penalty to all jutsu of this type during the Scene unless they spend an Action to untangle.

BASIC JUTSU

- ◆ **Attached (Yang + Deception):** Any item they touched during the Scene has one of their strings attached to it already. When a string is attached to an object, it can be manipulated, yanked or otherwise affected with Strength.
- ◆ **Invisible Threads (Yin + Stealth):** The ninja makes their strings completely invisible, allowing them to be used in espionage. If used with attacking strings, targets suffer a -1 penalty to Defend.
- ◆ **Skilled Strands (Yang + Intuition):** The ninja can manipulate their strings from afar to perform Skills at Near or Far Range with a -2 penalty. Gains +1 bonus to rolls with Boost. Cannot be used for combat.
- ◆ **Spider's Scry (Yin + Perception):** The ninja can listen in on conversations around their strings within Near Range. The string itself must be within (Yin) miles to be affected.
- ◆ **Thread Web (Yang + Crafts):** Instantly summons a web of string, useful for traps or for catching themselves or a target while falling. The web must have trees, walls or other surfaces to hang from, and has Health equal to successes gained.



MEDIAN JUTSU

- ◆ **Battle Strands (Yang + Discipline):** Must have Skilled Strands. The ninja grabs close combat weapons with their strings and uses them in a fight, allowing use of Fighting Skill at a Far distance for the Battle.
- ◆ **Blast of Webbing (Yin + Marksman):** The ninja shoots balls of sticky string at the target, slowing them down and making it harder to move. If hit, the victim loses -2 Movement per success. If reduced to 0, the victim loses their Standard Action for the Round. Their Movement returns at a rate of +2 per Round. On a Boost, the target suffers a Slowed 1 Condition.
- ◆ **Strumming the Chords (Yang + Speed):** Affects the ninja's vocal chords to alter their voice or mimic another's. This allows them to hide their identity, especially if their physical features are covered, or can make them more menacing, adding +1 Intimidation while active. Lasts for the Scene.
- ◆ **Pulling Strings (Yang + Persuade):** The ninja reaches out to the victim's emotions, pulling them like strings. The victim suffers a Convinced 1 Condition per success gained.
- ◆ **Thread Whip (Yang + Crafts):** Creates a whip made of several strands of string wielded as a whip (pg. 147). Deals damage normally and causes a cumulative Pain 1 Condition with each strike (up to Pain 3).

ADVANCED JUTSU

- ◆ **Becoming the Mask (Yang + Crafts):** After curing a cloth mask in a mixture of blood and milk, the ninja applies it to their face to mimic the appearance of another person. The mask can then spread to the rest of their body and conform their other physical features as well (i.e. increasing weight, mimicking blemishes, etc.), proving a +2 bonus to related checks. This is superior to creating simple illusions, as it passes the touch test, lasts longer and requires no concentration to maintain.
- ◆ **Master of Puppets (Yang + Might):** Must have Battle Strands. The character attaches their strings to a target to control their movements like a puppet. The ninja and target make Opposed Strength checks, but the ninja receives a +2 bonus to their check. If the ninja wins, they take control of the target's Standard Action. On a Boost, they also control 1 Dynamic Action as well. Their control lasts for a number of Rounds equal successes gained.

CHAPTER FOUR - EXPRESSIONS OF KI

- ◆ **Razor String (Yang + Crafts):** The ninja thins their threads to make them even deadlier, adding +2 physical damage to any damage dealt with their threads for the Battle. If the ninja falls below Yang 4, this bonus reduces to +1 damage.
- ◆ **Spider's Charm (Yin + Fortitude):** The ninja sheds their blood and forms their droplets into the finest threads to manipulate. Using these blood strings for jutsu makes their threads indestructible and gives a +2 bonus to all activation checks for the Scene.
- ◆ **Wardrobe Change (Yang + Crafts):** Affects all the individual threads of the ninja's clothing at once, allowing them to construct entirely new outfits instantly. They can turn formal robes into combat gear, into stealth garb and even into Armor. Can provide up to (Crafts) in Armor against physical damage for a number of Rounds equal to successes gained. Lasts for the Battle or Scene.

WAY OF TWIN BEASTS

Element: Earth

Training: Ninja who follow the Way of Twin Beasts train for years alongside a ninja dog from a pup. They learn how to share everything: their meals, their lives, and their senses. On a Boost during an activation check, their jutsu affects their dog for free (no ki cost).

Backfire: Failing an activation check for a jutsu means the ninja and their dog have fallen out of sync. They suffer a cumulative -1 penalty to Initiative and to Way of Twin Beasts jutsu checks.

BASIC JUTSU

- ◆ **The Hunt Begins (Yang + Perception):** The ninja borrows their dog's senses, gaining +3 Survival (Tracking) for the Scene. They need only to catch the scent of the thing they hunt.
- ◆ **In the High Grass (Yin + Perception):** The ninja and their dog blend into the land, making them much harder to see. They receive +2 Stealth for the Scene. On a Boost, they deal +1 damage on their first attack during an ambush.
- ◆ **Licked Wounds (Yang + Empathy):** Along with the love of the ninja dog, the ninja receives a Holistics bonus equal to successes rolled for their next roll to treat a patient.

CHAPTER FOUR - EXPRESSIONS OF KI

- ◆ **Prodigious Howl (Yang + Intimidation):** Hounds can release a howl that travels up to (Yang) miles to deliver coded messages to others in their clan. On a Boost, anyone (including comrades) in Close Range must resist with a Discipline + Empathy check or suffer 1 mental damage.
- ◆ **Yellow Mark (Yin + Marksman):** The ninja orders their dog to send a stream of urine at the target, thus marking it with their scent. Attempts to avoid being tracked by the ninja instantly fail, as they always know exactly where the target is up to (Yin) miles. On a Boost, this may also inflict an Embarrassed 1 Condition, depending on the circumstances. Removing the Yellow Mark requires a long bath with lots of soap.

MEDIAN JUTSU

- ◆ **Animal Within (Yang + Might):** Must have Prodigious Howl. The ninja bring forth their inner beast, growing pointed ears, fangs and claws. They now deal +1 damage in close combat for the Battle, and gain +2 Speed for Rounds equal to successes gained. A Boost on attacks causes a Bleeding 1 Condition as well.
- ◆ **Canine Form (Yang + Fortitude):** This jutsu is at the core of much of what the Hounds stand for, transforming their form to match their ninja dog. They retain their minds, but obviously lose their opposable thumbs and ability to speak. They switch their stats for those of their dog, but receive +2 Athletics as long as they are within the form.
- ◆ **Linked Souls (Yin + Empathy):** Must have The Hunt Begins. With this jutsu, the ninja and their dog exchange senses and thoughts, allowing them to see through each other eyes and share information. This extends up to (Yin) miles and lasts for the Scene.
- ◆ **Meet In the Middle (Yang + Fighting):** The ninja and their dog coordinate a string of three attacks with a single Action. The player rolls one activation check for the first two attacks, which the target must Defend against separately. If both attacks hit the target, they roll a second check with +3 Fighting and dealing +2 damage if successful. If either of the first two attacks miss, they do not roll for the third.

- ◆ **Puppy Eyes (Yin + Empathy):** Hounds can be very persuasive when they need to be. Gain +2 Persuade for a number of checks equal to successes gained.

ADVANCED JUTSU

- ◆ **Backed into a Corner (Yin + Survival):** Must have Animal Within. If the ninja has been dealt damage, they can choose not to attack for the rest of the Round. At the beginning of the next Round, the ninja will act first (regardless of Initiative) and instantly heals half of the total damage dealt to them in the previous Rounds. The amount of damage healed is converted to bonus damage inflicted by their first attack of the new Round.
- ◆ **Beast Barrage (Yang + Athletics):** Must have Meet in the Middle. The ninja and their dog pick a single target and attack them seemingly without end. They disappear and reappear at all angles, throwing the target off balance. They may take a number of close combat attacks equal to their successes gained, with the target suffering a -2 penalty to all Defense checks. On a Boost, they may spend Dynamic Actions to add +2 attacks each.
- ◆ **Human Form (Yang + Crafts):** The ninja dog transforms into a copy of the ninja for the Scene. They still do not have the ability to use human language, but are otherwise identical to the ninja, using the same Skills. The ninja gains +1 Action at -2 Initiative, taken by their dog. On a Boost, they gain +1 Dynamic Die for the Battle that can be used by either the ninja or their dog.
- ◆ **Repress the Beast (Yin + Discipline):** The ninja conjures a burst of anti-aggressive energy and hits everyone within (Yin x10ft). Targets must resist with a Discipline + Speed check or suffer -3 Initiative and -1 Fighting for the Scene.
- ◆ **Stare Down (Yin + Empathy):** This jutsu draws an opponent's attention, forcing them to attack the ninja only for a number of Rounds equal to successes gained. For this time, the ninja receives +2 Armor against the target's attacks. The ninja dog may attack with no penalty for the duration, as well.

The cold night wind blew, and the shadows danced as the tree limbs swayed and signs creaked above their businesses. Odoriko Suzue made use of the darkness as she made her way along Jikankei's rooftops, carefully moving along gutters and the raised stone parapets of each building to minimize the sound she made. Suzue was in pursuit of a man known only as Yun, and whose reputation was every bit as mysterious as the methods he used when he carried out his primary duty to the Empire — assassinating ninja.

Suzue did not fear the so-called Ninja Killer. She remembered how her former teammate, Hebi Atsha, grew terrified when they discovered a faceless jade mask tied above the front gates to Jikankei. It was a simple warning to ninja that the Imperial army placed for all ninja to see: come here and the Empire's hired killer would get you. She knew her fellow ninja to be a brave and resourceful warrior, and to see her show fear for the first time had disturbed Suzue more than the mask's actual discovery.

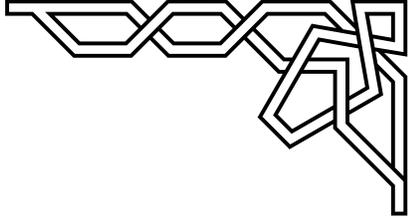
When she discovered Atsha dead in the inn where they had once stayed, Suzue decided to finally end this threat to the Lotus Coalition. Killing the agent would not only strike a blow against the Empire, but also avenge her fallen comrades. She didn't know where to find Yun, but she knew he would certainly see a lone ninja running out in the open as easy prey... and that would be her chance to counterattack.

Suddenly, there was a flash of light to Suzue's left, and she saw a figure running across the rooftops beside her. The figure turned his head to reveal a jade mask looking back at her. Suzue's blood ran hot, and she rushed her target. Focusing her ki, she felt the energy catapult her forward, and the hilts of her sai in her belt sung to her to draw them forth for combat.

They flew over several rooftops, making their way towards a nearby temple. The perfect place for her to end this. As they made it to the rooftop, Yun turned suddenly, drew a kama and chain before him and swung it over his head defiantly. Not afraid to meet her attacker head on, Suzue charged.

Unfortunately, the roof gave way under her foot, and Suzue discovered it was nothing but thin paper painted to look like roof. Her instincts told her to twist as she fell, and she narrowly avoided impaling herself on several spears previously set in place. One spear scraped her shoulder, though, and searing pain spread through her body. As she recovered her stance, Suzue looked around and realized she was not alone.

She was outnumbered five to one. They all wore the jade masks of Yun, and each wielded their weapons with skill. As Suzue's fading vision from the poison-coated spears revealed to her, they carefully and methodically moved in for the kill. Hopefully, the ninja sent to avenge her death would be able to do so.



CHAPTER FIVE

DICE MASTERY

Telling deep and interesting stories within Ninja Crusade 2nd Edition should be apparent from the detailed setting, range of character personalities and the multitude of ninja abilities available. There are times, however, when conflict arises, and a system for figuring out success vs. failure or winning vs. losing becomes necessary. This chapter covers these rules and dice mechanics that help gameplay run smoothly and keep things balanced. By rolling dice, the players are allowing chance to affect the outcome of their character's actions, thus pushing the story in a variety of different directions. A good roll may tip the odds in the character's favor, while a poor result can doom their success. Both are fun in different ways, creating awesome roleplaying opportunities and plenty of drama.

GIFTS AND TRIGGERS

With each Choice between Steps One through Five the player makes during character creation, their character receives one Gift and one Trigger. No two characters are the same due to the choices they make, so these are very important to the system as well.

GIFTS

Reflecting the lessons learned by the character, they receive a bonus to a Skill for a specific usage. This is very similar to a Specialty, but has more of a link to the Gift than to the Skill for tracking and growth. This bonus is usually a +1 bonus, but some Clan Gifts can give higher bonuses based on their ninja training.

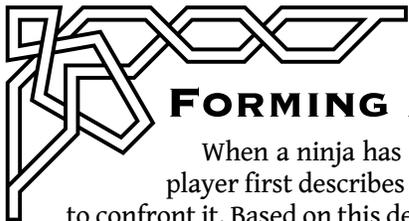
TRIGGERS

These are the price for greatness. For every great Gift the character receives, there is a downfall to having such power. A Confident character may be overconfident at times, and a soldier may learn a certain toughness through their training, but this brings a sense of duty and possibly split loyalties later on. Triggers are always effects that are immediate and create conflict in the Scene, either between the characters and their environment, characters and Extras or even between players' characters. All Triggers are quite different, but they all have the potential to cause trouble in common.

Most Triggers require some kind of circumstance to occur, such as someone disrespecting, or attacking a character or presenting them with a dilemma. Their purpose should be to help spur creative roleplaying and drum up drama in a Scene. In exchange, the players receive 1 Karma. Sometimes, the GM may offer up the Karma if the players don't want to cause the effect themselves. See Karma Pool (pg. 137).

SKILL COMBO SYSTEM

Characters use Skills to complete tasks; whether they are writing precise poetry or shattering stone with a single well-placed blow. There are 20 Skills representing the different areas a ninja may excel at due to training or talent, found on pg. 83. A ninja has a Level in each Skill, from 0 to 5, with a 0 representing no aptitude at all and a 5 representing total mastery.



FORMING A COMBO

When a ninja has a challenge to overcome, the player first describes the method the ninja will use to confront it. Based on this description, they select the two most relevant Skills from the list of 20 to form a Combo. Often one of the two Skills will be clearly dominant (Primary) and the other is just a helper that adds style to the outcome (Secondary). Sometimes it won't be clear which of the two Skills is more appropriate to use, in which case the top two contenders become the Combo. Players may suggest Skills for the Combo, but the GM has the final decision on which two are most appropriate for the method described. If no second Skill makes sense for the check, a Skill may combo with itself to make a combo.

If the character only has levels in one Skill required for the Skill Combo, they just make their check using the dice from one Skill. There are no further penalties except that they may want to train in the other Skill if they believe this combo will come up often in the future.

Example: A wagon has broken down in the middle of a small road that needs clearing. Naomi wants to repair the broken wheel so it can go on its way. Craft and Travel both seem relevant to this approach, so they become the Combo. Alternatively, the ninja could have scoffed at the travelers and simply pushed it off the road. This would be a feat of strength and endurance so Might and Fortitude becomes the Combo.

ROLLING DICE

The player rolls a number of d10 equal to the total of the levels in both Skills in the Combo. This is called a check or a roll. For instance, a character with Fighting 3 and Deception 2 attempting to distract an opponent would roll five dice ($3 + 2 = 5d10$).

Each die result of 7, 8 or 9 counts as a success. A result of 10 gives the ninja two successes. If the player gets no successes on their check while any of the dice results are a 1, this becomes a Critical Failure.

DIFFICULTIES

Compare the number of successes from the check to the Difficulty of the task. The GM sets the Difficulty. Meeting the number of required successes means the character has succeeded in the task they are attempting. If a player rolls 3 more successes than the Difficulty, the ninja gains a Boost.

- ◆ **Easy (0):** Tasks that don't even require a roll. The character simply performs the task and moves on.
- ◆ **Simple (1):** Basic tasks with little to no fuss, but could still fail.
- ◆ **Moderate (2):** Slightly more involved tasks that need more attention and focus.

CHAPTER FIVE - DICE MASTERY

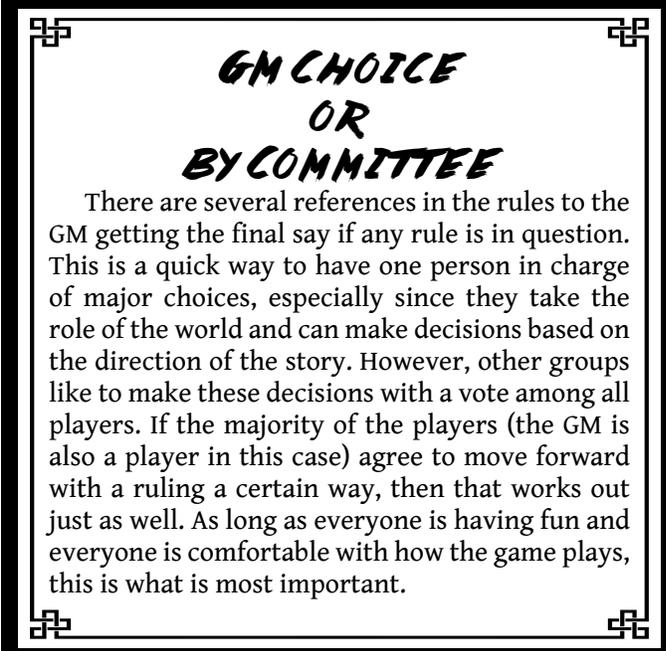
- ◆ **Tough (3):** Advanced tasks usually requiring intimate knowledge of the subject
- ◆ **Challenging (4):** Complex tasks that take time and effort to complete, usually with unique complications.
- ◆ **Legendary (5):** Near-impossible tasks that should be awesome to behold.

Not all methods have the same Difficulty. If the GM asks for check at a certain Difficulty, the player may always offer a counter Skill Combo to use. However, if the method is more or less straight forward, the GM may lower or raise the Difficulty.

Example: The GM asks for a Moderate (2) Stealth + Speed for moving stealthily through a neighborhood without alerting the residents. The player requests using Stealth + Knowledge, instead, to use local knowledge to avoid obvious traps. The GM accepts this, but says it'll be a Tough (3) check instead.

FATE DIE

If the character has no levels in either Skill in the combo, they can still attempt the task, but it's much harder to succeed. The player rolls only a single d10, called a Fate Die, and is only successful if that die result is 10. Any other result means they fail, and if it lands on a 1, it's a Critical Failure per normal. The 10 result still counts as two Successes, which means a Fate Die can be attempted for Moderate (2) and lower Difficulties, but Tough (3) and higher tasks don't have as much leeway.



GM CHOICE OR BY COMMITTEE

There are several references in the rules to the GM getting the final say if any rule is in question. This is a quick way to have one person in charge of major choices, especially since they take the role of the world and can make decisions based on the direction of the story. However, other groups like to make these decisions with a vote among all players. If the majority of the players (the GM is also a player in this case) agree to move forward with a ruling a certain way, then that works out just as well. As long as everyone is having fun and everyone is comfortable with how the game plays, this is what is most important.



MODIFIERS

Circumstances or the ninja's Gifts may give bonuses or penalties to a check, making it easier or harder. Each bonus adds another d10 to the check. Each penalty removes a d10 from the check, down to a minimum of no dice at all. For instance, a +2 bonus, means the player adds 2d10 to their check. If a player must roll a check with 0 dice due to modifiers, then they roll a single Fate Die instead.

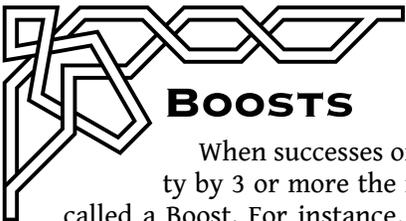
OPPOSED CHECKS

Most checks are rolled against a static Difficulty, but sometimes a ninja and an opponent played by the GM are working against each other. In such cases, both sides make their check at the same time, and the player with the most successes wins. When these types of checks tie the GM chooses which was the active roll (trying to meet the Difficulty) and which was the opposition (setting the Difficulty). The active check wins in a tie, since it is meeting the Difficulty. For instance, a ninja using a Defense in a Battle counts as the active check against an opponent's attack.

EXTENDED CHECKS

Some tasks require multiple smaller steps to succeed, and a single check just isn't dramatically impactful enough to simulate this. An Extended Check requires between 5 or more successes, but these successes may be split up over a series of checks, each with its own Difficulty. Stakes are applied after every roll, such as time or a cumulative penalty. The stakes and Difficulty may change as the Extended Check proceeds, or because of the methods the ninja chooses. A Critical Failure immediately ends an Extended Check, usually to terrible results.

Example: *Ninja are tracking a fugitive general through the woods, trying to capture him before he can find his troops. The GM decides it takes 10 successes to catch up to the general due to his head start. The Difficulty for each check is 1, and the stakes for each check are 30 minutes of time. After two hours, the general will reach his troops, so the ninja only have time for 4 checks to reach him before his reinforcements make capturing him much more difficult.*



BOOSTS

When successes on a check exceed its Difficulty by 3 or more the ninja gains an extra benefit, called a Boost. For instance, if a player gets 4 successes against a Simple (1) Difficulty, they received one Boost. If they rolled 7 successes, they would have received 2 Boosts. Different Skills have suggested Boost effects, and GMs and players can devise entirely new benefits for unique situations. If the character receives a Boost, they may only choose one effect at any given time among jutsu training, weapon effects or one of the suggestions below.

- ◆ **Additional Targets:** A Skill targeting a single person may affect extra targets with a slightly lesser effect.
- ◆ **Bonus Damage:** Usually used in a Battle, and worth +1 damage to an attack.
- ◆ **Bonus Info:** The ninja finds or overhears unexpected information that may prove useful.
- ◆ **Heightened Effect:** Whatever the ninja was trying to do, they do better. If they were attempting to scare someone, they not only scare them, but also make them cry.
- ◆ **Karma Pool:** The ninja's teamwork adds a die to the Karma Pool.
- ◆ **Streak Bonus:** Creates an advantage and may give a bonus or reduce the difficulty for a particular method.
- ◆ **Style:** The ninja completes the task with a flourish that people notice. If performing for a crowd, this may gain their favor.
- ◆ **Time Crunch:** Halves the time usually needed to complete the task.
- ◆ **Weapon Effect:** Some weapons allow the character to create a new Condition (pg. 150) for a Boost.

CRITICAL FAILURE

If the check has no successes at all and one or more of the dice have a 1 result, this is a Critical Failure and goes beyond the normal consequences of a failed check. It's the worst possible outcome, blocking further progress with the same method and often creating new complications. An Extended Check ends in failure, and in an Opposed Check, the foe gains a Boost against the character. The GM should also apply one of the suggested Consequences listed with the Skill used (pg. 83).

Though Critical Failures make a ninja's life more difficult, such hardships also empower them thanks to the Karma Pool. The player places 1d10 in the Karma Pool for the first 1 result they received and suffer the Consequences. If they rolled multiple 1s, they

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can take additional Consequences for each 1 and add another die to the Karma Pool in response.

REPETITIVE SKILL USAGE

The Chakra System encourages creativity from players when coming up with interesting ways to use Skill Combos. If a player uses the same Skill Combo more than two consecutive times, however, they begin to suffer a cumulative -1 penalty. This does not apply to Extended Checks, as those are multiple rolls all connected to the same Skill usage.

This rule can reflect many things within a Scene, such as the frustration of trying the same method repeatedly without result or the character beginning to grow bored and unimpassioned with the method, leading to lower results. In Battle, it could also be that the opponent starts to see through their tactics. GMs should always be pushing for new ways to express what the characters are attempting to accomplish.

ROUNDING UP

During gameplay, some rules refer to halving values. Unless otherwise stated, players should round up. For example, half of 5 is 3 and half of 1 is 1.

SPECIALTIES

Some characters are better at certain Skill applications than they are at others. This is where Specialties come into play, giving the character an edge (a +1 bonus) when using their Skill for a specific purpose. For instance, a character with Fighting 3 may be especially skilled with using swords. This means they would have 3 dice when fighting or 4 dice if using a sword. No Skill may have more than two Specialties. These two Specialties may even be for the same effect, such as choosing Fighting (Sword) twice.

A Specialty can be used toward a specific known jutsu connected to the Skill, as well, giving a +1 bonus to activation checks for that particular jutsu.

TOOLS

Tools have the ability to make some tasks easier. Grip gloves provide a bonus to Athletics checks for climbing, while an artist with the right materials and workspace would receive a bonus to their Crafts checks. Tools generally provide anywhere from a +1 (simple tools) to +3 (master-crafted) bonus to a particular Skill check, depending on how much the tool impacts the circumstances. GMs may also grant bonuses from environments as Tools, such as a singer gaining a bonus to their Perform check for singing in a theater with great acoustics or taking advantage of the drunkenness of the crowd.

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SUPPORT

Sometimes one or more ninja may wish to cooperate on the same task. In such cases, one player rolls dice for one Skill in the Combo, and the helping player rolls dice for the other Skill based on their ninja's Skill level. Support can allow some truly unusual Combos, such as Perform + Stealth where one ninja is distracting an audience while another sneaks past. Both ninja may pull dice from the Karma Pool for each part of the check.

KARMA POOL

Ninja have suffered untold hardships in their lives, but through that adversity they have found a new strength and resolve that gives them power. *The Ninja Crusade 2nd Edition* uses the Karma Pool to represent the connection of each character to the others in a mechanical way.

ADDING DICE

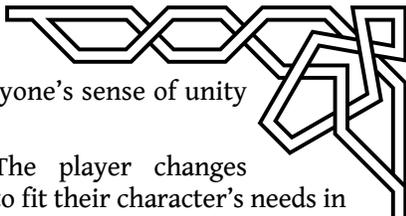
At the beginning each of session, the Karma Pool starts with a number of d10s equal to the number of players at the table during this session. These dice sit in the middle of the play space. There can never be more than 10 dice in the Karma Pool at any given time. During play, events and character choices may add additional dice to the pool:

- ◆ **Triggers:** The most frequent way to add dice is to use any of the characters' Triggers. The player or GM may activate the effect whenever conditions are met, usually adding 1 die to the Karma Pool. With XP or special effects, the player may add more than 1 die at the time. GMs may also offer Karma to activate Triggers if the player hasn't initiated it but the Scene would benefit from the Trigger.
- ◆ **Critical Failures:** When any ninja suffers a Critical Failure, add a d10 to the pool. Optionally, if a Critical Failure has multiple 1s, the player may elect to add an extra d10 for each 1 from which they suffer an additional Consequence.
- ◆ **Boosts:** A ninja may also give up the usual benefits from a Boost in favor of placing another die in the pool.

USING DICE

The Karma Pool is the accumulation of all the good luck the group has gathered. Since it is a shared pool of dice, any player may use them on their turn as long as no other player objects. This means communication between players is highly recommended for the most strategic use of Karma. They may use the dice in a few different ways:

- ◆ **Bonus Dice:** A player may draw any number of dice from the Karma Pool and add them to a Skill check before rolling. The player should describe how the



ninja's act inspires everyone's sense of unity and purpose.

- ◆ **Dramatic Rewrites:** The player changes something in the Scene to fit their character's needs in the heat of the moment. Examples include things like "I came earlier and set a trap right there" or "I know this guy, we went to school together when we were younger." This kind of effect costs 2 Karma dice from the pool. If the rewrite alters the Scene to a larger degree, the GM can ask for up to 4 Karma dice instead.

MOVEMENT

Movement represents the speed at which the character travels on foot. Their base Movement when walking or jogging is equal to (Athletics + Speed + 5 ft.) per Round, used in most calculations for jutsu. Walking and running require no checks under normal circumstances.

At their top speed, characters can move at a rate of (Movement) x10 ft. per Round. The GM may ask for an Athletics + Fortitude check to keep their speed when running at a steep incline, Athletics + Intuition to avoid obstacles while running or Athletics + Speed to keep from tripping if the terrain is slippery or jagged.

JUMPING

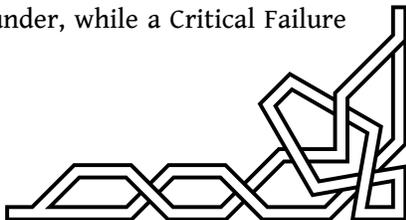
Without a check, characters can jump Movement + (Might x2) ft. horizontally or half this value vertically. They can double their horizontal distance with a running start and a successful Moderate (2) Might + Athletics check. Landing may require an Athletics + Speed check to avoid hurting themselves as they land or to catch themselves if they fail their jump check, depending on the terrain.

CLIMBING

Climbing requires attention to hand and foot locations that can often slow a character down. An Athletics + Speed check is often necessary, but travel is only at (Movement/2) while climbing. Difficulty is usually dependent on the surface incline. A failed check means they make no progress, while a Critical Failure usually means they fall.

SWIMMING

Characters with at least Athletics 1 can swim. In calm waters, there are no checks needed and they can travel at (Movement/2) while swimming. In rough or choppy water, they may make a Might + Athletics check once per minute to fight against the currents. A failed check means the character begins to flounder, while a Critical Failure means they start to drown.



STRENGTH

Strength represents the raw power of the character's muscles and can tell a lot about them. Their Strength is Athletics + Might. Read below for more on what this means.

CARRYING/LIFTING

A character can carry 50lbs. of weight + another 25lbs for each point of Strength they possess without suffering from encumbrance. They can deadlift twice the amount they can carry. For instance, a character with a total Strength of 6 could carry 150lbs. and lift 300lbs.

If they attempt to carry more than their weight limit, they suffer a -1 penalty to all physical checks. Attempting to lift more than their limit incurs the same penalty, but they also cannot take any other Actions besides lifting until they drop their load.

TESTS

Strength checks use Might + Athletics to reflect how much power the character can summon and allows them to perform a range of Strength Feats. See below for a list of examples.

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STRENGTH FEAT	MIN STRENGTH
Crush a trinket in your hand	0
Drag someone your same size	2
Break a wooden chair	3
Drag someone twice your size	4
Break down a wooden door	5
Break open a metal door	6
Punch through a stone wall	8
Burst through a stone wall	10
Uprooting a tree	12

JOURNEYS

The lands of Izou are large and varied, and crossing them can be an adventure unto itself. Journeys heighten the dangerous paths a ninja must tread to reach distant destinations. Each step of the Journey is a check, starting with the Village (even if it is only a metaphorical one), and then proceeding to any stage the player selects except the Temple, which must always be selected last. Once a ninja makes a check they must pass to another ninja to make



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the next check until there are no more stages to the Journey. The Difficulty for each check varies based on the destination. Each stage is completed whether the associated check succeeds or fails, but a success grants extra benefits and a failure imposes consequences on the travelers.

- ◆ **Village:** Planning and preparation. Defaults to Knowledge + Persuade, with a success granting a single reroll for any other stage and a failure increasing the Difficulty of any other stage by 1. The player who rolls for this stage chooses which other stage to reroll.
- ◆ **River:** Pace and distance. Defaults to Fortitude + Travel while on foot, with a success restoring one lost Psyche and a failure hampering the ninja with a Deprived 1 Condition.
- ◆ **Forge:** Enemies and confrontations. Defaults to Perception + Stealth, with a success detecting and avoiding (or ambushing with advantage) enemies in the area and a failure leading to a Battle.
- ◆ **Mountain:** Obstacles and environmental hazards. Defaults to Survival + Travel, with a success meaning discovery of a hidden refuge or item and a failure inducing an Injury 1 Condition or the loss of important equipment.
- ◆ **Temple:** Arrival and reception. Defaults to Empathy + Intuition, with a success producing a helpful local character as a temporary Contact and a failure alerting any enemies in the area of the ninja's arrival and intent.

TYPICAL ROAD JOURNEY

- ◆ **Village:** Simple (1) to find a map or find a welcoming inn along the way.
- ◆ **River:** Moderate (2) to trudge the lengthy but well-worn dirt roads of the Empire. On a success, the ninja may find a Traveler's Shrine and make a small offering to gain a +2 Bonus on the next stage's check. Failure means they remain unrefreshed.
- ◆ **Forge:** Tough (3) to avoid the Imperial patrols and garrisons that dot the rich landscape. Failure means a Battle with at least Town Guards hired by the army.
- ◆ **Mountain:** Simple (1) to find shelter from a storm. A success finds the ninja a sympathetic family with information about their destination. A failure means the ninja bicker among themselves - reset the Karma Pool to 0 dice.
- ◆ **Temple:** Simple (1) to slip into town and gain the lay of the land without drawing attention from the wrong people. Failure means they were seen entering, which could spell trouble for them in the future.

TYPICAL WILDERNESS JOURNEY

- ◆ **Village:** Simple (1) to gather food and camping supplies.
- ◆ **River:** Tough (3) trailblazing a path through knotted bamboo forests. On a success, discover a long lost battleground that yields a master-crafted tool or crafting materials.
- ◆ **Forge:** Moderate (2) to avoid attack from the beasts of the woods. A success gains the ninja a temporary animal companion, such as a rodent or bird, who grants +1 Perception within these woods only.
- ◆ **Mountain:** Moderate (2) river crossing. A success adds a die to the Karma Pool, but a failure loses the heaviest item (especially armor) carried by the ninja.
- ◆ **Temple:** Simple (1) to emerge back into civilization without disturbing farmers or hunting lodges.

TYPICAL RIVER JOURNEY

- ◆ **Village:** Moderate (2) to negotiate passage on a boat or secure a small boat themselves. A failure books passage with an extremely unreliable boatman, increasing the Difficulty of the next two stages by +1.
- ◆ **River:** Simple (1) to adjust to days in the cramped spaces of the boat as it drifts past massive stone idols and pastoral fishing villages. Failure creates a Confused 1 Condition for the character.
- ◆ **Forge:** Moderate (2) to avoid raiders (treat as Bandits) who have fled upriver to avoid Imperial coastal patrols. On a success, the miscreants are accosting another ship, and the occupants will be grateful if rescued. A failure means a battle against Bandits (pg. 160).
- ◆ **Mountain:** Simple (1) to avoid a rockslide or whirlpool in a treacherous area of the river, which can halt the journey entirely or even hurt the travelers. The check is Crafts + Travel to help manage the boat.
- ◆ **Temple:** Tough (3) to avoid Imperial customs agents at the docks. A failure means Izou soldiers are on the lookout for the ninja as they head to their destination.




BATTLES

A ninja's life is battle. They breathe and eat it as a regular part of their everyday existence. They are born from conflict and almost drawn to it even when attempting to avoid such things. Unlike long drawn-out fights between regular people, a battle between ninja can begin and end before an observer blinks. Mechanically, this means most battles between ninja and an opponent may last only a few Rounds, depending on the fortune of their dice.

Of course, there is more than one way for ninja to fight. The Chakra System allows characters to battle with their fists (physical) or with their minds (mental). Physical altercations deal damage to Health in most cases, but can sometimes also deal mental damage. A battle of intellect and social prowess usually deals damage to Psyche, but can also deal physical damage at times. The two types of battles essentially work the same, with Turns, Rounds and whatnot, but have a different framework. Each Action and Defense is listed with physical and mental options, showing how they can be used in either battle type.

TIMING

The Ninja Crusade 2nd Edition uses certain terms to refer to the passing of time during gameplay. Below is a list of the most common.

- ◆ **Scene:** Similar to a scene from a play or a chapter of a book. It has no set time, but ends when characters experience a significant change in location or circumstance.
- ◆ **Battle:** From beginning to end of a Battle.
- ◆ **Round:** Effectively 10 to 30 seconds of time, a Round is how long it takes all characters to take their Turns in Battles.
- ◆ **Turn:** A character's time to act during a Round.

DETERMINING INITIATIVE

In any type of conflict, whether mental or physical, anyone participating must make notes of their Initiative to know their Turn order. The player adds together their character's Intuition + Speed + 3, and that is their standing Initiative for Battles. Certain special abilities from one's Clan, Jutsu, etc. may add to Initiative or sometimes take away from the value.

If two or more players have the same Initiative, they remain at their current order placement, but each roll one die to decide who acts first between them. Whoever rolls highest gets to choose. One character may also concede their Initiative placement to allow someone else to go first at any time, essentially holding their Action for later usage in the Round.

DYNAMIC ACTIONS

Dynamic Actions represent any character's ability to think on the fly and react to factors as they arise, instead of waiting for their Turn to come around. This makes Dynamic Actions a powerful tool for any character. These special actions refresh at the beginning of each Round.

Rank (pg. 92) provides characters with a number of Dynamic Actions received from prior training, as well as a number of Dynamic Dice to roll for more at the beginning of each Round. For each success they get on this check, they receive one more Dynamic Action. For instance, an Emerald Star ninja (Rank 1) begins with 1 Dynamic Action for free and gets 3 dice to roll for more. If they get 2, 5 and 10 (2 Successes), this gets them 2 more Dynamic Actions for a total of 3 for the Round.

This means the character gets to take their Standard Action when their Initiative says they can, but they can use Dynamic Actions at almost any time in the Round for a variety of effects. **Note:** Ki may be spent reflexively for Dynamic Actions on a one-for-one basis.

OFFENSIVE USES

AVOID BACKFIRE (1)

Failing a jutsu activation check causes a Backfire effect (pg. 103), but spending a Dynamic Action negates these negative effects. A Dynamic Action may also be used to negate any cumulative penalties gained from previous failed activation checks.

COUNTER ATTACK (1)

After a successful Defense check, the fighter may spend a Dynamic Action to make an immediate Standard Action as a counter attack. It must be some form of Action against only the initial attacker, so it may not be used to Attack another opponent, Mold Ki, Prepare or any other non-attack Action.

DEEPER CUTS (1)

Sometimes the character really wants to hurt their opponent. Spending a Dynamic Action causes +1 damage on any successful attack. This can be spent after rolls have been revealed, but only once per attack, per target (if their attack hits multiple targets simultaneously).

ENHANCED ATTACK (1)

The fighter increases their offensive capabilities to ensure a hit. They may spend 1 Dynamic Action during an attack Action to gain a +2 bonus. This may be spent reflexively, even after the result of the roll has been revealed.

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RETREATING ATTACK (1)

If someone attempts to break close combat quarters with the character and run away, the ninja may spend a Dynamic Action to make an instant attack on the coward. This is usually a Moderate (2) check, unless terrain or circumstantial obstacles make it a harder check.

DEFENSIVE USES

DEFLECT ATTACK (2)

The character may use a jutsu instantly to deflect an attack against them for the cost of 2 Dynamic Actions. The player makes their jutsu activation check per normal, with each success subtracting a success from the incoming attack. If this brings the attacker's successes to 0, it is nullified and counts as a successful Defense. Some jutsu are built for this type of use, while others may require narrative creativity. As long as the player and GM agree on the jutsu's suitability to the Scene as a defense against the incoming attack, almost any jutsu can be justified. This can only be used once against any given attack.

Example: An attacker gains 4 successes on their sword swing, and Tadao spends a Dynamic Action to use Stone Skin and makes an activation check. He receives 3 successes, reducing the attack to only 1 success. He can now make a normal Defense check against the new result.

ENHANCED DEFENSE (1)

The fighter increases their defensive capabilities to stay safe against an incoming attack. They may spend 1 Dynamic Action during a Defense check to gain a +2 bonus. This may be spent reflexively, even after the result of the roll has been revealed.

THICKER SKIN (1)

Spending 1 Dynamic Action after being hit can negate 1 damage taken. There is no limit to how many Dynamic Actions can be spent this way.

OTHER USES

DYNAMIC INTERACTIONS (1)

There are plenty of opportunities to interact with one's environment, usually costing 1 Dynamic Action. Examples can be found for Dynamic Environments on pg. 147, but GMs and players can make up others in the heat of the moment.

EXTRA ACTIONS (1)

A Dynamic Action can grant +1 Standard Action. They can take a total number of actions at the same Initiative up to Speed (spending 1 Dynamic Action a piece), while extra Actions past their Speed suffer a -2 penalty to Initiative.

For instance, a character with Initiative 7 and Speed 3 could spend 2 Dynamic Actions to take 3 Actions at Initiative 7. If they spent 5 Dynamic Actions, their fourth attack would occur at Initiative 5 and their fifth at Initiative 3. The only limit to the number of Extra Actions taken in one Round is having Dynamic Actions to spend and the character cannot go below Initiative 0.

IGNORE CONDITIONS (1)

The character ignores the effects of all active Conditions (like Pain or Bleeding) for a single Action.

INITIATIVE MANIPULATION (1)

After determining Initiative for the Round, but before anyone has acted, the character may spend Dynamic Actions to affect Turn Order. If the character has unspent Dynamic Actions at the end of a Round, they may also be spent in this way.

- ◆ **Quick on Their Feet:** Grants a +2 bonus to the character's Initiative for each Dynamic Action spent.
- ◆ **Slowing Them Down:** Lowers another's Initiative by -2 for each Dynamic Action spent.

INTERRUPTIONS (2)

If another character in the current battle does something the character would like to respond to, they may spend 2 Dynamic Actions to perform an Interruption and immediately use an Action. This can be spent reflexively, but only once per Round. An Interruption can be interrupted which can also be interrupted, as long as the characters have enough Dynamic Actions to spend.

ZEN MIND (1)

When using a Mold Ki Action, they may spend up to 2 Dynamic Actions to gain +1 ki (of either type) from a single environment tap (pg. 91).

TURN SEQUENCE

- ◆ **Step One: Choose Action**
- ◆ **Step Two: Choose Defense**
- ◆ **Step Three: Choose Skill Combo**
- ◆ **Step Four: Resolve effects/Calculate damage**

STEP ONE: CHOOSE ACTION

Each participant in a Battle receives one Standard Action they may use when it is their Turn, determined by Initiative. Of course, Dynamic Actions may be used to affect the number of Actions a character may take as well. Jutsu or fighting style techniques may have particular Actions built into them and can actually allow use of multiple types together.

Each Action lists a physical and mental effect that most likely comes up in a Battle. Even in instances where None is listed, players and GMs are encouraged to come up with new uses. The Chakra System is all about flexibility after all.

INFLECT HARM

The most common Action to take during Battle is to attempt to cause either physical or mental damage to a target.

- ◆ **Physical:** Causing damage with fists or weapons, usually influenced by the character's fighting style. Close combat attacks usually utilize Fighting, while ranged attacks flow from the Marksman Skill.
- ◆ **Mental:** Inflicting mental harm to a target, including intimidation, creating a convincing lie or an action that jars the senses. Skills like Intimidation or Deception are great for manipulating an opponent's emotions, as is Perform for distracting an opponent.

PLAN ATTACK

- ◆ **Physical:** They take time to aim their next strike, receiving a +2 bonus to their next physical attack against the target. If during this time circumstances force them to Move or Defend against an incoming attack, this bonus is lost.
- ◆ **Mental:** They take their time to size up their target and strike while the iron's hot, usually using an audience's attention for emphasis or possibly revealing a juicy and damaging secret. They gain a +2 bonus to their next mental attack.

AFFECT COMPOSURE

- ◆ **Physical:** None.
- ◆ **Mental:** The character attempts to alter their target's emotional state to make them happy, sad, guilty, angry or even scared. This can be a tricky Action, as everyone shows emotions in different ways. If successful, the target responds to the new emotion and takes 1 mental damage.

QUICK ACTIONS

Quick Actions are things a character can do in the heat of battle without using their Action for the Round. The Quick Action may be used before or after their standard Action, but only on their Turn. Instead, they suffer a -1 penalty to their follow-up Action for that Turn. Any Quick Action can be taken as a Standard Action to avoid the penalty. This includes the following:

FEINT/DISTRACT

- ◆ **Physical:** None.
- ◆ **Mental:** The fighter does something to distract their opponent, opening the target up for a follow-up attack. This gives a +2 bonus to the next attack on the target. This can even be used to distract the target to aid a friend.

MOVE

- ◆ **Physical:** While a character can move up to their Movement in feet every Round for free, they may also move 3x this distance as a Quick Action.
- ◆ **Mental:** None.

PREPARE

- ◆ **Physical:** This includes standing if on the ground, drawing a weapon, pulling evidence from a satchel or other secondary action.
- ◆ **Mental:** None.

TOUCH

- ◆ **Physical:** Often used in conjunction with the use of a jutsu requiring physical contact with the target.
- ◆ **Mental:** While a touch is physical, it can also be used to heighten the effects of certain social interactions, such as seduction.

DISARM

The character attempts to take an advantage away from their opponent. If successful, the target loses whatever bonus dice or other effects they gained from the item or action.

- ◆ **Physical:** Disarming a weapon is the most common use of this Action.
- ◆ **Mental:** The character does something to steal someone's thunder.



INITIATE GRAB

- ◆ **Physical:** Grabbing someone is a Fighting check. Once they have a hold, the target suffers a -1 penalty to Movement and other physical Actions per character currently holding them. Break Grab is the exception to this penalty. Those involved in a Grab use Might as a Primary Skill (instead of Fighting) to attack each other until the Grab is broken. Only small items can be used in this range, as larger weapons have no room to swing.
- ◆ **Mental:** The fighter grabs the target's attention, locking eyes with them and daring them to look away at their own peril. The target suffers a cumulative -1 penalty to Discipline checks for each Round they spend focused on the fighter.

BREAK GRAB

- ◆ **Physical:** The character attempts to break the Grab someone has on them. The two make contested Might checks (no penalties) and break the Grab if successful.
- ◆ **Mental:** The fighter wishes to disengage with their attacker. The two make contested Discipline checks (with penalty) and their spell is broken if successful.

KNOCK BACK

- ◆ **Physical:** They attempt to knock their opponent away. If successful, their target stumbles backward (Attacker's Strength - Defender's Strength) x5 ft. For instance, one character with Strength 4 who pushes their target who has Strength 2 shoves them back 10 ft. If this value is more than 20 ft., the target is Knocked Down as well. The target takes only 1 physical damage (regardless of successes gained), but may take other damage from falling into other objects or slamming against a wall, depending on their surroundings.
- ◆ **Mental:** None.

KNOCK DOWN

- ◆ **Physical:** Attempting to trip, sweep or otherwise knock the target down to the ground. If successful, the victim takes only 1 physical damage (regardless of successes gained), falls prone and must make a Prepare Action to stand again.
- ◆ **Mental:** None.

MOLD KI

- ◆ **Physical and Mental:** The character takes time to tap into the environment to Mold either 1 Yin or 1 Yang ki, adding this amount to their ki ratings. This can only be done once per Round.

 **RETREAT**

◆ **Physical:** Similar to a Move or Sprint/Rush Action, but takes the character out of close combat interaction with their opponent. When this occurs, opponents may spend Dynamic Actions to attack (pg. 141).

- ◆ **Mental:** The character attempts to leave the battle of wills before tempers have waned, but takes 1 mental damage to disengage.

SPRINT/RUSH

◆ **Physical:** The character may Move at (Movement x10). Their next Action is limited to only Inflict Harm, Knock Back, Knock Down or physical skills/jutsu due to the momentum they have built up. Attackers suffer a -2 dice penalty to hit the ninja while moving at their max speed and the ninja receives a +2 bonus to hit and +1 damage on their next attack. They can negate their damage bonus to activate a Knock Back effect instead with a +3 bonus to their Strength.

- ◆ **Mental:** None.

USE JUTSU

◆ **Physical and Mental:** Using jutsu requires an Action and an activation check (pg. 103). Some need an Action to Activate and another to fully utilize, so read descriptions carefully.

**STEP TWO:
CHOOSE DEFENSE**

Characters may take a number of free Defense checks every Round equal to their Athletics Level. After that time, they suffer a cumulative -1 penalty for each additional Defense check in the same Round. For instance, a ninja with Athletics 2 could defend with no penalty twice in any given round, but would suffer a -1 penalty if attacked a third time or a -2 penalty if attacked a fourth time.

BLOCK/PARRY

- ◆ **Physical:** Stopping an incoming attack using either one's body or a weapon they wield. If blocking a weapon with one's body, the defender suffers a -2 penalty. In these cases, they should find a weapon to parry with, Dodge out of the way or Find Cover.
- ◆ **Mental:** Often, this is the character shrugging off a comment or insult, or presenting something just as damaging about their attacker as a Defense.

BRACE

◆ **Physical:** Instead of making a Defense check, the fighter braces for impact. This allows them to use their (Fortitude/2) as Armor against the attack and can reduce the attack to a minimum of 1 damage.

- ◆ **Mental:** The character takes the abuse without response, hoping it doesn't fracture their mind. Same rules as above, but replace Fortitude with Discipline.

CATCH

◆ **Physical:** An attempt to catch something (or someone) thrown or dropped around the character. If successful, they now possess this item and it is immediately ready for use. If trying to catch something sharp or spiked, they suffer a -2 penalty. A failure means they take damage from the item normally.

- ◆ **Mental:** None.

DODGE/EVASION

◆ **Physical:** Getting out of the way of an attack by ducking, sliding, sidestepping or jumping. Dodges generally occur in close combat. If trying to avoid a ranged attack, one usually must Find Cover.

- ◆ **Mental:** They evade the line of questioning or simply deny, deny, deny.

FIND COVER

◆ **Physical:** The character makes a dash for cover. If near (within a Move action), cover can be taken and applied to the incoming attack. The GM should determine if this cover can withstand the whole attack or if the attack goes through the cover to inflict half damage. If further away, the attacker suffers a -1 penalty to their attack, but otherwise suffers no other hindrance to their shot.

- ◆ **Mental:** The character finds another person to intervene in the dialogue and take the mental abuse instead.

PROTECT

◆ **Physical:** The character gets in front of an attack that is occurring within (Movement/2), taking full damage instead of the intended party. They may spend 1 Dynamic Action to travel up to (Movement) instead.

- ◆ **Mental:** They step in to take the brunt of the emotional attack on themselves. Same mechanics apply, and the character must still put themselves physically in the way to take the brunt of the mental attack.

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STEP THREE: CHOOSE SKILL COMBO

Once all those involved in this Turn (attacker and defender) have chosen their Action and Defense types, the player and GM taking the role of an Extra (or both players) decide what Skills are appropriate for their check. Every Skill Combo differs based on the context of the situation, but there are obvious Skills that work best for one Action vs. another. For instance, Fighting is used obviously during close combat attack and Marksman for ranged attacks. Players and GMs are encouraged to come up with alternate Skill Combos on the fly and ways to use them non-traditionally.

ACTION OR DEFENSE	TYPE	COMMON COMBO
Punch, kick or weapon use	Inflict Harm	Fighting + Speed
Scathing Remark	Inflict Harm	Intimidation + Discipline
Throw Weapon	Inflict Harm	Marksman + Athletics
Fire an arrow	Inflict Harm	Marksman + Perception
Ambush	Inflict Harm	Fighting + Stealth
Smash Through a Door	Inflict Harm	Strength
Initiate Grab	Grab	Fighting + Might
Human Shield	Grab	Might + Speed
Strangle	Grab	Might + Fighting
Thousand Stare	Grab	Discipline + Intimidation
Slip Free	Break Grab	Might + Athletics
Confused with Lies	Affect Composure	Deception + Persuade
Encourage	Affect Composure	Persuasion + Intuition
Intimidate a Foe	Affect Composure	Intimidation + Fighting
Shove	Knock Back	Might + Fighting
Sweep	Knock Down	Fighting + Speed
Touch	Touch	Fighting + Speed
Line up a shot	Plan Attack	Perception + Intuition

Avoid Obstacle While Running	Move	Athletics + Speed
Forward Block/Parry	Block	Fighting + Speed
Leap over a Sweep	Dodge	Fighting + Athletics
Dive under a jump attack	Dodge	Athletics + Speed
Hide Behind a Tree	Find Cover	Speed + Perception
Look over here!	Feint	Deception + Perform
I'm Your Opponent Now	Protect	Fortitude + Speed

STEP FOUR: RESOLVE EFFECTS/DAMAGE

Actions that do not cause damage may instead apply a penalty to the target, create a Condition (pg. 150) or may only affect the character themselves and have no target at all. These effects should be recorded and become part of the Scene.

Actions that deal damage can inflict one of two different types based on the intent and the Skill Combo used.

- ◆ **Physical Damage:** Hurts the body with cuts, bruises and broken bones. Physical damage is tracked under Health by putting a "/" in the number of circles for the amount of damage they've taken.
- ◆ **Mental Damage:** Harms the mind with confusion or fear. Mental damage is tracked under Psyche by putting a "/" in the number of circles for the amount of damage they've taken.

ANATOMY OF DAMAGE

- ◆ **Successes:** Damage applied based on the number of successes the attacker rolled more than the defender did. If the attacker rolls 3 successes and the defender rolls 1 success, the attacker has inflicted 2 damage.
- ◆ **Base Damage:** Some attacks (especially jutsu) deal a base amount of damage on top of any other factors.
- ◆ **Weapon Damage:** If wielding a weapon, the character deals +1 damage (or +2 if the weapon is Brutal).
- ◆ **Dynamic Damage:** Players may spend a Dynamic Action to cause +1 damage.
- ◆ **Boost Damage:** If they gained 3 or more successes than their opponent, they have the option to deal +1 damage (pg. 136).



MODIFIERS

ARMOR

If a character is wearing protection or has used abilities that grant Armor, this directly takes away from the successes rolled on an attack based on its level. For instance, if an attacker gets 2 successes on their attack over the defender, they would normally deal 2 damage. If the defender is wearing Armor 1, however, they only deal 1 physical damage.

Generally, ninja do not wear armor, opting to stay light and mobile in Battle. They may opt to wear physical armor, but suffer a -2 penalty to all physical Actions per point of Armor gained. Many antagonists have Armor (without the above penalty), but ninja have jutsu, which can give them armor without slowing them down. A character cannot wear multiple armors, but some effects add to existing Armor.

RANGE

Range is a major factor in Battle, since a fighter cannot strike a target they cannot reach. Below are general Ranges used in *The Ninja Crusade 2nd Edition*.

- ◆ **Grappling:** The combatants are so close they are touching and grabbing onto each other.
- ◆ **Close:** Fighters within about 5ft. of each other are considered to be in Close combat with each other.
- ◆ **Near:** Fighters within 6ft. to 15ft. are considered Near. Weapons with Reach allow for strikes at this Range. Non-ranged weapons can be thrown at Near opponents, but suffer a -2 penalty.
- ◆ **Far:** Beyond Near becomes Far, usually as far as the character can see clearly. Thrown non-ranged weapons will not make it to Far Range.
- ◆ **Distant:** Even farther than Far, this is often too far to hit anyone with accuracy. At this Range, even Ranged weapons suffer a -2 penalty.

WEAPONS

While a ninja's bare hands can be considered weapons in most cases, when they wrap their fingers around an actual weapon, this raises any stakes and makes a Battle deadlier. Regardless of the weapon used, they inflict +1 damage with an attack, but each weapon has certain Qualities that make them different in combat.

The size of a weapon is conceptual, but may affect how concealable the weapon is or if it can be affected by certain jutsu and abilities. For simplicity, weapons are either Small, Standard or Large in size. Small

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weapons are usually handheld like knives or shuko. Standard weapons are those most used like swords, kama or the kusari-gama. Large weapons are ones that usually require two hands to wield correctly, such as the tetsubo, bo or spears.

WEAPON QUALITIES

NAME	EFFECT
Blunt	May cause a Pain 1 Condition on a Boost.
Brutal	Inflicts +2 damage (instead of +1)
Chain	If the attack roll ties with the Defense roll, the weapon still inflicts 1 damage.
Concealable	+2 Stealth to conceal this weapon
Crushing	May cause a Bruised 1 Condition on a Boost.
Disarming	May disarm opponent's weapon on a Boost.
Fragile	The weapon does not deal extra damage.
Heavy	Target suffers -1 penalty to Block/Parry this weapon
Master-Crafted	Immune to being broken, disarmed or affected by rival jutsu, and a +1 bonus to all checks with weapon.
Quick	A character wielding this weapon gains +1 Initiative
Ranged	May attack targets at Far or Distant Range.
Reach	May attack targets in Near Range.
Paired	+1 to Block with this weapon. Using only one, however, creates a -2 penalty to all checks.
Piercing	Weapon ignores 1 level of Armor
Poisonous	May cause a Poisoned 1 Condition on a Boost.
Sharp	May cause a Bleeding 1 Condition on a Boost.
Skilled	Gives +1 bonus to listed Skill while wielding
Slow	A character wielding this weapon suffers -2 Initiative
Unpredictable	Target suffers -1 penalty to Dodge.
Unwieldy	Attack checks with this weapon suffer a -1 penalty.

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EXAMPLE WEAPONS

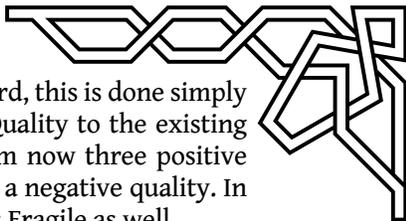
- ◆ **Bo (Staff):** Reach, Blunt
- ◆ **Bokken (Wooden sword):** Blunt, Quick
- ◆ **Fukiya (Blowgun):** Ranged, Poisonous
- ◆ **Gauntlets:** Blunt, Skilled (Fighting)
- ◆ **Kama (Twin-sickles):** Paired, Sharp
- ◆ **Katana (Long sword):** Sharp, Quick
- ◆ **Kunai (throwing knife):** Ranged, Sharp
- ◆ **Kusari-Gama:** Sharp, Chain, Skilled (Climbing), Slow
- ◆ **Naginata (Glaive):** Reach, Sharp
- ◆ **Nunchaku:** Chain, Blunt
- ◆ **Ono (Ax):** Heavy, Sharp, Brutal, Slow
- ◆ **Shuko (Hand-claw):** Concealable, Paired, Skilled (Climbing), Fragile
- ◆ **Sai:** Disarm, Paired
- ◆ **Shuriken:** Ranged, Quick, Concealable, Fragile
- ◆ **Tanegashima (Firearm):** Brutal, Ranged, Unpredictable
- ◆ **Tessen (bladed fan):** Sharp, Concealable
- ◆ **Tetsubo (warrior's club):** Heavy, Crushing, Brutal, Unwieldy
- ◆ **Sansetsukon (Three-Section Staff):** Chain, Blunt, Reach, Unwieldy
- ◆ **Tonfa (fighting sticks):** Paired, Blunt
- ◆ **Whip:** Reach, Sharp, Blunt, Unwieldy
- ◆ **Yari (Spear):** Piercing, Reach
- ◆ **Yumi (Bow/Arrow):** Ranged, Piercing

IMPROVISED WEAPONS

There are times when a character simply doesn't have a weapon on their person. Ninja are crafty, though. They can pick up almost any item and it may mimic another weapon. When they do this, the player and GM choose the most appropriate counterpart to the improvised weapon, but replace one of the positive Qualities with Fragile. For instance, a character attempting to fight with an umbrella may try to wield it like a Sword. Since an umbrella is obviously not a bladed weapon, the GM decides to replace Sharp with Fragile, making the weapon Quick and Fragile.

CUSTOMIZING WEAPONS

It is easy for GMs to let their players create their own weapons, specially designed just for their ninja. The player just needs to know the type of weapon they want to wield and capabilities they need, but keep in mind that most weapons have either two positive Qualities or three positive Qualities and one negative Quality. If they want their



character to have a cane sword, this is done simply by adding the Concealable Quality to the existing Katana. Since this gives them now three positive Qualities, it should also have a negative quality. In this case, the GM decides it is Fragile as well.

- ◆ **Master-Crafted:** If a character wants their weapon to be Master-Crafted, this requires finding an expert smith or artisan to ask. Making a weapon Master-Crafted costs 5 XP for the upgrade, since it turns the item into an artifact.

DYNAMIC ENVIRONMENTS

A Dynamic Environment is a battlefield that is not quite normal. Instead, the combatants are in a terrain that is in a constant state of change. Note also that these environments match up with the five elements. The GM may give a +1 Dynamic Die for a character whose Element matches that of the Dynamic Environment.

THE 1,000-FOOT FALL

Element: Water

The ninja and their opponents dive off a cliff or other high precipice, trading blows while plummeting towards the ground. Initiative determines the order in which people line up in falling space. Characters with the highest initiative are traveling the fastest and are closest to the ground, while characters with low Initiative are highest in the air.

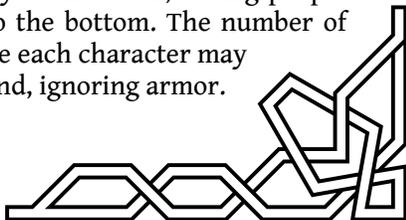
Without changing their position in the air, fighters can only attack opponents within 1 of their Initiative. Thus, a character with Initiative 3 could only attack those with Initiative 2, 3 or 4.

DYNAMICS

Dynamic Actions can be spent to change Initiative as normal, but now this also changes their position in the air for the purposes of close combat attacks. A change in Initiative means the ninja may have jumped off a person, body or piece of debris to re-order themselves. Using more than a single Dynamic Action means they did a run in free-fall for tremendous momentum and adds +1 damage to their next attack.

Ranged attacks can be made against targets "above" the character (lower in Initiative) with a +2 bonus. Against targets "below" the ninja (higher in initiative), however, they suffer a -2 penalty.

The Game Master determines how long the fall will be in Rounds. Each Round, they count down, letting people know how close they are to the bottom. The number of Rounds indicates the damage each character may take when they hit the ground, ignoring armor.



FINALE

The Dynamic Environment ends when they hit the ground. There are jutsu that allow a character to slow or stop a fall. Lacking that, they must throw out a grappling line, hook it to something and make a **Might + Athletics** check. Creative players may come up with other ways to avoid the impact as well. Each success on the roll reduces damage by 1.

A VICIOUS PARTY

Element: Earth

The ninja are at a social gathering. It need not be at a party, per se, but it must be a big event with lots of people. At the party, characters are trading jabs and insults back and forth, instead of engaging in physical combat.

Roll for Initiative normally, and characters may attack each other just like in a physical combat, but use their social Skills to inflict mental damage on their targets. Character social attacks represent veiled insults or put-downs.

Social engagements usually take place in a certain order, keeping with tradition. Introductions, Small Talk, Debates and then Dancing. Introductions involve the beginning of a party, where everyone is still trying to get to know each other; they can be quite awkward. During this phase, all mental damage is increased by +1, due to sensitivity. Small Talk is where cliques are beginning to form, with a few hopping between groups. **Stealth + Perception** checks can be made to eavesdrop on nearby circles. If a character tries to extract themselves from a conversation, they suffer an attack of opportunity, as if they were attempting to leave combat. Spending a Dynamic Action can let them skirt by without acknowledging the comment made as they left.

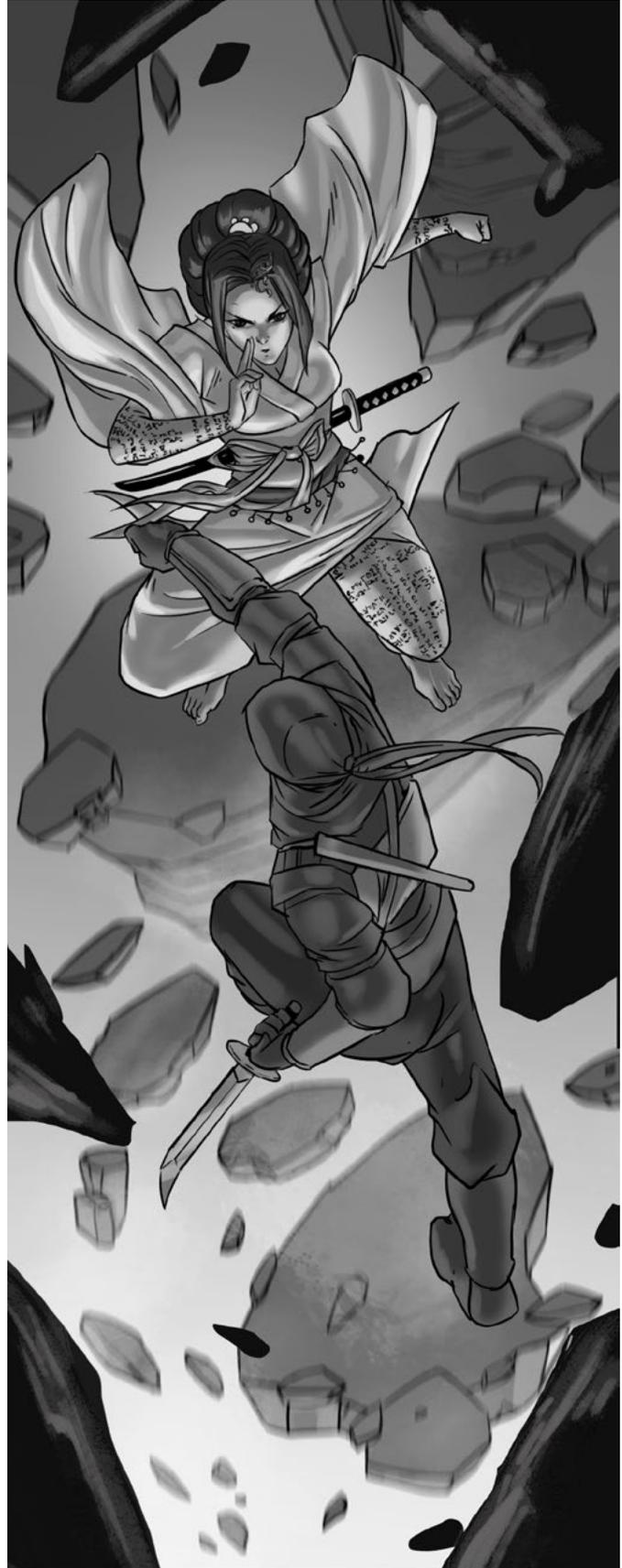
No party is complete without a Debate of some sort. This is the stage where groups argue about politics, economics, social issues and, of course, the Ninja Crusade. The character with the highest Initiative will be drawn into a Battle of Wit and must debate their position or take a **Convinced 1** Condition. If they win the debate, their opponent suffers that fate instead.

Dancing at a fancy affair is seldom the same as someone's personal party. It involves knowledge of etiquette and poise. All characters must make **Perform + Intuition** checks to try to fit in, with Difficulty determined by how well they've done at the party thus far.

Anyone who falls to 1 or lower **Psyche** takes an **Embarrassed 3** Condition and will usually be asked to leave. If the gathering is a social event that requires that character's participation, she may simply leave to another part of the room or site.

DYNAMICS

Dynamic Actions can be used to counter-attack socially, bump up Initiative to get a word in, lower Initiative to get attention off the character



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or even to Deflect using social jutsu on the fly. They may be also used for multiple social attacks. Finally, they may also be used to extract oneself from a conversation.

BLAZING INFERNO

Element: Fire

The ninja are fighting on a blazing rooftop or inside a burning building!

If they are inside, flaming logs plummet down onto the floor. Each round, up to two characters with the highest initiative must avoid flaming wood as it falls from the crumbling structure. The GM receives 6 dice to roll against the players, with a success dealing +1 damage. Those who are hit may catch on fire or even suffer Burned Conditions. As the debris falls, it stays on the ground and becomes an obstacle that causes damage (1 damage) if they come in contact with it. Any character who gets a Critical Failure on their Defense roll against flaming debris may become trapped under it. Such a character must try to push off the debris or squirm free, taking 1 damage each Round they are trapped.

If they are on a flaming roof, holes are constantly opening up on the roof, causing the unwary to fall through them. During everyone's Round, the target with the lowest initiative must make a Challenging (4) Speed + Perception check to avoid falling through. Those who do fall into a hole may wind up on another level of the building, or simply take damage, as they fall waist deep into splintering wood.

DYNAMICS

A character may spend a Dynamic Action to kick or strike a piece of falling debris. If it is kicked, the debris goes flying and falls on a new target (kicker's choice). If the debris is struck, it goes up in a shower of sparks injuring all except the striker within Close Range for 1 damage, bypassing armor. If the debris is kicked at a new target, they may kick it to yet another person (not the original target), but it must be simply avoided after that. Characters who do not want to target another character, can simply kick the debris away.

A character on a flaming roof can cause it to collapse under someone else's feet so long as they are within Close Range. They need only spend a Dynamic Action to do so, since the roof is fragile already. Triggering this effect causes a hole to open beneath the target's feet. A character on a flaming roof can also leap out of the way with a Dynamic Action, but must move a significant distance away, possibly placing them against a new opponent.

FINALE

Eventually, the building is going to completely collapse. The GM must inform the players the Round before the structure disintegrates. If anyone remains when the building collapses, they must make a Tough (3) Survival

+ Fortitude to survive the collapse. If they spent more than 4 Rounds within the building, this difficulty raises to Challenging (4). Those who do survive may automatically disappear from the scene, as it is easy to escape during such an event. Those who do not survive may wake up later in some insidious prison or other hidden place, spirited away by a mysterious benefactor. Or they may just be plain dead.

THE FOG

Element: Wood

The ninja are in a forest where it is very hard to see or perceive anything. This dynamic environment assumes the ninja are up against opponents who can also hide with some degree of skill. As all of the combatants hide, strike, hide and move, there is mass confusion. Foes appear and disappear. Each Round, randomly determine whom each ninja is next to for Battle. Roll one die.

- ◆ **1 to 3:** The ninja finds themselves far away from her original location. Roll again, ignoring 7 to 9 on the die.
- ◆ **4 to 6:** The character finds themselves next to an ally, which can help for trading equipment or healing. Do not roll a die for the Ally.
- ◆ **7 to 9:** They appear next to an opponent. Both roll Stealth vs. Perception to determine if they see each other. The ninja could be hidden from her opponent or vice versa. It is possible they are both hidden from each other or both revealed.
- ◆ **10:** The ninja is next to no one this round, but they get a glimpse of an enemy. Not only can they make a Ranged attack (if they have the right weapon), but they can choose their placement next Round (no roll).

A combatant can attempt to escape the battlefield by succeeding in a number of Stealth rolls equal to how many enemies are in the area.

DYNAMICS

Characters may spend a Dynamic Action to automatically appear next to an opponent, as if they had rolled a 7 to 9 result. If caught in the midst of combat, any character may spend a Dynamic Action to hide immediately.

FINALE

After five Rounds of stealth combat, one side will win. The faction who has suffered the most damage can be found by following traces of their blood. At this point, each member of the winning side gets to make a Fighting + Stealth attack on a member from the other side. If anyone is still alive, the Scene then becomes a normal Battle.



THE LONG CHASE

Element: Metal

The ninja are chasing someone through a series of streets, across rooftops or through a graveyard. This Dynamic Environment presumes the chase environment has plenty of obstacles or dangers, such as carts that can be overturned or gaps between roofs that must be traversed.

Movement determines where all of the combatants are in the chase. Those with the highest Movement are at the front of the pack. This does mean that pursuers can be in front of chased characters, but are unable to stop the target from attempting to escape.

Each round, an obstacle or danger may appear. Roll a die to determine what happens. The character with the highest Movement will encounter it first, followed by others trailing behind them.

- ◆ **1 to 3:** An obstacle appears that must be Dodged (such as a cart, clothesline or horse). The obstacle is treated as an attack (5 dice, Damage +0). Each character in the chase must dodge the obstacle. Failing to Dodge means the character has run into it and falls to the back of the Chase. If they rolled a Critical Failure, one character behind them must Dodge twice (the failed character and the obstacle)
- ◆ **4 to 5:** A danger appears that must be jumped over (such as a gap in the rooftops, a merchant transporting hot coals or a basket full of snakes). Characters must roll Athletics + Speed, with a Difficulty dependent upon the size of the jump that must be made (GM choice). Failing the roll is disastrous, because the character may fall a long way, or into something dangerous.
- ◆ **6 to 9:** No obstacles or dangers!
- ◆ **10:** A barrier appears, splitting all of the combatants into two parallel tracks for 1 Round.

A chased character escapes if they are able to maintain the highest Movement two Rounds in a row or if they remain uncaptured for 3 to 5 Rounds (GM choice).

To capture a chased character, an opponent must attack and defeat the chased person or grapple them. Only a character who is in front of a chased person (higher in Movement) can attempt to grapple the running target.

DYNAMICS

Ninja can spend a Dynamic Action to change their Initiative order as normal, but may also raise Movement by +3 per Dynamic Action spent as well. This represents the ninja speeding up, slowing down or leaping off obstacles to get around.

A ninja may use a Dynamic Action to kick something and create an obstacle that affects all those lower in Movement order. A ninja may

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avoid an obstacle automatically with a Dynamic Action, but that may prevent them from using it to change their Movement order.

DEATH AND DYING

Every character has a certain amount of physical damage they can take (Health) before they drop and mental suffering they can withstand (Psyche) before they lose themselves. Fights are dangerous and can lead to characters taking on terrible injuries and even dying.

REACHING 0

- ◆ **Health:** If the character reaches 0 Health, they are injured beyond anything the character can come back from. The body begins to break down and the character will die if they do not receive medical attention within the next (Fortitude) minutes.
- ◆ **Psyche:** If the character hits 0 Psyche, their mind fractures, and they collapse into a mental breakdown. This is usually accompanied by unconsciousness. Unlike 0 Health, the character will not die with 0 Psyche, but it can easily take them out for long periods of time.

If the character continues to take damage after one of their damage tracks has been reduced to 0, that damage is automatically converted to the other type. Continued damage after the body is severely harmed can start to hurt the mind. Likewise, a broken mind can start to manifest physically in the body. If both damage tracks are ever both reduced to 0, the character dies without any chance of being revived.

CONDITIONS

Once a character has suffered a lot of damage, this can begin to take its toll on them in the worst of ways. Conditions are the reflection of this phenomena, a display of the wounds and traumatic situations the character carries with them. These are anything from becoming weakened, to bleeding to becoming dazed.

If a character reaches Health 0 or Psyche 0, very bad things begin to happen. Conditions allow the character to stave off reaching 0, but at the cost of bringing on certain penalties that can last for Scenes or even entire Sessions. When choosing to take on a Condition, the character removes that much damage and jots down the Condition on their character sheet with the amount of damage relieved for it, which becomes its level.

Each Condition works slightly different, but none can have a rating higher than 5. Likewise, no character can have more than four ongoing Conditions, and the total of all their Condition ratings cannot be higher than 10 at any given time.



Sometimes, the GM will choose a Condition for the character to take, depending on the circumstances surrounding the damage. Other times, the player may choose which they'd prefer. This back and forth should be a discussion, not a dictatorship. Also, the player always has the option to simply take the damage without a Condition if the Condition seems like it would be too harsh in the Scene. Then again, death is also pretty harsh.

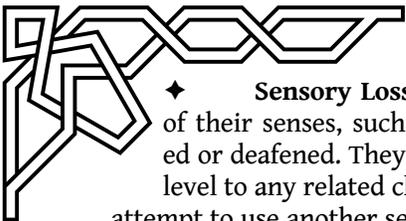
Some weapons, abilities and jutsu can produce Conditions even if no damage is dealt, as well. If the character has no available Condition slots, these Conditions are converted to damage instead.

Example: Rika is facing an Executioner who gets a lucky hit in, causing her 4 damage to Health. Rika's player decides she doesn't want Rika to take all the damage, so she marks 2 damage and then writes in Injured Leg 2 under Conditions. She could have chosen to take Injured Leg 4 and take no damage or simply take all 4 damage instead.

Rika hobbles through the forest on her injured leg, escaping the Executioner, when she springs a trap designed to knock her out. It would add a Knockout 3 Condition, but Rika's four Condition slots are already filled, so she instead takes 3 damage, leading her ever closer to death's door.

PHYSICAL CONDITIONS

- ◆ **Bleeding:** When a character is Bleeding, any physical Action can cause a rupture. To do anything physical (attack or Defense), the character must succeed against a Moderate (2) Fortitude check or suffer 1 damage. They suffer a penalty to this check equal to the Condition Level.
- ◆ **Bruised:** While the character is Bruised, they take +1 damage when struck.
- ◆ **Burned:** The character suffers a penalty equal to the Condition level to all physical tasks, and takes +1 damage when struck due to their sensitive nerves.
- ◆ **Deprived:** The character has been deprived of food, water, sleep, breathable air or some other sustenance they require. Even after they get the thing they need, their body requires time to recover from the loss. They may not recover Health damage until the Deprived Condition ends.
- ◆ **Injured:** Pick a limb or part of their body that is now injured. The character suffers a penalty equal to the Condition level to all checks with that limb.
- ◆ **Knocked Out:** The character is knocked out instantly and stays unconscious until the Condition ends. Every day they are unconscious, they may make a Tough (3) Fortitude check. If they succeed, they lower the amount of time they will be unconscious by one day.

CROSSOVER CONDITIONS


◆ **Sensory Loss:** The character has lost one of their senses, such as being temporarily blinded or deafened. They suffer a penalty equal to the level to any related checks until healed. They may attempt to use another sense to compensate, suffering a -1 penalty.

◆ **Slowed:** Something is affecting the character and making them slower. This could be a leg injury, a jutsu effect or a sickness that has made it harder to move. They suffer a penalty to Initiative equal to their Condition level.

MENTAL CONDITIONS

◆ **Afraid:** The character has been frightened by something, and their fight or flight instinct kicks in. They must make a Tough (3) Discipline + Empathy check against Fear at the beginning of each Round on contact with the source of their fear. If they fail, they lose their Action. They suffer a penalty to this check equal to their Condition level.

◆ **Confused:** Their mind is muddled and it makes it harder to do even the simplest of tasks. While Confused, any 1s the character rolls during a check subtracts a success. For example, if the Confused character rolls 1, 4, 7 and 8, that counts as only 1 success (instead of 2 successes).

◆ **Convinced:** Whatever lie or half-truth has been spoken to the character, they are now fully convinced. They also suffer a penalty equal to their Condition level to detect lies from the same source while in effect.

◆ **Dazed:** The character has become dizzy and their vision blurred. They only use their highest Skill in a Skill combo or do not receive the +1 bonus for a Single Skill check. Also, regardless of their success on a check, they always suffer at least 1 Consequence (pg. 83).

◆ **Embarrassed:** When embarrassed, the character has lost face in front of people from whom they seek respect. They suffer a penalty to social checks with those people until their Embarrassment passes.

◆ **Scarred:** The character is horribly scarred. Until the wound heals, they suffer a penalty to social checks (except for Intimidation) equal to the Condition level.

◆ **Broken:** Something about the damage has made it harder to perform a certain Skill. Maybe a strike to the throat makes it hard to sing (Perform), their nerves have been severely shaken (Discipline) or crushed hands make it harder to build (Crafts). They suffer a penalty to that Skill equal to their Broken Condition level.

◆ **Dosed:** If the character has been affected by a potion created with Alchemy, they gain a Dosed Condition that lasts as long as the effect description (pg. 74).

◆ **Pain:** Characters in Pain take a penalty to their physical or mental checks equal to the amount of damage they have taken of that type. For instance, a character who has taken 3 physical damage and 2 mental damage, has a -3 penalty to physical checks and a -2 to mental checks. The character can make a Moderate (2) Discipline + Fortitude check as a Quick Action to ignore their pain for a Round. They suffer a penalty to this check equal to their Pain Condition level.

◆ **Poisoned:** A poisoned character takes 1 damage per Round of Battle, which cannot be negated. Outside of Battle, they are sickly, suffering half their Poison Condition (rounded up) as a penalty to physical and mental checks. They also only heal half as much Health or Psyche while this Condition in effect (pg. 91).

REMOVING CONDITIONS

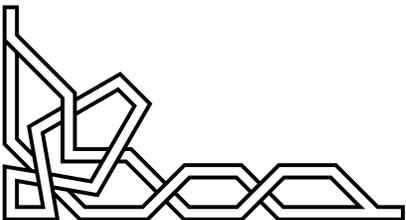
Depending on the severity of the Condition, some last for a few Scenes, while others can last for days of in-game time or even multiple sessions.

◆ **Light Conditions (Level 1):** These Conditions remain for the rest of the Scene and are then shaken off. In some cases, the GM may say it sticks around for one more Scene, but never any longer.

◆ **Lasting Conditions (Level 2-3):** Lasting Conditions last for a number of days equal to its rating before reducing its level by one. This time can be down time, but most stories are time sensitive for a reason.

◆ **Heavy Conditions (Level 4-5):** These are the worst Conditions to take on, lasting an entire session before it lowers by one level.

Example: Kino ran into a building to save a child only to be crushed under a pile of burning logs. This was after a battle, so it would have surely killed her if her player didn't choose to take a Burned 5 Condition. Without treatment, she will suffer the effects for the rest of the Session and the next session, after which it will last for 5 days (3 + 2) of in-game time before being shaken off at the end of the first Scene Kino plays in.



CHAPTER FIVE - DICE MASTERY

HOLISTICS AND DAMAGE

Once per Scene, a character with at least Holistics 1 can attend to another character, setting bones, bandaging them and applying ointments. The healer can make a Moderate (2) Holistics check, with a secondary Skill that fits the circumstances. They may use Perception for internal injuries, Survival for using herbs specifically, Speed if it is imperative to get it done quickly, Empathy if the damage is purely mental or just general Knowledge to use their intelligence to heal the target. Success means they heal the target 1 damage, or 2 damage on a Boost. Any damage left over heals naturally at the end of the Scene (pg. 91) or can be converted to Conditions per normal. A character can only receive one treatment in any given Scene. Administering care to oneself is trickier than helping another, incurring an additional -2 penalty to their check.

HOLISTICS AND CONDITIONS

Once per Session, a character with at least Holistics 3 can attempt to treat another character's Conditions (One cannot remove their own Conditions). The healer makes a Tough (3) Holistics check similar to that for healing damage, but suffers a penalty based on the level of the Condition being treated: -1 penalty for Light, -2 penalty for Lasting and -3 penalty for Heavy. A successful check means the Condition is reduced by 1, or by 2 on a Boost. For instance, if the target has suffered Burned 3, the healer would have a -2 penalty to reduce it to Burned 2. Again, a character can only receive one treatment in any given Scene.

BATTLE EXAMPLE

Eloy is GMing at a local gaming convention where thousands of people have gathered to play tabletop RPGs, card and board games. He's readied all his materials (dice, notes, etc.) and brought a few pre-generated characters for his players to pick from. Three players show up, and they go through the characters to see which one they'd like to play. Jarad ends his reading on Sakatomo Tadao (pg. 229), Ryan picks up Sumi Rika (pg. 230) and Elizabeth grabs Kumori Kunio (pg. 225). Everyone has already played *The Ninja Crusade 2nd Edition* before, so there is little setup or explanation involved beforehand. Eloy decides to jump right into the action, using the Starting in the Middle trick (pg. 215), and shows them how cool combat can be.

Eloy (GM): We start the scene with all of your characters on the estate of the local daimyo, surrounded by two groups of Town Guards (Squad, pg. 161) and a Silver Blade (Warrior, pg. 164) leading them. Your elders sent you here to steal something from the daimyo, but there's no chance of that happening unless you survive this battle.

Jarad (Tadao): I take it that talking our way out of this isn't an option.

Eloy (GM): Looking at the guards, they don't seem to be open to discussing the issue, no. They are arming themselves and ready for the Silver Blade to make the call.

Ryan (Rika): Rika's glad that's not an option. She wants to fight that Silver Blade and see who is better.

Elizabeth (Kunio): I know this wasn't my fault. Had they just sent me by myself, I could have snuck in and taken the item.

Eloy (GM): The reason they were with you is that the item is too big for one person to carry alone. It's a large golden statue of special nostalgic importance to the daimyo.

Elizabeth (Kunio): Figures. *laughs*

Eloy (GM): Pretty much. Now let's start the fight! Everyone roll first for Dynamic Actions.

ROUND 1

First step to combat is each player rolling to see how many Dynamic Actions they'll have to help for the Round. Since all the characters are Rank 1, each of them rolls 3 dice. Each success adds +1 Dynamic Action.

Jarad (Tadao): I got 2, 7 and 8, so that's 2 successes for a total of 3 Dynamic Actions.

Elizabeth (Kunio): My dice say 4, 2 and 9, so I have 2 Dynamic Actions.

Ryan (Rika): Woot! I rolled 8, 7 and 8, for a total of 4 Dynamic Actions.

Comparing the Initiatives for each of the combatants, they end up with the following Initiative order:

Rika - 9
Silver Blade - 9
Town Guards #1 - 7
Town Guards #2 - 7
Tadao - 6
Kunio - 5

Eloy (GM): It's your go first, Ryan. Rika and the rest of you are surrounded in the center of a hall in the estate. There are four symmetrical columns. Each group of Town Guards represents five fighters. The Silver Blade is a single Warrior.

Ryan (Rika): Can I get to the Silver Blade to attack her?

Eloy (GM): There are three guards in front of her, but you can if they are taken out.



Ryan (Rika): Easy enough. I'm going to use my Standard Action to activate Tiger Claws first, readying myself for the upcoming attack.

Tiger Claws is a Basic Jutsu and the activation check is Yang 2 + Fortitude 3. Ryan rolls 5 dice and gets 4, 5, 7, 9, 9 (3 successes), which means it lasts for her next three attacks.

Ryan (Rika): Since I have Dynamic Actions to spare, I'm also going to spend one to take another Action and activate Sturdy Fist, launching an attack at the Town Guards in front of me. This is a fast and strong strike, no fanciness.

Eloy (GM): Let's make your attack pool using Fighting + Speed for that, after your activation.

Sturdy Fist is also a Basic Jutsu and will roll Yang 2 + Fighting 3. She also gets +1 Fighting from her Assailant Gift since she is currently outnumbered (11 against 3). Rolling her 6 dice, she gets 2, 2, 4, 6, 7, 10 (3 successes). That is a success and means she gets to make an immediate close combat attack with a +2 bonus.

Since that was successful, Ryan now rolls for his follow-up attack with Fighting 3 + Speed 4 + 1 for 8 dice total. Eloy will roll for the Guards who have 6 dice for Defense as they attempt to hold off the ninja. Ryan gets 3, 4, 5, 5, 7, 10, 10, 10 (7 successes). Eloy gets 2, 2, 4, 5, 9, 9 (2 successes). This means Rika would deal 5 damage normally. With the help of her Tiger Claws, she deals +1 damage and causes a Pain 1 Condition as well, for a total of 7 damage.

Eloy (GM): Rika swipes with her claws, slitting the throats of two of the guards in front of her. They fall to the floor in agonizing pain.

Ryan (Rika): Can I attack the Guard again? I really want to clear the way to the Silver Blade.

Eloy (GM): You have Dynamic Actions to spare, so I don't see why not.

Ryan uses Sturdy Fist again and rolls the same 6 dice, getting 1, 6, 6, 7, 7, 8 (3 successes). On success, he decides he is going to attack in the same way and uses the same 8 dice, getting 3, 5, 6, 6, 8, 8, 9, 9 (4 successes). Eloy rolls 4 dice for the Defense (-2 penalty for losing two squad members) and gets 4, 5, 5, 7 (1 success). This means Rika would deal 3 normal damage, in addition to +1 damage and Pain 1 from Tiger Claws and +1 damage from her Boost (3 more successes than the defense), making it 6 total damage.

Eloy (GM): The other guards file in to back up the Silver Blade, but Rika's Tiger Claws cut them to ribbons and send blood flying everywhere. There is only one guard left in group #1 now, and he is looking very scared at this point.

Now it's the Silver Blade's Turn. Rika has never faced one before, but she's going to find out why they have a reputation in the empire. The Silver Blade quickly unsheathes her katana and launches forward with her Sharpest Blade technique.

CHAPTER FIVE - DICE MASTERY

The Silver Blade's Sharpest Blade means they attack the target's Attack dice, instead of Defense. If successes, they have the option to destroy the defender's weapon or deal +3 damage. Eloy spends one of the Silver Blade's Dynamic Actions to activate the ability and will roll her 9 dice for attack. He then determines Ryan needs to roll Rika's Fighting + Speed with a -1 penalty due to repetitive usage (6 dice). Eloy gets 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 8, 8, 9 (4 successes), and Ryan gets 1, 3, 3, 4, 4, 7 (1 success) for a massive hit against Rika that deals 7 damage (4 normal damage, 1 Boost damage and +3 damage from Technique, since Rika does not have a weapon to disarm). Ryan decides to take 4 physical damage, because it was an impressive attack, 1 mental damage from the shock of such a strong hit and convert the other 2 damage to a Pain 2 Condition. This is strategic since Ryan can ultimately ignore a Pain 2 Condition due to the Inks' Clan Gift.

Ryan (Rika): Wow, that was a massive hit. Rika is going to try to back up slightly to allow the others to come in and help.

Eloy (GM): It is the Town Guard's turn right now, so they'll get to go first. Group #2 is going to attack first, which means I have 5 attacks coming against Kunio and Tadao who are at the other end. The first is going to attack Tadao.

Jarad (Tadao): I'm going to spend 2 Dynamic Actions to Deflect attack and activate the Muddied Steps at the same time, which should help against the other attacks too.

Eloy rolls the Town Guard's 7 dice for attack and gets 4, 6, 6, 7, 7, 9, 10 (5 successes), while Jarad rolls 3 dice to activate the Basic Jutsu and gets 4, 8, 10 (3 successes). Not only does this reduce Eloy's successes to 2 (5 - 3), but also puts the effects of Muddied Steps on the area. Jarad may not Defend normally and makes an Athletics 0 + Speed 1 roll and gets a 10 (2 successes). Because they are tied, the Town Guards deal only 1 damage to Tadao.

Jarad (Tadao): Since I have the Thick Skin Martial Training, I absorb that 1 damage and laugh in the guards' faces. Ha! And now everyone has to roll to not fall down... sorry guys.

Eloy (GM): That's right. Everyone roll Athletics + Speed to not fall from the muddied floor. You just need 2 successes.

Ryan rolls 6 dice for Rika and gets 5 successes. Elizabeth rolls 4 dice for Kunio and gets 2 successes on the dot. Eloy rolls 3 dice for the Town Guards, with group #1 getting 2 successes and group #2 getting only 1. He then rolls 3 dice for the Silver Blade and gets 2 successes.

Eloy (GM): Awesome! All five of group #2 fall on their asses in true Three Stooges fashion. Lots of flailing arms and plop noises. They spend the rest of their turn getting to their feet, so no need to worry about group #2 for this Round.

The group laughs.

Eloy (GM): The last guard still standing remains by his Silver Blade lord. He gives it his all and attacks Rika with his spear.

CHAPTER FIVE - DICE MASTERY

Ryan (Rika): I'm pretty hurt, but I'm going to attempt to Dodge.

Eloy rolls 3 dice for the guard for his attack. This is normally 7, but squads lose -1 die for every member of their squad defeated. Since they have lost 4 already, he's rolling with 4 fewer dice. Ryan rolls Athletics 2 + Speed 4, but suffers a -2 penalty from pain. Eloy gets 2, 3, 5 (no successes), while Ryan gets 1, 7, 9, 9 (3 successes).

Ryan (Rika): Now that I got a Boost, I'm going to use Taste Your Own Blood, which lets me reduce my Pain Condition by 1 and gain +1 Initiative and +1 Fighting for the rest of the Round. I'm also going to spend my last Dynamic Action to Counter Attack and hopefully end this last guard. Going to attack with all my strength and activate Sturdy Fist again.

Eloy (GM): Ok, make this a Fighting + Might check, instead of using Speed then.

Ryan now gets to attack the Guard who just attacked him. He must first make a check to ignore his current pain that would normally give him a -4 penalty. It is a Moderate (2) Discipline + Fortitude check, and Ryan has 4 dice. Without his Clan Gift that reduces pain penalties by 2, he would suffer a -1 penalty. He gets 3, 5, 7, 8 (2 successes), which means he may ignore the pain.

Then he rolls 7 dice (having gained another +1 Fighting) and gets 1, 2, 4, 7, 7, 8, 10 (5 successes). This is a Boost on his activation check, which means spending Dynamic Actions for damage will deal +2 damage instead of +1. Eloy rolls 2 dice for Defense and gets 1, 6 (0 successes), which deals 5 damage. This is enough to cut the last guard in group #1 in half. With the Boost, Ryan decides to reduce his Pain Condition by 1 again, removing it entirely.

Ryan (Rika): Now it's just the Silver Blade and me.

Eloy (GM): Not so fast. It's Tadao's actual Turn now.

Jarad (Tadao): Oh man. I kind of did what I wanted to do. I'm going to Mold Ki, in case I need to pull out some more jutsu next round. I want to make 1 Yin.

Jarad just marks 1 more point of Yin. There is no roll for Molding Ki, but by doing so, Jarad has balanced his Yin and Yang ki, giving him +1 Health, +1 Psyche and +1 to all future jutsu checks. That could come in handy.

Eloy (GM): Sounds great. Ok, Elizabeth, it's Kunio's turn. There's a lot of chaos going around. What's he going to do?

Elizabeth (Kunio): I'm going to use The Unnoticed to go invisible. I'm hoping for a Boost for my plan to work.

Elizabeth rolls Yin 3 + Stealth 3 for Kunio, and gets 5, 6, 8, 8, 10 (5 successes). This jutsu gives Kunio +2 Stealth on all checks. On a Boost, this allows her to run and still remain invisible. A Boost also creates a -2 penalty to see Kunio.

Eloy (GM): Wow! Awesome check. What's next.

Elizabeth (Kunio): I'm going to spend 1 Dynamic Action to sprint over behind the Silver Blade, who is hopefully preoccupied with Rika.

Eloy (GM): She is, yes. You also need to make another check to move in the Muddied area.

Jarad (Tadao): Sorry about that again.

Elizabeth rolls her same 4 dice and gets 3 successes, which is enough to keep from slipping. Otherwise, there is no roll for moving, especially since Kunio is invisible.

Eloy (GM): Ok. Now that you're there, what are you going to do now?

Elizabeth (Kunio): Now I'm going to come out of my invisibility with a strategic strike to the Silver Blade's back.

Eloy (GM): The Silver Blade didn't see it coming, but tries to defend anyway. I'm going to give her a -2 penalty to her defense.

Elizabeth (Kunio): Awesome! I'm also going to grab the 3 dice from the Karma Pool, cause I'm hoping I can one-shot her.

Ryan (Rika): Oh man, that would be amazing! Good luck!

Elizabeth rolls her attack using Fighting 3 + Stealth 3, but also receives +1 Fighting from her Devious Gift, +2 Stealth from her jutsu and +3 dice from the Karma Pool for a total of 12 dice on her attack. Eloy is rolling only 4 dice for defense, since he has a -2 penalty. Elizabeth rolls 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 7, 7, 8, 10, 10 (8 successes) and Eloy rolls 1, 1, 4, 4 (0 successes).

Eloy discloses that the Silver Blade only has 9 Health and Armor 2, which means her 9 damage (8 from successes, +1 from weapon) would only deal 7 in the end. She needs to inflict 2 more damage to make it a one-hit kill. She did Boost twice, so she spends both of those to add +1 damage each, thus ending the Silver Blade in one fell swoop.

From there, the group could continue to fight the remaining guards or Eloy could simply say they run away, since their leader has been defeated. This could lead to alarms being rung, so the players should choose whether they want to be done fighting or if they want a better chance of completing the mission without another battle.

In any case, that was an epic Round of battle.

Stars filled Hebi Tsuneo's vision as he flew through the thin glass window of the Red Ox Tavern. He felt the cold splash of mud on his head and shoulders as he rolled to a stop. Looking up, he saw the drunk guards stumbling out of the tavern, their eyes full of vicious glee.

"You sure took great offense to my remarks," Tsuneo said as he picked himself up. "Perhaps I should alert the guards. You know," Tsuneo wiped the blood dripping from his nose on his right arm. "The ones that are good at their jobs?"

Tsuneo barely dodged a thrown bottle as he smirked and ran away from the guards, who he noticed were keeping a steady pace behind him. These guards had been running a protection racket in the southern valleys for some time now. They took any coin back to their boss, a corrupt bureaucrat named Henchi, who in turn taxed the people to death in order to 'pay for more guards.' Tsuneo was not here for vengeance on corrupt guards, however.

As Tsuneo ran down a familiar alleyway, he took care to leap from crate to crate to dodge the puddles on the ground and keep his feet dry. He landed in the middle of the alleyway and turned around, his hands a flurry of motion as he activated the jutsu he had prepared just for this occasion.

The guards rampaged down the alleyway, their feet splashing through the puddles, soaking their legs in the deep water. The guards saw Tsuneo trapped in the dead end, and they formed a line preventing his escape. Their leader, a man with a shaved head named Kyou, drew a knife from his belt and waved it back and forth menacingly.

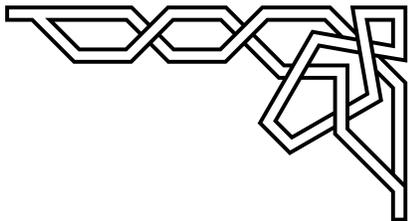
"Look! The little rabbit ran into a hole! Now he's stuck, and doesn't know what he's going to do."

"I wouldn't say I'm stuck. Stuck implies I'm actually trapped. I have you just where I want you, however," Tsuneo replied.

Several of the guards started looking uneasy, and a few started clutching their stomachs in pain. Kyou, his own face turning pale, gripped his blade even tighter. "What is going on? What did you do?"

Tsuneo launched his whole body forward like a snake and struck Kyou hard in the chest. Before Kyou's men could react, Tsuneo had already unleashed his twin bladed knives with the skill only a Recoiling Serpent could possess, slashing at their eyes and throats before they could move. The ninja's moves were precise, and soon only Kyou was still alive. His face was turning purple and his fingers clawed at his neck.

"Not that this fact will help you in this life, but feel free to carry this knowledge into the next world." Tsuneo knelt next to the guard captain, who could only see the ninja's face as a blur of colors. "Do not splash in every puddle you see, foolish man. Not every puddle is made of water."



CHAPTER SIX

ON ALL FRONTS

No story is complete without encountering Extras who engage and challenge the characters. Traveling the lands of the Izou Empire will bring ninja in contact with criminal guilds hoping to usurp control of villages, Izou battalions bent on their destruction or even enemy ninja who want nothing but to make the characters fail their mission. All these “Extras” are the people who populate the rest of the world, and the GM portrays them all.

This chapter focuses on those Extras who may pose a threat to the ninja. It could be battling wildcats in the deep forests, matching minds with politicians in the Izou courts or shedding blood on one of many different battlefields. This also includes information on some of the more magical elements of the setting, such as ancestor spirits, Celestial Animals and demons. Descriptions are purposefully generic so the GM can customize them to fit their needs in the stories their players are experiencing.

TYPES OF ENEMY EXTRAS

The fearsome foes of the Ninja Crusade come in four different types, each one spelling out how dangerous they are.

◆ **Squads:** Squads are a group of enemies collectively fighting with their numbers spread out over an area. Typically, these opponents have three times the normal Health and Psyche of a single character, with each member of the Squad represented by a fraction of the total Health. For instance, a Squad with 5 members and 20 Health, means they lose one of their members if they take 4 damage. They must be faced down with teamwork to be bested. Each lost mem-

ber of the Squad also incurs a -1 penalty to Attack and Defense. Squads typically have just 1 Action per Round, but they can attack once per squad member.

◆ **Legions:** A Legion is not just a group of enemies, but also a large gathering of them, such as a battalion of Izou soldiers or an entire rogue clan of ninja. Legions don't actually have “Health” but instead have a damage threshold, combining Health and Psyche. If they sustain enough damage, legions disperse in a particular area for a while, but will gather again unless the players' characters flee. While it is possible for the players' characters to utterly defeat these forces, they must first bring about special conditions, such as the defeat of its commander, the destruction of a key bridge, a breach in a wall, etc. Legions typically have 1 or 2 Actions per Round, depending on the size of the Legion, and they can attack everyone in the area in which they occupy.

◆ **Warriors:** These opponents are effectively equivalent to a player's character. Keep in mind that a single warrior won't last long at all against an entire band of ninja. Warriors work best with a Squad or Legion at their back, usually taking the lead as their commander. Most groups of ninja should face multiple warriors at once.

◆ **Masters:** Masters are stronger opponents who can take on multiple ninjas at once. They typically have three times a typical character's Health and Psyche.

MARTIAL ARTS

These are the powers and abilities antagonists possess, not unlike jutsu. Most of them also possess a weakness or loophole to the power, called a "Twist." Also, note some Twists list Skills in parentheses. In these cases, the GM determines which Skill is the true weakness of the Martial Art. This is to prevent too much player memorization, as it can change between individual foes. There's no way for ninja to be completely sure what their enemy can do without a fair amount of reconnaissance.

CONDITIONS AND FOES

Unlike characters who can shrug off damage in exchange for Conditions, some antagonists do not have such a luxury. Squads and Legions, since they represent multiple opponents, handle Conditions somewhat differently. Conditions applied to these foes simply stack on top of damage done. They are still limited to only so many ongoing Conditions at any given time.

ANIMAL THREATS

Antagonists come in all shapes and sizes, and this means ninja may sometimes have to fight off animals during Battle. They are separated simply into smaller and larger animals. Tiny animals like house cats or rats do not get full stats, as they do not possess enough power to challenge a ninja. Then again, some snakes can deliver deadly poisons and other animals have natural abilities that could harm a ninja.

SMALLER ANIMAL (WARRIOR)

Dog, Wolf, Badger, etc.

Health: 7 **Psyche:** 3

Attack: 6 **Actions:** 2

Defense: 6 **Armor:** 0

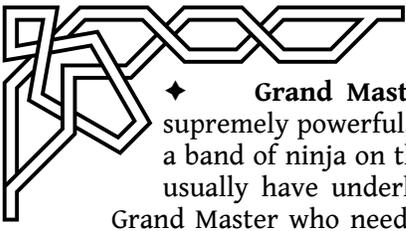
Initiative: 5 **Damage:** +1

Dynamic Actions: 1

Suggested Skills (3 dice): Athletics, Intimidation, Perception, Speed, Stealth

TECHNIQUES

Athletics (+), Speed (+), Deception (-), Intimidation (-); It is foolish to outrun or dodge a creature of nature. Instead, a wise ninja tricks or frightens beasts that set upon them.



◆ **Grand Masters:** These antagonists are supremely powerful, created to pose a threat to a band of ninja on their own. Despite this, they usually have underlings with them as well. A Grand Master who needs no aid should be exceedingly rare.

STATS

- ◆ **Combat:** The values listed with each antagonist write-up represent the number of dice the players must roll for Attacks and Defense. Foes have a static Initiative, just like other characters, and a static number of Dynamic Actions, unlike ninja who get to roll for more every Round. Note that some threats have more than one attack per round. This is on top of their Dynamic Actions.
- ◆ **Skills:** The suggested Skills for some foes are just that – suggestions for when these antagonists need quick Skills. If an enemy becomes a reoccurring threat, the GM should look to enhance or alter these Skills.
- ◆ **Damage:** Each antagonist also has a damage bonus to apply, regardless of the weapon they use. The GM may adjust the damage up or down by 1 to individualize particular threats.

TECHNIQUES

This section informs the enemy's fighting tactics and represents what methods they are good at fighting against or their possible weaknesses. Skills with a "+" beside them indicate the foe receives a +1 bonus against any roll made with that Skill. For example, a mercenary with "vs. Might (+)" gets 1 extra die when attacking ninja who use Might in their defense, such as while in a Grab. They also get a +1 bonus on their Defense roll when someone uses Might in their attack on them. Especially powerful enemies may have (++), which means they gain a +2 bonus on their check.

However, Skills with a "-" beside them means the foe suffers a -1 penalty whenever they face an opponent who uses that Skill. For example, a particular guard may have Stealth (-), which means the guard suffers a -1 penalty on their roll when an opponent uses Stealth against them. It really pays to figure out your opponent ahead of time.

Again, if the enemy becomes a reoccurring threat or begins to see through the ninja's tactics, the GM is encouraged to raise or lower these modifiers by +1 or -1, respectively.



LARGER ANIMAL (MASTER)

Bear, Tiger, Panther, etc.

Health: 20 **Psyche:** 12

Attack: 8 **Actions:** 2

Defense: 8 **Armor:** 1

Initiative: 7 **Damage:** +2

Dynamic Actions: 1

Suggested Skills (4 dice): Athletics, Fortitude, Intimidation, Might, Perception, Speed, Stealth

TECHNIQUES

Might (+), Speed (+), Deception (-), Survival (-); to try to match the strength of a tiger or bear would be foolish. Sharp wits and knowledge of nature are what the ninja need.

BESTIAL ARTS

Maul: A large animal, like a tiger or bear, can seize an opportunity of weakness in the span of a heartbeat. If this creature damages its opponent, it can spend a Dynamic Action to attack again immediately against the same target. Only usable once per Round. **Twist:** A ninja who stands behind a mauling animal may gain a +2 bonus to their attack roll.

TOWNSHIP THREATS

These represent threats a ninja might encounter in a town or village. It covers villagers, town guards, criminal elements and political leadership. These threats do not pose a serious challenge to even a lone ninja, but may cause delays or otherwise interrupt their plans.

AVERAGE CITIZEN (SQUAD)

Millions of people come and go each day in the Empire. These are merchants, innkeepers, crafters and anyone else found living and working within a town. These people are not combat trained, and individually pose no threat to a ninja or a soldier. If gathered into a group towards a single purpose, they might make a formidable foe. Citizens prefer to keep their heads down and not gather notice, so rallying them requires a serious incentive.

Health: 15 **Psyche:** 12

Attack: 3 **Actions:** 1

Defense: 3 **Armor:** 0

Initiative: 3 **Damage:** +1

Dynamic Actions: 1

Suggested Skills (2 dice): Any four of choice.




LOCAL HERO/VIGILANTE (WARRIOR)

Every town has someone who believes themselves a hero. They may have received real military training, or some training from a ninja at some point in their life. They do not have the resources or means to truly fight the Empire, though they try their best at every turn. They act as natural leaders on the streets, calling people to rally against a rogue ninja or a street thug, often to no real consequence. These people tend to be foolhardy, thinking they can take on threats well beyond their capabilities. They need saving as often as they attempt to save someone else, but with a bit of strategy and cunning, a vigilante can be made into an ally.

Health: 6 **Psyche:** 5
Attack: 7 **Actions:** 1
Defense: 6 **Armor:** 1
Initiative: 5 **Damage:** +1
Dynamic Actions: 1

Suggested Skills (2 dice): Empathy, Fighting, Intuition, Marksman, Persuade, Survival

TECHNIQUES

Fighting (+), Persuade (+), Stealth (-); these people have some training and ability, making them just enough of a threat to get themselves in a lot of trouble.

BANDITS (SQUAD)

Bandits represent one of the lowest forms of thievery. They prey on the weak and unprotected, stealing goods and money. They often work in small, well-armed groups, extorting travelers to and from towns. They prefer to simply intimidate people into giving them what they want, but will resort to violence if necessary. They allow well-armed or guarded caravans and groups to go by, waiting instead to attack smaller or ill-equipped travelers. They strike lone travelers or small groups as long as they have superior numbers.

Health: 20 **Psyche:** 15
Attack: 5 **Actions:** 1
Defense: 4 **Armor:** 1
Initiative: 6 **Damage:** +1
Dynamic Actions: 1

Suggested Skills (2 dice): Fighting, Intimidation, Speed

TECHNIQUES

Intimidation (+), Speed (+), Fortitude (-); bandits attempt to use superior numbers and a show of force to intimidate people into giving them

what they want. They strike fast and are coordinated, though not very tough.

BRAWLERS (WARRIOR)

Brawlers are the strong arm of most criminal organizations. They tend to be the most common gang members the town sees on a normal basis. They are the pickpockets, toughs and extortionists. They push people around to get what they want, often threatening violence or vandalism if the people of the town do not pay a price. A street thug on his own is no real match for a ninja; though they have a certain degree of training in hand-to-hand combat.

Health: 6 **Psyche:** 5
Attack: 5 **Actions:** 1
Defense: 4 **Armor:** 1
Initiative: 5 **Damage:** +1
Dynamic Actions: 1

Suggested Skills (3 dice): Deception, Fighting, Might, Survival

TECHNIQUES

Fortitude (+), Might (+), Speed (-), Stealth (-); Street thugs are not fast, and depend on their brute force in a fight.

GUILD LEADER (WARRIOR)

The leader of criminal guilds does not gain that position from being soft or incapable. These men and women are the toughest or cruelest members of their respective gangs. They command the respect, or fear, of their group; whatever they say goes. Dealing with a criminal organization almost invariably requires dealing with the leader. Most leaders are out for themselves, viewing the lower ranks of their organizations as expendable if it comes to a fight. However, few would willingly sell out their entire gang just to save their own skin.

Health: 7 **Psyche:** 6
Attack: 6 **Actions:** 2
Defense: 5 **Armor:** 3
Initiative: 7 **Damage:** +2
Dynamic Actions: 2

Suggested Skills (4 dice): Deception, Fighting, Fortitude, Intimidation, Speed, Stealth

TECHNIQUES

Intimidation (+), Fighting (+), Intuition (-), Knowledge (-); Guild leaders rarely fight alone, using their command of their gang to win in a conflict.

CHAPTER SIX - ON ALL FRONTS

POLITICAL LEADER (WARRIOR)

The political leader is the member of the town who serves as the local government. This may be a minor noble, a religious leader, the village elder or an official appointed by the Empire. They hold great power in the city, their words commanding respect and immediate action. They do not necessarily pose much of a physical threat on their own, but in the social arena, they are formidable opponents.

Health: 5 **Psyche:** 8
Attack: 7 **Actions:** 1
Defense: 6 **Armor:** 0
Initiative: 6 **Damage:** +1
Dynamic Actions: 1

Suggested Skills (4 dice): Discipline, Empathy, Knowledge, Intimidation, Intuition, Persuade, Speed

TECHNIQUES

Intimidation (+), Persuade (+), Discipline (+), Fighting (-), Might (-), Marksman (-); most political leaders are not trained for fighting, and instead have at their command bodyguards or the town guards for physical protection. In a social setting, they employ their considerable political and social power to cow their enemies.

TOWN GUARDS

Town guards serve to protect the peace within a town from bandits, wild animals and other threats. Depending on the area, they may be tangentially within the Emperor's employ, though this is a rare occurrence. These people are concerned citizens with better training than most who take it upon themselves to patrol or set up watches. When guards spot a ninja in town, they often give them a wide berth unless they think they can defeat them. Most take their duty to the township seriously, and intervene if a character is disrupting the peace. Some might be corrupt and paid by the characters' enemies to give them trouble.

SIMPLE GUARDS (SQUAD)

Health: 15 **Psyche:** 12
Attack: 6 **Actions:** 1 (Squad)
Defense: 5 **Armor:** 1
Initiative: 5 **Damage:** +1
Dynamic Actions: 1

Suggested Skills (3 dice): Fighting, Intimidation, Intuition, Perception

TRAINED GUARDS (SQUAD)

Health: 18 **Psyche:** 12
Attack: 7 **Actions:** 1 (Squad)
Defense: 6 **Armor:** 1
Initiative: 7 **Damage:** +1
Dynamic Actions: 1

Suggested Skills (4 dice): Fighting, Fortitude, Intimidation, Intuition, Perception

TECHNIQUES

Might (+), Speed (+); Deception (-), Stealth (-); these trained guards are used to fighting, but are essentially brutes. They lack guile and cunning.

STONE GUARDIAN

MERCENARIES (SQUAD)

The Stone Guardians are mercenaries hailing from the Aikuchi Mountains. Once there were only a smattering of them in the land, but as the Great War has worn on, more men and women arrive at the High Peak every day, looking for purpose... and a home. A Stone Guardian trains for a full year before descending the mountain and serving in the various warring armies of the realm. They are no friend to Izou or the ninja, fighting for their own perceived purposes.

Health: 24 **Psyche:** 15
Attack: 6 **Actions:** 1 (Squad)
Defense: 6 **Armor:** 1
Initiative: 9 **Damage:** +1
Dynamic Actions: 2

Suggested Skills (4 dice): Athletics, Crafts, Fighting, Fortitude, Intimidation, Marksman, Survival, Travel

TECHNIQUES

Might (+), Deception (-); Stone Guardians are trained as brutes, and therefore are guarded against a strong show of force. They have little guile against deception, however.

MARTIAL ARTS

- ◆ **Urchin of Steel:** They take an action to muster themselves into a defensive block formation with polearms out. Anyone attacking them in melee while they are in this position suffers an immediate counterattack, without the need to spend a Dynamic Action. **Twist:** Anyone who can jump or appear in the midst of the defensive block catches these soldiers off-guard, giving them a +2 bonus to their next attack. (Stealth or Athletics).

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◆ **Stonefletcher:** Once per Battle, the Guardians can take in a deep breath, letting the dust of the mountain into their flesh. Their skin turns to stone for just a moment, allowing them to ignore damage for 1 Round. **Twist:** A quickly timed impact attack can crack their stone exterior, ignoring this immunity (Perception, Intuition, or Discipline).

IMPERIAL THREATS

The main enemy in the ninja's sights is the Emperor and his Imperial army. Not only does the Empire have superior numbers to the ninja, but they also possess ki-manipulating, homicidal lunatics, masterful swordsmen and even their own ninja clan. The ninja are in for the fight of their lives.

IMPERIAL BATTALION (LEGION)

These stats represent an entire battalion against the ninja. As it states in the section on Legion-type enemies, a band of ninja cannot simply kill all of them off. Ninja may disperse a Legion of troops for a while but they will always reconvene.

Damage Threshold: 30

Attack: 7 **Actions:** 2 (Legion)

Defense: 7 **Armor:** 0

Initiative: 4 **Damage:** +2

Dynamic Actions: 1

Suggested Skills (5 dice): Discipline, Fighting, Holistics, Intimidation, Knowledge, Marksman, Perception, Speed

TECHNIQUES

Fortitude (+), Speed (-); The Emperor's troops rely on the ability to march over their opponent with brute force. It is hard for them to deal with quick and nimble opponents.

MARTIAL ARTS

◆ **The Tide of Battle:** For every 2 Rounds the Imperial Army is fought, it gains a +1 bonus to its Attack pool. **Twist:** Crafty ninja will escape a legion of Imperial troops... or find ways to avoid fighting them.

◆ **Constant Crossfire:** The Imperial Army is especially good at firing with their specially recurved bows. They can even fire at enemies who are engaged with their allies in melee. Every 2 Rounds a ninja remains visible to the Imperial Army, they take 1 point of damage, regardless of Armor, as missiles fly by. **Twist:** A ninja can block or deflect these arrows (and the damage) by spending a Dynamic Action each Round.



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ENGINEERS (WARRIOR)

The Izou Army has the advantage of gunpowder thanks to aid from the Land of Five Blades. Those who are trained in the use of firearms and explosives are the army's Engineers. Only the most intelligent soldiers are trained as Engineers, making their number limited. They are rarely found on the frontline with their ability to fight at long ranges and their ability to repair weaponry and armor on the battlefield make them invaluable members of the army.

Health: 9 **Psyche:** 6
Attack: 7 **Actions:** 1
Defense: 6 **Armor:** 1
Initiative: 7 **Damage:** +1
Dynamic Actions: 1

Suggested Skills (3 dice): Athletics, Crafts, Empathy, Discipline, Knowledge, Marksman, Perception, Stealth, Survival

TECHNIQUES

Athletics (+), Marksman (+), Might (-); Engineers prefer to fight at a range. They are quick and mobile units, always looking for the best spot to shoot from, but also wear lighter armor than their frontline compatriots. They are still trained soldiers, and can handle themselves in an up-close fight, as long as power is not the main factor.

EXECUTIONERS (MASTER)

The Izou Army has long known the dangers of the ninja's jutsu, and has trained warriors especially for fighting against them. Executioners are soldiers trained over years to resist jutsu. This training is not easy, and often breaks the mind of those who undergo it, instilling a killer instinct. Executioners take a sick joy in killing even when not at war. They kill for sport, competing against each other to kill the most dangerous opponent. These soldiers are used for assassination assignments, leading small squads in espionage or acting as generals in the Ninja Crusade. They are nearly completely insane and often commit heinous acts in the name of finding ninja.

Health: 10 **Psyche:** 5
Attack: 8 **Actions:** 2
Defense: 7 **Armor:** 2
Initiative: 9 **Damage:** +2
Yin: 3 Yang: 3
Dynamic Actions: 4

Suggested Skills (4 dice): Athletics, Deception, Fighting, Fortitude, Intimidation, Perception, Performance, Stealth, Survival

TECHNIQUES

Deception (+), Fighting (+), Intimidation (+), Fortitude (+), Empathy (-), Perception (-); Executioners enjoy the kill, taking their time to make death a slow and excruciating process.

MARTIAL ARTS

- ◆ **Nullify Jutsu:** Executioners have been trained to master their ki aspects to help them push off the effects of a ninja's jutsu. They gain the advantage of negating any jutsu used in their presence by spending 1 ki of the reverse type. **Twist:** None.
- ◆ **Weapon Training:** The Executioner knows and can use two levels of any of the Weapon Styles of the GM's choice. **Twist:** None.

GOLDEN LIONS

The Emperor has long employed his own personal ninja, called the Golden Lions. They have this illustrious name for the suits of golden armor they wear, which have been mystically crafted to store ki. Golden Lions are hand-chosen by the Emperor's most loyal warriors. Each is unwaveringly loyal to the Emperor and gladly devotes their lives to the Empire. Whenever the peasantry speaks of these Imperial ninja, it is usually out of disdain or fear. Most see their shining gold raiment as ironic, for while they wear gold on the outside, there are many who would say that it is to hide the black hearts worn on the inside.

The Golden Lions are infamous for stealing jutsu secrets from other ninja clans. Amongst the Lotus Coalition, most spit on the Lions for being nothing more than thieves with little to no originality of their own. In fact, the Lions try to capture other ninja when they can to torture secrets from them. For this reason, some ninja would rather commit seppuku than to risk giving up their secrets to the Golden Lions.

GOLDEN LIONS (SQUAD)

Health: 25 **Psyche:** 20
Attack: 8 **Actions:** 1 (Squad)
Defense: 9 **Armor:** 3
Initiative: 8 **Damage:** +1
Dynamic Actions: 2

Suggested Skills (3 dice): Athletics, Deception, Intuition, Perception, Speed, Stealth

TECHNIQUES

Speed (+), Stealth (+); Fortitude (-), Might (-); Golden Lions are cowards at heart, always stealing others' secrets and preferring to ambush opponents rather than meeting them head-on. For that reason, they are best dealt with directly.

SILVER BLADES

Silver Blades are the elite fighting force for the Emperor, founded by the Ichikyo clan at the dawn of the century to eventually become the right hand of the Emperor. The minor warrior clan swore allegiance to the Izou Empire and serves at the Emperor's pleasure today. Some within Silver Blade ranks find the Emperor's path to be morally corrupt. Speculation says these peerless warriors would need only a push in the right direction to turn against the throne itself.

Currently, Silver Blades serve as commanders for the Imperial army and are sometimes mustered into special units. Unlike Golden Lions or Executioners, Silver Blades are primarily warriors and mostly lack stealth, subtlety or special powers beyond their expertise with a blade. They follow a special code called the Way of All Rivers that dictates how they conduct themselves, and how they approach life. Morimito Ichikyo, who history states never lost a single duel in his long and storied life, founded The Way of All Rivers.

What the Blades lack in terms of espionage, they make up for in martial skill. These warriors are almost without peer in the land. The war has forged their souls into steel. With so much fighting, there are no pretenders amongst the Blades. Each one is a toughened killer.

SILVER BLADE (WARRIOR)**Health:** 9 **Psyche:** 7**Attack:** 9 **Actions:** 1**Defense:** 6 **Armor:** 2**Initiative:** 9 **Damage:** +1**Dynamic Actions:** 2

Suggested Skills (3 dice): Crafts, Discipline, Fighting, Fortitude, Intimidation, Might, Survival, Travel

TECHNIQUES

Fighting (+), Stealth (-); Silver Blades are fast, but are not used to facing opponents who value stealth, making some of them easy prey for the likes of ninja.

MARTIAL ARTS

◆ **Sharpest Blade:** The warrior focuses ki into their weapon and delivers a mighty blow, capable of chopping through wood, stone or even the steel of another weapon. Once per Battle, as a Dynamic Action, the Silver Blade may roll Attack dice against an opponent's Attack pool (instead of against Defense). If the Blade wins, he destroys his opponent's weapon. Alternatively, the Silver Blade can use this ability to add +3 to his damage instead. Silver Blades who slay an opponent with this art slice their opponent in half. **Twist:** The greatest way to avoid an enemy's blow is to not be there. If the Sharpest Blade fails against a ninja, that ninja may get a +2 bonus on their

MARTIAL ARTS

◆ **Stolen Jutsu:** These particular Golden Lions possess two different jutsu of the Game Master's choice - stolen secrets from other clans. They need not spend any points to activate their powers, the golden armor they wear provides them with the ki they need. **Twist:** A careful strike to one of these Imperial ninja's golden plates will rob them of their ki energy. A successful attack with a -3 penalty destroys one of the Golden Lion's plates and makes her unable to use one of her jutsu. When fighting a squad of Golden Lions (like this one), a ninja can spend a Dynamic Action after successfully attacking a golden plate to destroy all of one ki type for the entire squad, instead of just for one member!

GOLDEN LIONS (WARRIOR)**Health:** 8 **Psyche:** 7**Attack:** 9 **Actions:** 2**Defense:** 10 **Armor:** 3**Initiative:** 8 **Damage:** +2**Dynamic Actions:** 3

Suggested Skills (4 dice): Athletics, Deception, Intuition, Intimidation, Marksman, Knowledge, Perception, Speed, Stealth

TECHNIQUES

Deception (+), Stealth (+), Fighting (-), Might (-); individual Golden Lions still lack bravery, but have the ability to lie their way out of many situations.

MARTIAL ARTS

◆ **Stolen Jutsu:** As above.

◆ **Jutsu Mimicry:** When highly skilled Golden Lions see other ninja practicing their jutsu, they can temporarily copy it, using a mental discipline handed down through the Emperor's family. The Golden Lion spends a Dynamic Action and can then use the copied jutsu through the energies of his armor for the Battle. **Twist:** A ninja can disrupt this ability by making a piercing attack between the Lion's golden plates. This attack inflicts no damage, but instead disrupts the energy stored within the armor, removing this ability for 2 Rounds. The piercing attack must be made with a small, precise weapon such as a shuriken, needle, dagger or string.

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next attack if they used the correct technique in the process. (Deception or Stealth).

- ◆ **Silver Iaijutsu:** Iaijutsu is the art of the sword quick-draw, used to take an opponent by surprise. If an opponent declares an attack, the Blade can spend a Dynamic Action to act first, before his enemy rolls any dice and regardless of Initiative values. If the Blade's attack hits, they gain +3 bonus to Defense for 1 Round. This art may only be used at the beginning of combat and it can only be used by a Blade who has his sword sheathed and in a ready position. **Twist:** Ninja who face Silver Blades must be crafty. There is a saying that has cropped up since the outbreak of the war. "A ninja can entice any opponent – she can even lure the sun out from behind a cloud." If a Silver Blade has his weapon out at the beginning of combat, he loses one of his greatest advantages.

SILVER BLADES KENSAI (MASTER)

Health: 27 **Psyche:** 21

Attack: 12 **Actions:** 2

Defense: 8 **Armor:** 3

Initiative: 10 **Damage:** +2

Dynamic Actions: 3

Suggested Skills (3 dice): Crafts, Discipline, Empathy, Fighting, Fortitude, Intimidation, Might, Perception, Persuasion, Survival, Travel

TECHNIQUES

Fighting (+), Speed (+), Stealth (-), Deception (-); Silver Blade masters are fast and have focused so many years on training that they often fail at spotting lies in social interactions.

MARTIAL ARTS

- ◆ **Sharpest Blade:** Same as above.
- ◆ **Silver Iaijutsu:** Same as above.
- ◆ **Silver Tide:** A Silver Blade Kensai can focus her ki through her blade and swipe it through the air. This strike cuts not only what is in front of the Blade, but everything else before her in a straight line – all the way out to Near distance. The Kensai can use this art to attack multiple opponents, so long as they are lined up. They roll only once for Attack, applying the result to multiple targets. This counts as one attack. **Twist:** None.

NINJA THREATS

Ninja are so often at each other's throat that to ignore ninja threats is a mistake. Every ninja is a force of nature unto themselves, but are even more dangerous in groups. If the Empire doesn't destroy the ninja, it may be the threat from within that finishes the job.

VICIOUS NINJA SWARM (SQUAD)

Health: 21 **Psyche:** 24

Attack: 9 **Actions:** 1 (Squad)

Defense: 8 **Armor:** None

Initiative: 7 **Damage:** +1

Dynamic Actions: 2

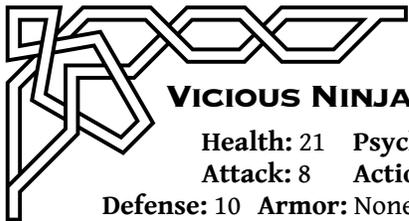
Suggested Skills (3 dice): Athletics, Deception, Fighting, Intuition, Marksman, Perception, Speed, Stealth

TECHNIQUES

Intuition (+), Marksman (+), Might (-); Crafts (-); these particular ninjas are looking for a straight battle, not anticipating a lot of grappling or traps.

MARTIAL ARTS

- ◆ **Flurry of Bodies:** The ninja jump, leap and dash furiously, cutting at their opponents at blinding speed. What once were a dozen blades now seems like one hundred. By spending 1 Dynamic Action, the ninja inflict +2 damage for the Round. **Twist:** Those who use (Intuition or Marksmanship) may strike just as one of the dashing ninja passes by. Such attackers add +2 damage against the Squad.
- ◆ **Flickering Shadows:** This art only works while the ninja are able to be in shadow. While attacking, these ninja appear and disappear, appearing beside their opponents, striking and then flickering away to a nearby shadow. After an attack by the Squad, those who want to engage them must spend an Action to get to Close Range with their chosen target. **Twist:** Those who are quick can catch a flickering ninja when they appear next to them. Using a specific skill (Might or Discipline) allows the defender an immediate counterattack when this art is used.



VICIOUS NINJA MASTER (MASTER)

Health: 21 Psyche: 24
Attack: 8 Actions: 1

Defense: 10 Armor: None

Initiative: 9 Damage: +2

Dynamic Actions: 3

Suggested Skills (4 dice): Athletics, Deception, Intuition, Fighting, Knowledge, Marksman, Perception, Speed, Stealth, Survival, Travel

TECHNIQUES

Fighting (+), Stealth (+), Knowledge (-), Intuition (-); this ninja master is adept at fighting a variety of opponents. Only knowledge and wisdom can aid an opponent against him.

MARTIAL ARTS

◆ **Shadow Step:** This particular ninja master can make himself appear where he is not. Those who attack him are likely to attack nothing more than an illusion, while the real threat appears just behind. Each Round, the GM chooses an opponent and writes his or her name down on a card. If that opponent attacks the ninja master in melee, the foe gains +3 to defense and gets a free counterattack against the person indicated on the card. A new target may or may not be chosen each Round. **Twist:** None, though it behooves the master's chosen target not to attack directly.

◆ **Flickering Shadows:** Same as above.

SPIRITS

Religion in the Izou Empire revolves around the idea of reincarnation. When a person who has lived a good and wholesome life dies, their soul goes to an afterlife to await reincarnation. These Celestial Realms are lands of paradise and plenty, places of rest before the soul goes on to its next life. The time between death and reincarnation is different for each soul, some leave immediately, and some stay for many years.

While there, souls can watch over their living families and the Earth in general. Some return to Earth as spirits, invisible and intangible to all but the most sensitive priests. They cannot affect real change on Earth, but they can attempt to influence people's actions through indirect means, such as signs and omens. Usually, these spirits attempt to guide their own descendants into a course of action to make life better for them, though sometimes spirits follow other people they feel are important. People often claim to feel the presence of a spirit and read into strange happenings as directives from their ancestors. Other spirits take part in the Ce-

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lestial Courts with hopes to make Earth a better place for their inevitable return.

Legends of spirits and ghosts are prevalent across all the territories. People believe paying homage to the dead — through tribute and prayer — makes their presence stronger and allows them to give guidance in mundane matters. Everyone believes spirits exist, even though few have any concrete evidence. Many great men and women throughout Izou history give some credit for their fortune to their ancestor spirits watching over them and giving them guidance.

ANCESTOR SPIRIT (WARRIOR)

Spirits are real, and they can and do attempt to influence life on Earth. They cannot directly interact, though they have capabilities similar to jutsu that allow them to create vague signs to direct their descendants. Because spirits do not have physical forms, they do not have the same characteristics as characters or other threats.

Health: 0 Psyche: 15

Defense: 8 Initiative: 6

Dynamic Actions: 1

Suggested Skills (5 dice): Discipline, Empathy, Knowledge, Stealth

TECHNIQUES

Stealth (+), Knowledge (+), Perception (-), Persuade (-); Spirits cannot take physical actions, and therefore do not have an attack rating. They can be attacked in certain ways, but do not have Health, only Psyche.

MARTIAL ARTS

◆ **Omens:** Spirits can affect small changes in the world to give subtle guidance. The spirit must choose its intended message carefully as the omens carrying it can be easily misinterpreted. Interpreting spirit omens requires the target to succeed at a Tough (3) Intuition + Empathy check. If the target is already praying or paying tribute to their ancestors, they gain a +2 bonus to their check. **Twist:** None.

◆ **Temp Fate:** Powerful ancestor spirits can attempt to influence a particular outcome of a situation by pulling on the threads of fate. With a Discipline + Knowledge check, the spirit creates a +2 bonus or -2 penalty to the target's next action. The target may roll Fortitude + Intuition as a Defense against this ability. **Twist:** Spirits cannot actually affect fate. They can direct omens to bolster or intimidate a person in a split second, a flash of a raven's wing or a white leaf on a tree catching their eye at the moment of action. Recognizing these omens with (Knowledge or Intuition) allows the target to choose to ignore the spirit's effect.



CELESTIAL ANIMALS

The Earth once belonged to demons, but the beings residing in the Celestial Realms saw fit to cut the cancer away and make room for humanity to prosper. During these battles, humanity fought beside giant bears who cleared paths for their soldiers, or hunted down demons with the help of their packs of intelligent canines. They held on to this friendship between human and Celestial Animal until humanity ruled the world and saw fit to become more sadistic, hunting and killing animals for fun with eyes narrowing at their once-allies. The Celestial Animals had no choice but to retreat to their animal realms, separate dimensions from Earth, to escape humanity's greed and power mongering.

Each Animal Realm belongs to a single type of Celestial Animal family, from the old and wise turtles to the spirited rams. Many believe human souls rest here before being reincarnated, running in the fields of these massive worlds before returning to Earth in their next life. Each animal family has their own society, some modern and others utterly barbaric, but they do not depend on humanity for anything in their lives unless they choose to.

Some realms have long-reaching wars against each other, such as the rat families and the snake families.

On Earth, one is prey and the other predator, but Celestial families often rival each other in power, regardless of species. This has led to most animal families not getting along, even if their Earth counterparts would otherwise. Celestial Animals are just as mortal as any other being, hoping to live a life they can be proud of before they pass on, so war is just as dire in the realms. Several wars to usurp each other's realms have occurred, leading many to be xenophobic at best... especially in light of the recent Summoner Skirmishes.

There are times, however, when Celestial Animals become too curious to resist visiting Earth. They've shared stories of humanity for millennia, and want to explore these new worlds. There are strict rules for when an animal can leave or reenter their realm, varying from species to species. For example, Celestial Snakes can travel to Earth during sweltering summers, emerging in the blackest bogs in the Empire. Likewise, Celestial Bears often take after their slumbering counterparts and return home during the winter seasons. This is where ninja come into play, as many animal families have long traditions of entering into blood pacts with ninja for transport to Earth. Only through these pacts can they bypass standing rules for their realms.



MINOR ANIMALS

Minor Celestial Animals look similar to earthly animals of their same era, but they naturally have an intelligence far beyond any animal (and sometimes humans as well). These are the youngest Celestials, often the children of more powerful beings or just old souls who never sought power. Their best defense is that they blend in with regular animals, allowing them to interact with humanity on their own terms and without the inherent fear one gets when dealing with giants. Of course, depending on their species, it can be just as odd for them to be in a locale, such as summoning a Minor Celestial Bear into the middle of a marketplace. See stats for normal Animals (pg. 158) for these creatures, but add a +1 bonus to Suggested Skills to reflect their heightened intelligence. Even Minor Animals that would normally be without stats, like turtles or rats, receive the stats of the Smaller Animal.

MAJOR ANIMALS

Some Celestial Animals have risen above the Minor rank, growing stronger and more skilled. This also often means they no longer resemble mundane animals, making them stand out much more, some even becoming humanoid versions of the animal. While Minor Animals can become companions for ninja, Major Animals have the ability to best a ninja in battle and actually be their equal or even their better. Major Animals are often on their own quests when they encounter and make deals with ninja out of convenience and the need to stay on Earth for long periods.

GREATER ANIMALS

These Celestial Animals are beings of immense size and commanding authority. Legends abound of Greater Animals the size of cities battling each other, and the Ninja Crusade's Summoner Skirmishes proved these myths were true, if Sword Tower (pg. 200) wasn't enough reason to believe the stories. However, in truth, not all Greater Animals are so large, only the most powerful among them. They do not allow themselves to be summoned unless the circumstances are especially dire, as they are often leaders and commanders in their own realms. Greater Animals will often send their children as messengers in their stead so as not to be bothered.

Summoning a Greater Animal changes the landscape of any Scene. Descriptions provided in the Animal Families should give some idea of how powerful these creatures are, and a Summoner truly has no control of these giants. A single attack from a Greater Animal could wipe out a whole village, so GMs should use caution when allowing one to be summoned the middle of a crowded city or during simple Battles where a ninja could handle themselves easily.

SHARED TRAITS

Regardless of species, all Celestial Animals have a few traits in common:

- ◆ **Human Speech:** They can understand and speak any language they choose. This was a gift of the Celestial Immortals to their favorite creations. They can even speak to each other using what is called the Old Tongue to hold conversations without humans understanding.
- ◆ **Jutsu:** Celestial Animals are beings of almost pure ki, making it obvious that manifesting this energy into jutsu displays comes naturally to them. These abilities usually mimic ninja abilities, but some even know rare or forbidden jutsu they could teach to worthy ninja or those with the right tributes.
- ◆ **Healing:** They heal all Health and Psyche between Scenes, showing their quick regeneration while on Earth. However, if they are ever reduced to either 0 Health or 0 Psyche, they immediately disappear and return to their Celestial Realm. Death on the Earthly realm isn't possible, though they can die if slain in their own world.

ANIMAL FAMILIES

Upon signing the Scroll of Summoners, ninja enter into a blood pact with the animal family of their choice, allowing the animals to cross dimensions to come to their aid. These deals usually take place with an individual animal, but it is not uncommon to receive help from a relative of the ninja's usual animal if they are not available. Note that family rivalries can exist even with Celestial Animals and personalities vary from animal to animal, even from the same species. Sample Celestial Animals listed for the following Animal Families should give players and GMs an idea of their abilities and a baseline to use to create their own.

ANIMAL FAMILY FORMAT

- ◆ **Name:** The type of animal they made their deal with.
- ◆ **Element:** The Element most strongly linked to the animal. The ninja receives a +1 bonus when summoning an animal that matches their Element.
- ◆ **Skill:** When a Minor Animal is in the Scene and helping the ninja complete a task, they receive a +1 bonus to this Skill.
- ◆ **Description:** A rundown on the general personality of members of the animal family, how they attempt to help their ninja and how they often choose their Summoners.

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- ◆ **Trigger:** No one is perfect, and certain animal families bring with them their own baggage. This gives the player another Trigger to use in order to generate Karma and affect the Scene.

BEARS

Element: Earth

Skill: Holistics

Most Lesser Bears are simple cubs, but no one should underestimate a bear of any size with intelligence and claws. While each one holds a ferocity within them, however, bears actually hold secrets of healing and alchemy. They use these Skills to help their Summoners to heal the sick and wrap wounds during the war. Traveling with a bear obviously makes the ninja stand out in a crowd, but they can be worthwhile companions.

Trigger - Slow to Attack: Most bears, not Tetsuo below obviously, are hesitant to use their inherent viciousness, instead showing strength in their patience and kindness. This isn't always helpful for their Summoner, however. Gain 1 Karma if the bear's hesitation actually causes harm.

TETSUO THE AGGRESSOR (MAJOR MASTER)

Tetsuo stands at 18ft. tall, carries a broadsword and has a patch over one eye, making him an imposing figure indeed. He has a love of war, and has enjoyed the Ninja Crusade so far, taking on several Summoners and being called to battlefield after battlefield to deliver joyous bloodshed. He has traded blows and stolen eyes with Hebi Ide, his last horrible defeat. Today, he hates any member of the Recoiling Serpents with a deep, seething passion.

This Celestial Bear is different from his brethren who love healing and taking care of people, but he loves to pair himself with ninja who possess some sort of medicinal abilities to help soothe his own wounds. Tetsuo runs into Bamboo Herbalists often, but he'll make pacts with any ninja who can promise him battles against other Celestial Animals.

Health: 30 **Psyche:** 20

Attack: 10 **Actions:** 2

Defense: 8 **Armor:** 2

Initiative: 9 **Damage:** +2

Dynamic Actions: 2

Suggested Skills (4 dice): Athletics, Empathy, Fighting, Fortitude, Intimidation, Might, Speed, Survival

TECHNIQUES

Fighting (++) , Might (+) , Crafts (-) , Stealth (-); In a face to face battle, few have been able to best Tetsuo, but ambushes and traps seem to be effective.

MARTIAL ARTS

- ◆ **Jutsu:** Tetsuo the Aggressor knows any four jutsu (GM or player choice) from Way of the Warrior or Way of Earth, in addition to Surface Running and Lightfoot from the Way of Movement. **Twist:** None.
- ◆ **Styles:** Tetsuo doesn't mess around when in Battle, knowing most techniques from Weapon Style: Sharp and Fighting Style: Bear. **Twist:** None.
- ◆ **Cross-Slice:** Tetsuo may spend 1 Dynamic Action to attack twice immediately (same Initiative), one slash being vertical and the other horizontal. If both attacks land, the target suffers a Bleeding 3 Condition automatically. A ninja may learn this as an Advanced Jutsu (Yang + Fighting) from the Way of the Warrior. **Twist:** If the target takes extra care to prepare for their Defense, suffering a -2 penalty, and manages to successfully defend against the first attack, they negate the second attack.

GREATER BEARS

The Greater Panda, Gen, was summoned years ago during the Ninja Crusade to heal an entire city sickened by the Year of Floods. The Empire was somehow ready for her arrival, and sent their enslaved Celestial Scorpions against her, striking her dead with a poison that slowly killed her when she returned to her realm. The other Greater Bears, not as kind as Gen, have been gearing up for an indiscriminate attack on Earth. Haru the Mountain, who towers over even the Ensen Volcano in size, will lead this vengeful strike.

CANINES

Element: Wood

Skill: Perception

Celestial Canines come in a variety of different sizes and breeds, just like their mundane counterparts. Their world is a place where they connect with the hunter within, making them much closer to wolves than domesticated dogs in many cases. They are almost all expert hunters and trackers, and help their Summoner detect things that may be dangerous, along with providing general companionship.

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Trigger - Trust the Nose: It comes all too often that a canine demands they know better because they can sense the scent of danger. Their nose will always bring the character to something, but not always the things they wanted. Gain 1 Karma when their destination is more dangerous than intended.

JIN'S CREW (MAJOR SQUAD)

Appearing young, even though he is easily over 100 years old, Jin is a master tracker and very loyal to his Summoners. He appears slightly larger than a normal dog, but otherwise could pass through an Izou village without raising eyebrows. Jin has even gathered a crew of other Celestial Canines, and the group works together to help their ninja companions.

Jin is a people-watcher, spending hours upon hours seeing what people do, how they speak and why they do such things. He's attracted to others with a similar sense of patience and voyeurism. Hounds make an obvious first choice for Jin's Crew, but he isn't particularly picky about his Summoners if they have interesting lives he can watch.

Health: 15 **Psyche:** 14
Attack: 6 **Actions:** 1 (Squad)
Defense: 6 **Armor:** 0

Initiative: 8 **Damage:** +1

Dynamic Actions: 2

Suggested Skills (4 dice): Athletics, Empathy, Holistics, Intimidation, Intuition, Perception, Perform, Persuade, Stealth, Survival

TECHNIQUES

Survival (+), Fighting (+), Marksman (-), Intuition (-); Jin's crew knows how to use their surroundings to win in a fight, but can be bested with ranged attacks and careful planning.

MARTIAL ARTS

- ◆ **Jutsu:** Jin's Crew knows any three jutsu (GM or player choice) from the Way of Movement, Way of Survival or Way of Twin Beasts.
- ◆ **Find Anything:** If given a scent, there is nothing and no one Jin's Crew cannot track down, no matter where they exist in the world. Finding their target takes a suitable amount of time, depending on where the target currently is. Obviously, if their target is halfway around the world it may take longer to find than if they were only one town over. Jin's Crew reports back as soon as they've found what they were looking for.
Twist: None.
- ◆ **Double Howl:** Two of Jin's Crew howl to distract the enemy, while the other three Celestial Canines launch a



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series of attacks with +2 damage instead. The Summoner may learn this as a Basic Jutsu (Yin + Intimidation), where the ninja and their dog howl to give anyone else who attacks the target +1 damage until the end of the Round. **Twist:** The members of the team who are distracting the target suffer a -2 penalty to their next Defense within the same Round this ability was used.

GREATER CANINES

Few like to talk about the Greater Canines, as they haunt Izou folklore. Stories of 30ft. tall, snarling wolves feasting on the bodies of the dead and causing death with a simple glare of their glowing red eyes is enough to make adults cry at the thought. To actually summon such a beast would show the Summoner was powerful, but the wolf would surely devour the ninja to prove they were not.

FELINES

Element: Fire

Skill: Athletics

Celestial Felines would consider themselves the best of the families. They are agile, multi-skilled and able to get into places others cannot and can blend into almost any environment without raising eyebrows. They come in a variety of sizes and colors, just like normal cats, and have a spectrum of personalities. Any Summoner would be lucky to have a feline by their side.

Trigger - Lazy: Most felines will do whatever they can to avoid work, even if it's in their best interest to comply with their Summoner's wishes. They work at their own speed, and usually have to be convinced it was their idea all along. Gain 1 Karma when the feline slows progress with their pride.

QUEEN KAZUHIKO (MAJOR MASTER)

Kazuhiko is a cunning and dangerous, but ultimately lazy Celestial Feline. She murdered her father for the title of Queen of their pride, but spends the majority of her time lounging. Her brother, Michio, plots her death by the day, but she pays him no mind; there is much sleeping to be done. She is the largest of her pride at 15ft. long, with fiery red fur and a deep imposing voice.

Unlike other animals who happen upon ninja to pact with out of necessity, Kazuhiko is actively looking for ninja she can cultivate into warriors to help her fight for her throne. Favors her Summoners must uphold are things like bringing 1,000 fish for her lunch or fetching the beautiful

candelabra she saw in the Emperor's window, so ninja should know she is high maintenance. Blazing Dancers are a favorite for her to make pacts with. For obvious reasons, she'll never agree to a Summoner from the Pack of the Black Moon.

Health: 25 **Psyche:** 22

Attack: 9 **Actions:** 2

Defense: 9 **Armor:** 2

Initiative: 6 **Damage:** +1

Dynamic Actions: 4

Suggested Skills (5 dice): Athletics, Deception, Fighting, Intimidation, Intuition, Knowledge, Persuasion, Speed, Stealth, Survival

TECHNIQUES

Fighting (+), Athletics (+), Intuition (-); She is a calculating warrior who swipes and jumps around the battlefield with ease, but finds it challenging to change tactics midstream.

MARTIAL ARTS

- ◆ **Jutsu:** Queen Kazuhiko knows five jutsu (GM or player choice) from the Way of Fire, Way of Beasts, Way of the Warrior, Way of Survival or Way of Movement.
- ◆ **Ignoring Death:** When in the presence of Queen Kazuhiko, her Summoner need not worry about dying. Anytime her ninja would suffer a death blow (bringing them to Health or Psyche 0), 1 Dynamic Action lets her negate it, or she transfers the damage to herself for free. The latter she only does if she really likes the Summoner, however (Rank 3 or higher).
- ◆ **Stealing the Crown:** Kazuhiko may act first automatically during any Round she chooses for 1 Dynamic Action, regardless of Initiatives rolled by others. Ninja may learn this as a Median Jutsu (Yang + Speed), which may be used at the beginning of the Round for 1 Dynamic Action. It allows them to go first for the Round and gain a bonus to Initiative equal to successes gained for the following Round. **Twist:** She cannot use this ability if she has been distracted by something (Perform or Deception) in the previous Round, as her attention just isn't on the fight.

GREATER FELINES

The Wild Sabretooth is a Greater Feline who rules over much of their realm, standing over five stories tall. He has been summoned to Earth only once, during the Summoner Skirmishes, where he dueled with a poisonous Celestial Frog, slaying yet another one of the Emperor's tools. Rumors speak of him currently residing in the Untamed Wilds of the Land of Seed and Blossom.



HEDGEHOGS

Element: Earth

Skill: Survival

Celestial Hedgehogs are the finders of lost items, a talent highly sought in these times of loss. They are small, and travel in a pocket or bag with ease, but their protective quills make them hard to handle. When in a bad mood, this gets even worse. Mutual respect is necessary for hedgehogs; without it, they hit many emotional highs and lows.

Trigger - Overwhelmed: As hedgehogs are very small, how big the world is can often overwhelm them. Being underground is so much easier for them. Gain 1 Karma if the Summoner could really use their animal's help, but they have anxiety.

HIBIKI (MAJOR WARRIOR)

She is a small burrower, only about twice the size of her mundane counterparts. She has bright red eyes and loves collecting rings of all cuts and designs. She spends a lot of time in the Hedgehog Realm, sorting through lost items that have fallen through the cracks, and won't hesitate to recover one of them for her Summoner.

Hibiki is one of the nicest Celestial Animals around, always looking to do good deeds and is never selfish. She is known for approaching potential Summoners directly, making sure they have a penchant for honorable acts first. Will of Iron ninja are approached more often than others.

Health: 6 **Psyche:** 7

Attack: 3 **Actions:** 1

Defense: 7 **Armor:** 2

Initiative: 7 **Damage:** +0

Dynamic Actions: 1

Suggested Skills (5 dice): Crafts, Empathy, Intuition, Perception, Survival, Travel

TECHNIQUES

Fortitude (+), Might (-); She is tough, but small and not as strong as some opponents are.

MARTIAL ARTS

♦ **Jutsu:** Hibiki knows two jutsu (GM or player choice) from the Way of Earth, as well Teleportation from the Way of Movement and Rise From the Ashes from the Way of Fire.

♦ **Finder:** The ninja may ask Hibiki to find some lost item for them. She'll return to her dimension and sift through the mess to try to find it. If it is findable at all, it may take up to a week. Even if the item is destroyed, she can bring it back.

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♦ **Defensive Spikes:** If someone attempts to attack Hibiki, she deflects the attack with her proactive quills. A successful Defense check removes one of the weapon's Qualities or deals 1 damage, if unarmed. Her Summoner may learn this as a Basic Jutsu (Yin + Fortitude), creating quills on their back that have a similar effect. **Twist:** Attacks using weapons with the Ranged Quality are immune to the effects.

GREATER HEDGEHOGS

Even the largest Greater Hedgehogs are only about one story tall, but the devastation they can inflict on a landscape is tremendous. They often have a bad temper and lash out at the first social indiscretion. The last summoned to Earth, Yoichi, created numerous fissures and earthquakes that sunk a Five Blades city into the Earth, killing hundreds of thousands with its destruction.

MONKEYS

Element: Wood

Skill: Speed

Some believe Celestial Monkeys to be the bridge that connects normal monkeys and human beings, as they stand on their hind legs and possess critical thinking. Of course, they often use this intelligence to pull elaborate pranks to keep others (and their Summoner) on their toes and help them laugh at themselves. A few Izou citizens have their own pet monkeys, so they can often blend right into some Scenes.

Trigger - Pranksters: Celestial Monkeys love pranks, the more damaging the better. They disregard decorum and set their traps to go off at the worst of times. Gain 1 Karma when such a prank puts the characters in a precarious situation.

SITA (MAJOR WARRIOR)

One of several children of the great Monkey King, Sita has found she has a very large shadow to escape. Her journey to do so has brought her to Earth, as she looks for a hero among humanity to aid her on her path. The Ninja Crusade is the time for heroes to rise, so she keeps a careful eye on the goings-on.

Sita is a cheery monkey, standing close to 8ft. tall; she loves pulling pranks like other Celestial Monkeys, but she has the sense not to do so to authority figures. Sita loves younger and optimistic Summoners with a good sense of balance in their lives, leaning toward Wardens in many cases.

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Health: 9 **Psyche:** 9
Attack: 7 **Actions:** 2
Defense: 5 **Armor:** 1
Initiative: 11 **Damage:** +1
Dynamic Actions: 2

Suggested Skills (4 dice): Athletics, Deception, Empathy, Holistics, Knowledge, Perception, Perform, Persuasion, Speed, Survival, Travel

TECHNIQUES

Fighting (+), Speed (+), Perform (+), Crafts (-), Discipline (-); Sita's fighting style is quick, deadly and beautiful, but she can easily be lured into traps and bores if a Battle lasts too long.

MARTIAL ARTS

- ◆ **Jutsu:** Sita knows six jutsu (GM or player choice) from the Way of Movement and Way of Wood, in addition to Tree Hopping.
- ◆ **Styles:** She is an accomplished warrior, having learned most techniques from Weapon Style: Blunt and Fighting Style: Monkey.
- ◆ **Trickster:** On a successful Defense check, Sita may spend 1 Dynamic Action to blink away and instantly appear anywhere else she can see. If she Blinks behind the target, she can instantly Counterattack with a +1 bonus as well. Her Summoner may learn this as a Median Jutsu (Yang + Speed), which affects a number of Defense checks equal to successes gained without the cost of a Dynamic Action. The Distance they may travel is up to (Movement x2). **Twist:** Opponents who use Perception in their next Skill Combo gain +1 bonus against Sita, by keeping track of her movements.

GREATER MONKEYS

The most legendary Greater Monkey is Hanuman, the Monkey King, ruler of his own, and a few other lesser Celestial Realms. He is the supreme trickster, yet holds a certain child-like wisdom. He possesses the strongest martial arts of any creature in existence, and is a master of outsmarting his opponents. Every few hundred years he is stripped of his powers and thrown to Earth so he may attain his greatness once more from scratch. This is a contest he uses to prove he deserves his status over and over again.

RAMS

Element: Metal
Skill: Fortitude

Celestial Rams are a testy species, easy to incite and often boisterous in their action. They are known for hitting their Summoner over and over again with their horns, both to teach physical resistance techniques and to release their own stress. Celestial Rams are often seen as simple pets by commoners, but are rarely seen as normal in bigger cities. They respect ninja with a strong sense of pride, who can stand up for what they believe.

Trigger - Off the Handle: Rams have terrible tempers, which they use to take out their aggression on anyone around them (including their Summoner at times). Gain 1 Karma when this kind of situation puts strain on the group and makes their job much harder.

KUNIYUKI (MAJOR MASTER)

This Celestial Ram became fascinated with humans a long time ago and went through several trials to learn a rare gift for Celestials, the ability to take human form. His form isn't fancy, actually coming off as Untouchable most of the time, but he hides among humanity to observe and learn. Kuniyuki is a cynic, however, and sees the Izou class system as corrupt.

Like other Rams, Kuniyuki respects ninja with strong convictions, but not those who believe too much in one's class defining their greatness. Any Summoner of Kuniyuki's, though, must be able to hold their liquor, many earning his pact from a drinking contest. Surprisingly, he has taken on several Grasping Shadows as Summoners, due to his hatred for cheeriness.

Health: 14 **Psyche:** 12
Attack: 6 **Actions:** 2
Defense: 5 **Armor:** 2
Initiative: 8 **Damage:** +1
Dynamic Actions: 2

Suggested Skills (3 dice): Athletics, Discipline, Fortitude, Intimidation, Knowledge, Perception, Stealth, Survival, Travel

TECHNIQUES

Might (+), Stealth (+), Travel (-); Kuniyuki shows his strength, but isn't above sneak attacks. Mounted enemies have an advantage over him, however.

HACHIRO'S FAMILY BUSINESS (MAJOR SQUAD)

Celestial Rats are nothing if not numerous. Hachiro is eighth born of thirty-two siblings, but was the first to reach out to the ninja world in search for Summoners. Along the way, his siblings got the courage to do the same, allowing them to work as a team to help their Summoner with whatever they need. Hachiro wants to start his own legitimate shop on Earth, having grown tired of Celestial politics.

Hachiro is loyal to his family first, and will even betray his Summoner if one of their lives is in danger. He is also quite selfish, always looking for Summoners who can help him raise his own status in the world, especially if they have a silver-tongue. Hidden Strands are a favored clan for him to deal with.

Health: 12 **Psyche:** 15

Attack: 4 **Actions:** 1 (Squad)

Defense: 6 **Armor:** 0

Initiative: 7 **Damage:** +1

Dynamic Actions: 2

Suggested Skills (4 dice): Athletics, Crafts, Deception, Discipline, Intuition, Knowledge, Persuasion, Speed, Stealth

TECHNIQUES

Discipline (++) , Perform (-); Hachiro and his family are known for keeping cool under pressure, but can also be mesmerized by artistic displays.

MARTIALARTS

◆ **Jutsu:** Hachiro's Family Business knows four jutsu (GM or player choice) from the Way of the Unseen, as well as Mold and Melting Touch from Way of Metal.

◆ **The Shop:** When summoned, Hachiro usually appears with a fully stocked shop, manned by himself and many of his brothers and sisters. The ninja need only ask, and Hachiro probably has the item (or something close to it) for sale. If he doesn't, he can get it. Of course, anything he sells has a price, and it usually isn't money.

◆ **Call Comrade:** At any time he needs, Hachiro can call one of his relatives to help him in a situation; gaining +1 Attack each time he does this. A ninja may learn this as a Median Jutsu (Yang + Persuasion), allowing them to summon a blood relative, or squadmate to their current location within (Yang) miles. The target feels the pull and may attempt to resist with Yin + Fortitude. **Twist:** If the target was summoned unwillingly, Hachiro (or the summoner) suffers a -2 penalty to all checks for (6-Discipline) Rounds.

MARTIALARTS

◆ **Jutsu:** Kuniyuki knows five jutsu (GM or player choice) from the Way of Survival or Way of Metal, in addition to Cannon Punch from Way of the Warrior channeled through his horns.

◆ **Human Form:** He has the ability to transform into a human of any shape he chooses. It lasts for the Scene, but he can instantly drop it if he enters Battle. It is mostly helpful when dealing with humans on a social level.

◆ **Cannon Ram:** Every one of the Ram's attacks incurs a Knockback effect as well. Kuniyuki's Summoner can learn Cannon Punch (pg. 116) as a Basic Jutsu (instead of Median). **Twist:** If the target defends with Brace, they take damage normally but are not knocked back.

GREATER RAMS

Ensen, one of the most powerful Great Rams, was the being responsible for creating the Ensen Volcano. It is said it was a show of strength to the ancient people of Earth, showing he was powerful enough to knock the top off a mountain. Even today, some humans still pray to Ensen as a god, which he appreciates and even brings good tidings to his followers on occasion.

RATS

Element: Metal

Skill: Deception

The ability to be sneaky and clever is at the heart of what Celestial Rats stand for. Lying comes naturally to any rat, making them expert negotiators, something their Summoners often need assistance with. They use this skill to acquire all manner of rare artifacts and lost manuscripts along their path. Celestial Rats often hide in their Summoner's coat, whispering in their ear if others are lying (telling the truth about this at least most of the time).

Trigger - Who's Lying Now?: Celestial Rats are great at spotting lies but not great about not lying themselves. Their Summoner should know that their animal may lie to them on occasion, and believing their lies can lead to horrible situations down the line. Gain 1 Karma when it turns out the rat lied for their own purposes.

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GREATER RATS

One of the most infamous Greater Rats was Daiki, who lived among the ruins of the Orime Dynasty, feeding off the misery of some of the communities who lost everything in the war. The effects of his arrival are cyclical; he is drawn by despair but his presence brings sickness and death, which causes even more. A truly vile creature, who many believe may have been responsible for the Year of Floods as well.

ROOSTERS

Element: Fire

Skill: Intimidation

Celestial Roosters are as boisterous and energetic as the rising sun, allowing them to drown out other opinions quite easily. They have a knack for planning strategies and teaching their Summoner how to outthink their opponents, using fear as another weapon in their arsenal. All Celestial Roosters are male, but Summoners can also have a Celestial Hen if they prefer.

Trigger - No Second-Guessing: Roosters see everything as a challenge to their authority, and take great offense when others disagree with their tactics. It's better to just go along with what they say or not to ask at all. Gain 1 Karma when a Rooster blows up at the Summoner or their group and places them all in danger.

AKIHIKO-CHAN

(MAJOR WARRIOR)

Akihiko-Chan is a fiery, hyperactive rooster with a love of travel and learning new things. He's young and naive, despite his being a very skilled warrior and over 12ft. tall. New experiences are his goal, leaping into anything that seems interesting, whether pleasurable or dangerous.

When choosing a Summoner, Akihiko-Chan looks for cheery attitudes to match his own; especially from those who are also fire-aspected, like the Virtuous Body Gardeners. Traveling with grumps is not high on his goal list. To gain his loyalty usually requires a racing challenge. Akihiko-Chan will ultimately win, but the ability to accept defeat with a smile and be a good sportsman is important to this Celestial Rooster. A ninja who actually wins earns his love and admiration for all time.

Health: 8 **Psyche:** 4

Attack: 5 **Actions:** 2

Defense: 6 **Armor:** 1

Initiative: 14 **Damage:** +1

Dynamic Actions: 3

Suggested Skills (4 dice): Athletics, Crafts, Intimidation, Perception, Perform, Speed, Travel

TECHNIQUES

Athletics (+), Speed (++) , Might (-), Persuade (-); Akihiko-Chan is very fast and able to leap and pounce better than most, but he does this with magic not muscle mass. He is also quite gullible.

MARTIAL ARTS

- ◆ **Jutsu:** Akihiko-Chan knows any three jutsu (GM or player choice) from the Way of Fire or Way of Movement, in addition to Trackless Movements from Way of Survival.
- ◆ **Fastest Way There:** This Celestial Rooster is built for speed and loves long trips, since they pass very quickly. By fueling Akihiko-Chan's speed with 1 ki, the Summoner may skip any stage of their Journey except for Ocean and Temple. Traveling with Akihiko-Chan also means they arrive in a quarter of the time.
- ◆ **Swifter Soul:** Akihiko-Chan can attack multiple times on the same Initiative for the cost of 1 Dynamic Action per additional action. A Summoner with Akihiko-Chan as their animal can learn Swift Soul (pg. 113) as a Basic Jutsu (instead of Median). **Twist:** He hates hitting the wrong target and will stop his assault if someone uses the Protect Defense against his attack.

GREATER ROOSTERS

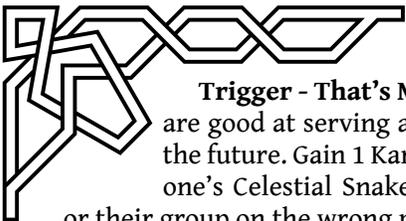
The last Greater Hen to be summoned to Earth was Mitsuko of the Light. Appearing the size of a three-story home, Mitsuko was immediately frightened by the Orime Rebellions going on around her, turning into a hen made of pure flame and screeching such a loud crow that it instantly slew half of those on the battlefield, including the Summoner who called her. Fortunately, it was the break the rebels needed to take the city, but at such a high cost.

SNAKES

Element: Water

Skill: Persuade

Celestial Snakes know well the idiosyncrasies of humanity; they have learned the secrets behind negotiation and coercion. They love to debate anyone they encounter on almost any topic, even creating rebuttals to their own arguments if their opponent is a dullard. They appear as normal snakes, but possess unique color patterns to mark them as distinctly different. They often stay near to their Summoner in case they need counsel, resting in a pocket or up their sleeve.



Trigger - That's My Opinion: These assistants are good at serving as an advisor, but cannot tell the future. Gain 1 Karma if following the advice of one's Celestial Snake actually sets the character or their group on the wrong path.

KHIS (MAJOR MASTER)

This 40ft-long serpent is heralded as king of snakes by many, one of the greatest Celestials summoned during the Mercenary Wars, and later by the Recoiling Serpents during the War of Withered Fang. Unfortunately, the Imperials know his form and have called for his destruction, forcing him to cut many of his ties to Earth. He has also lost his former status within the Snake Realms, others usurping his position as king.

What Khis needs from a Summoner is power, and the ability to use said power to help him reclaim his throne. A test of social prowess comes first, followed by several orchestrated scenarios for their would-be Summoner to survive before ever meeting Khis face-to-face. He has made several pacts with the Recoiling Serpents once more, seeing these ninja as the perfect tools. He hates to have his time wasted, which has led to the death of many of his Summoners.

Health: 26 **Psyche:** 22
Attack: 7 **Actions:** 2
Defense: 7 **Armor:** 2
Initiative: 13 **Damage:** +2
Dynamic Actions: 3

Suggested Skills (5 dice): Crafts, Deception, Discipline, Empathy, Fortitude, Intimidation, Intuition, Knowledge, Persuasion, Stealth, Survival

TECHNIQUES

Fortitude (+), Intimidation (+), Persuasion (+), Marksman (-); Khis is difficult to harm and has a way of ending battles before they begin, but is large which makes him an easy target.

MARTIAL ARTS

- ♦ **Jutsu:** Khis knows six jutsu (GM or player choice) from the Way of Survival, Way of Water or Way of Great Serpents.
- ♦ **Saliva of the Gods:** Khis's saliva is one of the most venomous fluids in the world, which many alchemists seek on their quests. It can be spit at a target to deal 4 damage, dissolving any clothing, items or weapons the target had. If ingested, the victim suffers twice this damage instantly. **Twist:** If the target has used any check with Stealth this Round, they gain a +1 bonus to their Dodge roll to avoid the venom.

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- ♦ **Alchemy Assistance:** If his Summoner is an Alchemist, Khis can give his saliva to them and their Poison potions (pg. 76) deal 3 damage per use (instead of 2). This also raises the Difficulty to resist the poison by +1. Of course, convincing him to give up his saliva is the tough part.

GREATER SNAKES

The most powerful of Great Snakes, Natsuki, is one of several enslaved Celestial Animals at the hands of the Izou Army. She was called forth to swallow whole several Celestials summoned by the Lotus Coalition. While she felt a sick sense of pleasure by destroying some of her greatest enemies from the realms, her attention is now turned to her escape and killing the Emperor herself for his insolence.

TURTLES

Element: Water

Skill: Knowledge

Celestial Turtles are the keepers of knowledge for every realm, including their own. They have long-reaching memories they use to remind the world of past mistakes in hopes of never repeating them. They can recall seemingly unimportant facts about almost any topic with startling clarity. Lesser Turtles dislike being called for battles, as their small frame isn't suited for fights, but some ninja simply carry them in satchels to keep them nearby.

Trigger - Spit it Out: Turtles are slow, not only in movement but in thought as well. Calling upon a Celestial Turtle in times of need where time is a factor may be less worth it than the ninja first thought. Gain 1 Karma when the slow relaying of information causes trouble in tense situations.

WAKANA (MAJOR WARRIOR)

Wakana is a Celestial Turtle who has lived on Earth since long before the founding of the Izou Empire. She has watched many civilizations rise and fall in her time residing in the world's oceans, accumulating all that knowledge in her mind. Wakana stands at 10ft. tall, and is never one to rush her words. She plans to stay on Earth until the day she dies, having all but completely removed herself from the Turtle Realms.

When choosing a Summoner, she looks to the Living Chronicle first and foremost. Their penchant for acquiring and sharing information is something she cares deeply for, but any ninja full of wisdom is a candidate. She is a fan of riddles, often refusing to be called by her Summoner until they answer them.

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Health: 7 Psyche: 11

Attack: 4 Actions: 1

Defense: 7 Armor: 3

Initiative: 5 Damage: +1

Dynamic Actions: 2

Suggested Skills (5 dice): Crafts, Discipline, Empathy, Fortitude, Knowledge, Persuade, Survival

TECHNIQUES

Fortitude (+), Speed (-); While not incredibly fast, Wakana is very tough if a Battle rears its head.

MARTIAL ARTS

- ◆ **Jutsu:** Wakana knows any three jutsu (GM or player choice) from the Way of Water, Way of Beasts or Way of Kept Lore.
- ◆ **Location Sight:** Wakana has the power to look backwards or forwards in time within a certain location, but is forbidden to share these secrets for free. Her Summoner can spend 2 ki (either type) to ask a question about the location from any point of the time spectrum that Wakana can answer. Remember that simply knowing the future can change the future.
- ◆ **Tucked In:** The Celestial Turtle hides within her shell for the Round, doubling her available Armor. While tucked, she may spend 1 Dynamic Action to make an Attack and then retreat back into her shell. Turtle Summoners may learn this as Median Jutsu (Yin + Fortitude) from the Way of Water. **Twist:** Every time she tucks in, this reduces her Initiative -1, which could stall her Standard Action.

GREATER TURTLES

The most famous Greater Turtle is the Floating Island of legend, an entire piece of land with cities and villages on the back of a giant turtle. Any civilization that once existed on the Floating Island is thought to be long lost or at least very well hidden, making explorers dream of the day of catching up with the creature.

DEMONS

Just as good and honorable people go to Heaven, those who lead immoral or dishonorable lives go to one of many hells. These hells lie just below the Earth, thousands of nightmare realms playing host to the souls of the damned. A person who commits atrocities in life is sent to a hell appropriate to their actions — a hell for murderers, another for thieves, another for dishonoring their family, etc. These souls also look upon the people of Earth, but feel despair and sometimes rage for their place in hell.

These souls can come back to Earth the way spirits can. Because they come from hell, they are twisted and warped, and the resulting creatures are called demons. Legends state that demons once walked upon the Earth until they were forced underground by the Celestial Realms and their land given to humans. Celestial Courts were appointed as keepers of the hells, who are supposed to stop souls from slipping back to Earth. Some lucky souls are allowed to come to Earth to redeem themselves and their families through honorable action, however. These demons attempt to help people or to make the world a better place as a form of atonement. Once their task is completed, they return to their hell to await passage into one of many Celestial Realms.

Demons take on a physical form when they come to Earth, but their appearance is revolting to many, and this is part of their test. To be redeemed, the demon must find someone who is on a path of immorality or dishonor and attempt to bring that person to a more honorable way of life. This can take a great deal of time, but demons do not begrudge their time away from hell. Sometimes a demon gets too comfortable in their short stay on Earth and attempts to stay forever. These demons either overstay their time after they have completed their task, or simply never attempt to complete it. In these cases, the keepers of hell, and sometimes Summoners who are friends with residents of Celestial Realms, set out to find and retrieve the recalcitrant demons.

Some souls have been in hell for so long that they have gone insane from the eternal torment. These souls have no ability to redeem themselves, and have never been allowed out of hell. Those who do find a way to Earth are called Oni. They are different from other demons as they are full of rage and destruction. The Oni who come to Earth are cunning creatures able to slip past the keepers and push their way through the barrier that separates the two realms.

ICHIKORO (WARRIOR)

Ichikoro is a demon who gained dishonor in life by refusing to assist a young woman and her two children, who later starved to death just outside Ichikoro's farm. He didn't even bother to bury the bodies, but instead left them for the crows and wolves to eat. As a demon, he has been given the chance to turn others to a path of honor. Ichikoro seeks out nobles, ninja and those whose honor matters most, and tries to help guide them through hard decisions.

Health: 5 **Psyche:** 10

Attack: 6 **Actions:** 1

Defense: 7 **Armor:** 0

Initiative: 7 **Damage:** +1

Dynamic Actions: 1

Suggested Skills (3 dice): Crafts, Discipline, Fortitude, Persuade, Stealth

TECHNIQUES

Intimidation (+), Persuade (+), Fighting (-); Ichikoro prefers not to fight, instead talking through things. He will defend himself if necessary, but is not good at out-right combat.

MARTIAL ARTS

- ◆ **Inspire Honor:** Ichikoro works to inspire those around him to do honorable deeds, indeed many find it hard to perform dishonor in his presence. Ichikoro chooses a single target who is incapable of performing dishonorable deeds while within his sensory range. He must have spoken with his target for at least five minutes to use Inspire Honor. **Twist:** Ninja can ignore Ichikoro's will if particularly determined. If they attempt their Action using a specific Skill (Deception or Discipline), they can ignore Inspire Honor.
- ◆ **Jutsu:** Each demon has the ability to use two jutsu of the Game Master's choice. They need not spend any points to activate their powers. **Twist:** None.

KAITOORI (MASTER)

Kaitoori is one of the oldest reported demons on Earth. Allowed out of hell centuries ago to redeem herself as a thief, she decided she liked Earth too much to return to hell. Kaitoori never fulfilled her goal in redemption. She has tried, and by all appearances keeps trying, so her Celestial keepers have not tried to hunt her down yet. However, they have their eyes on Kaitoori, waiting for her to make one misstep so they can return her to hell. She is cunning though, and always finds someone to attempt to redeem, but also finds loopholes and tricks to prevent her subject from succeeding.



CHAPTER SIX - ON ALL FRONTS

Stories of accepting deals or help from Kaitoori always lead to the downfall of the person she tries to help.

Health: 10 **Psyche:** 10

Attack: 8 **Actions:** 1

Defense: 10 **Armor:** 1

Initiative: 9 **Damage:** +2

Dynamic Actions: 1

Suggested Skills (4 dice): Empathy, Knowledge, Intimidation, Persuade, Speed, Stealth

TECHNIQUES

Persuade (+), Stealth (+), Might (-); Kaitoori is a trickster. She makes convoluted deals with people that are almost impossible to succeed at. She makes promises of assistance, but this invariably comes at the demon's leisure, and often not when the recipient needs it.

MARTIAL ARTS

◆ **Jutsu:** Same as above.

◆ **Sabotage:** Kaitoori makes deals with the intent to have them broken at a later date and gains power over someone who's made a deal with her. Whenever that person attempts to perform an important action pertaining to the deal, she can inflict a -2 penalty on their roll. Kaitoori must be able to perceive the person to affect them in this way. **Twist:** A ninja is wise in the ways of tricky deals. If the ninja is using a specific Skill (Knowledge or Fortitude) while performing their action, Kaitoori is unable to use Sabotage on them.

OKA-BAKU (SQUAD)

Oka-baku is a group of four demons who died together and have returned to Earth. These four boys tormented their younger sister by telling her scary stories during the day, then waking her at night with frightening sounds and characters from their stories. She grew so terrified of her own nightmares, she refused to sleep, and eventually died of fright. The boys swore to never tell their parents what they did and lived the rest of their lives with this sin on their souls. They have been let out of hell to redeem themselves by removing the nightmares of others.

Health: 20 **Psyche:** 15

Attack: 7 **Actions:** 1

Defense: 8 **Armor:** 0

Initiative: 8 **Damage:** +1

Dynamic Actions: 1

Suggested Skills (4 dice): Empathy, Fighting, Knowledge, Perception, Persuade

TECHNIQUES

Empathy (+), Persuade (+), Stealth (-); Oka-baku work together in all things. They try their hardest to bring comfort to others. They only fight if forced, but have exceptional group tactics.

MARTIAL ARTS

◆ **Dreamwalk:** Oka-baku can guide the dreams of their target. Each one selects a single aspect of the dream they wish to change, though each can affect the same emotion. Each rolls a Moderate (2) Empathy + Perception check to influence that aspect of the dream. Dream aspects reflect strong emotions — anger, fear, love, hate, passion — and each member of Oka-baku can either strengthen or decrease their aspect of the dream. Dreams devoid of emotion dissipate leaving a sleeper fully rested with dreamless sleep. A dream with a single heightened emotion leaves the dreamer rested, but focused on that emotion the next day. A dream with conflicting emotions leaves the dreamer exhausted and at a -1 penalty to all actions until they get a good night's rest. **Twist:** A ninja can steel their mind against Oka-baku by meditation using a specific Skill (Fortitude or Knowledge). If the ninja meditates before sleeping, they are immune to Oka-baku's attempts to influence their dreams.

◆ **Jutsu:** Same as above.

◆ **Teamwork:** Oka-baku work best as a team. Whenever Oka-baku are all focused on the same target either in physical or social combat, they each gain a +3 bonus to their attack. **Twist:** A ninja who uses (Intuition or Empathy) can discern the small motions Oka-baku use to coordinate with each other and use it to their advantage. They gain a +2 bonus to attack the Oka-baku.

ONI

Legends and stories of Oni describe them as impish demons who come in the night to steal children. People use them as boogymen to teach lessons to children or make sure they behave, but they are very much real. Oni invariably wreak destruction and death wherever they go. The few documented sightings involve the deaths of hundreds of people and the destruction of entire villages. Some warriors seek out Oni, hoping to earn honor and fame by slaying these terrible demons. They rarely succeed unless accompanied by an army.

Oni appear as giant humanoid creatures made up of a substance indicative of the crimes they committed in life and therefore the hell they come from. A murderer appears as an Oni covered in thick dark blood and someone who has dishonored their family ap-

CHAPTER SIX - ON ALL FRONTS

the body they wish to enter. Each night they roll Discipline + Holistics against the victim's Discipline + Fortitude with a cumulative +1 bonus for each previous night the Oni's roll won. If the Akogoru ever gains fewer successes than the victim, it has failed and cannot try with the same individual again. Once the Oni has netted a total of 10 successes over consecutive nights, the victim's soul is scoured from their body and the Oni can enter it. The Oni can only enter the body when the sun is down, but can control the body as though it were their own. The victim is dead, and nothing the Oni does can stop the body's decay, which eventually becomes visibly rotten within a week. **Twist:** If a ninja recognizes they are the target of an Akoguro, they can attempt to fortify their body each night against Possess Descendant by using a specific Skill (Empathy or Perception). Additionally, a ninja can attempt to reverse the effects of the power in another individual by rolling the specific Skill while meditating with the person. Doing so removes all bonuses the Oni may have gained and gives the victim a +2 bonus to their resistance roll that night.

AKOGORU (MASTER)

This demon is still relatively young compared to other inhabitants of hell. The Oni is still old and powerful, but died within living memory. They have living descendants whom they seek out. Spiritual scholars speculate the demons wish to reunite with their loved ones and hopefully regain some semblance of life, but their horrific appearance only incites fear, which drives them mad. The truth of the Oni's motives is lost, as no one has the time or ability to ask them what they truly want. Usually, by the time anyone with any kind of experience with the beings are involved, the demon is already on a destructive rampage.

Health: 20 **Psyche:** 15

Attack: 12 **Actions:** 3

Defense: 12 **Armor:** 0

Initiative: 11 **Damage:** +2

Dynamic Actions: 3

Suggested Skills (5 dice): Discipline, Holistics, Intimidation, Might, Perception, Speed

TECHNIQUES

Fortitude (+), Discipline (+), Fighting (-); Akogoru are a force to be reckoned with, and fight with a terrible ferocity. They do not fight like trained warriors, though their prowess more than makes up for their inadequacies.

MARTIAL ARTS

◆ **Corrupted Jutsu:** Oni are capable of using jutsu in a corrupted form. They each gain three jutsu of the GM's choice. They need not spend any points to activate their powers. Depending on the jutsu, their use has obvious corruptive traits. An Oni using Fire-Breather (pg. 107) may release deep purple flames, or one using Regrowth (pg. 111) may summon forth trees that are dead and decaying instead of a living forest. **Twist:** None.

◆ **Possess Descendant:** Akoguro seek out their descendants in an attempt to inhabit their bodies and regain life. The results are often horrifying as the Oni are incapable of truly restoring themselves to life. The process takes time as the Oni slowly destroys the soul of their descendant and attempts to take over the body. The Oni must spend an entire night (usually while the victim is sleeping) sitting in

FUKOTCHI (GRAND MASTER)

This Oni is a demon out of legend, stalking the night and leaving no trace of its victims. Fukotchi resembles a large bloated woman with black hair that hangs in ropes around its face. She is surrounded by an inky darkness that swirls around her as she moves. Some claim she has no face, but the reality is that her mouth is so large and wide that the sharp jagged teeth obscure the rest of her face. Accounts of the demon stretch far back, to when the Empire was still fresh and new. In life, she killed her own children and then in horrible shame killed herself. Now she seems intent on punishing recalcitrant children, or those who house and protect orphans. Few catch more than a glimpse of this silent killer as she stalks the night, and those who do rarely live to tell tales.

Health: 60 **Psyche:** 45

Attack: 13 **Actions:** 4

Defense: 13 **Armor:** 0

Initiative: 13 **Damage:** +3

Dynamic Actions: 4

Suggested Skills (8 dice): Discipline, Intimidation, Might, Stealth, Speed

TECHNIQUES

Discipline (+), Stealth (+), Speed (+), Might (-); Fukotchi moves with the darkness of night. She is a master of stealth and is faster than most other Oni. She prefers sneaking up on her victims and taking them silently, avoiding an outright fight if possible. If forced into a fight, she unleashes

CHAPTER SIX - ON ALL FRONTS

	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	ADEPT	UNEARTHLY
Attack:	3 to 5 dice	6 to 7 dice	8 to 10 dice	11 to 12 dice	13 to 15 dice
Defense:	3 to 5 dice	6 to 7 dice	8 to 10 dice	11 to 12 dice	13 to 15 dice
Initiative:	3	4 to 6	7 to 9	10 to 12	13 to 15
Dynamic Actions:	1	2	3	4	5
Actions:	1	1	2	3	3
Suggested Skills:	2 dice	3 dice	4 dice	5 dice	6 dice
Health:	5 (15)	7 (21)	9 (27)	11 (33)	13 (39)
Psyche:	5 (15)	7 (21)	9 (27)	11 (33)	13 (39)

the full fury of her demonic power at whoever was unlucky enough to anger her.

MARTIAL ARTS

- ◆ **Corrupted Jutsu:** Same as Above.
- ◆ **Open the Gates:** Fukotchi is an ancient creature who has seen much and been nearly everywhere. She seems to have a special connection with the realm of shadows, and is able to pass into it at any time she wishes. She can also open gates to the shadow realms of any size, condemning anything inside the gate to the shadow realm. Stories indicate she has leveled entire cities in this manner, though no one knows for sure if that is possible. **Twist:** Ninja are capable of sensing when Fukotchi is using Open the Gates. If they use a specific skill (Athletics or Travel) they can ground themselves and dictate if they go into the shadow realms or stay on Earth. They may save themselves, but not anything else around them.

CREATING FOES

Fast, on-the-fly threats may be created easily. The table above has information that should help GMs quickly come up with opponents for unexpected moments in the game. The following chart displays ranges of ability each foe can have. Each value represents how nasty a particular stat is for any foe. For example, if the Game Master needs the stats for a foppish diplomat, she may determine that her NPC has low dice pools for Attack and Defense. Perhaps he only has Attack: 3 and Defense: 5, indicating the dice he rolls for each, respectively. However, the same diplomat may receive 5 dice in his suggested Skill list, which is quite formidable.

Initiative and Dynamic Actions are static numbers. So, instead of rolling dice and finding foes' initiative or Dynamic Actions, they get the same amount each round. Foes have suggested Skills listed with a single dice value. That's for the sake of ease. So, a being with a high degree of skill may get 4 dice, but she gets 4 dice for all of the Skills listed for her. The values listed for health and psyche list what it should be for individual creatures first, and then Squad or Master level beings in parentheses.

Noriko knelt at the northernmost shrine, situated in front of the red banner, like the man at the market instructed. Located in a plain building, the room held numerous shrines. People from area villages traveled miles to renew their resolve and make offerings to the Empire here. In hope, perhaps, it would relieve the daily struggle of surviving.

Noriko plucked a stick of incense from her bag. She held the stick with both hands above her head and mouthed some words. Her shopping list, actually. To anyone watching, Noriko hoped she appeared to be a devoted citizen of the Empire. She wasn't even sure this dangerous act would work, but Noriko had no choice. The Empire conscripted everything in her shop, everything her family had. They would starve without their store, and no matter the risk, Noriko wouldn't let that happen.

She bowed low to the floor with the incense cradled in her hands. The unpretentious shrine represented the elements. A lit candle, a plant, a clay bowl of water, a broken knife and a small wooden whistle sat haphazardly on the rough surface: fire, earth, water, metal and wood; it was a fitting place to seek solace.

"Ancestors, I beg of you to hear me and aid me," Noriko said, careful not to disturb the peace of the place. Several others knelt nearby and prayed in reverent silence.

The old man in the market said she only needed to whisper and the ninja would hear her. There were many spent incense sticks adorning the sand in front of the shrine. How many of these went answered by the ninja?

"Our whole village is plagued by this war and we have little food. Please help us find enough food to last the winter. There are many good people who have nothing to eat and nowhere to go. We need you, Ancestors. Please."

She touched the incense to the candle on the shrine and watched it ignite. Noriko brought it to her lips and blew gently until the flame died and the incense began to smoke. The sweet scent calmed her. She stuck the incense into the sand with the other requests.

"Did you find some peace, little sister?" An old woman stood beside her, smiling.

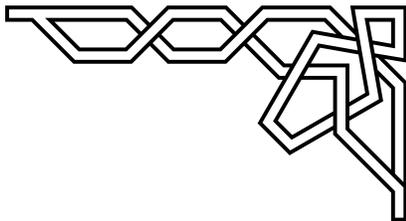
Noriko smiled back. She stood and bowed to the woman.

"I believe so," she said. The old woman reminded her of her grandmother. "Thank you."

"Then I believe your request will be heard and answered. The answers come to those who have found peace."

The woman patted her on the shoulder and walked away. Noriko picked up her bag and took a last look at the suffering faces around her. So much pain. Families torn apart and the land ravaged by battle. Noriko lived it all, but now she had something she didn't have before.

Hope.



CHAPTER SEVEN

LIFE IN THE EMPIRE

The Testament of Glory: The Line of the Izou Emperors and their Great Deeds

*“From the simplest means he came,
A man blessed of wisdom and virtue
To raise up the just sword in just cause
To avenge his family’s name and honor
He brought knowledge from darkness
And was granted dominion on land and sea
Through blood, the land became whole
And the land knew peace, unity and greatness
His benevolence shines upon us still in his most holy son
And may he protect us through dark and troubled times.
Praise to the nation that bears its father’s name!
Praise Izou!*

This oath, spoken by a priest before each assembly of nobles, as well as by drill sergeants as their soldiers train for the Imperial Army, tells the story of Izou Zurui, the first Emperor and founder of a dynasty that would create one of the most powerful nations in the world. The story of Zurui is one of loss, of vengeance and of glory. Every child knows of Zurui’s sacrifice to build a nation that has stood for nearly 765 years.

Knowing the history of the Izou family is important, as Izou Mamoru’s legends began with the glory of his ancestors, after all. Since Zurui there have been many powerful Emperors. Izou Junshinichi added the Land of Five Blades and the Land of Seed and Blossom to the Empire during the Expansion Wars, and Emperor Akono led the battle against the Matamoto Invasion, an epic siege against a Rai-

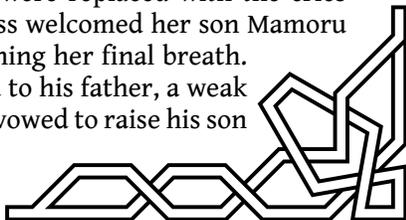
ju demon summoned from the sky. It is said each Emperor is destined to be at the center of at least one major event that would define their reign, but no Emperor has ever been as troubled or as notorious as the current Emperor, Izou Mamoru.

SCOURGE OF THE NINJA

Emperor Mamoru was born under an auspicious sign in 691 IE. His mother, Empress Mamoko, was leading the Empire through one of its worst insurrections in centuries. An underpaid and demoralized Imperial garrison was all that stood in the path of rebels from the Northern provinces, and Mamoko, who was already nine months pregnant, took control of the army after catching her general conspiring against her.

Though her son was about to be born, she personally led a cavalry charge that broke the rebels’ ranks, riding in a modified chariot with two loyal generals at her side. After breaking through the frontlines it is said the sun parted the heavens, and light fell upon her. It was then she knew she had to give birth, and her soldiers formed a protective wall around her to shield the mother and her son.

According to legend, one of the last great golden Celestial Lions appeared at the edge of the battlefield, roaring ferociously into the air before retreating into the forest once more. Soon the roars were replaced with the cries of an infant, and the Empress welcomed her son Mamoru into the world before breathing her final breath. Loyal soldiers took the child to his father, a weak but kind-hearted man, who vowed to raise his son





to be the leader his mother would have wanted.

The Emperor began his life beset by challenges that would only grow in threat and number. Assassins threatened his birthright, and from an early age he had to learn to wield a sword in order to protect himself. Due to tutelage from the Silver Blades and the Hidden Strands of Fate, he learned how to defend himself from various jutsu, and they molded him into an expert warrior. Before he died, Mamoru's father created a special order of Imperial ninja to protect his son: the Golden Lions, whose name came from the animal that first welcomed their Emperor into the world.

Mamoru traveled the Empire for many years as a child Emperor, learning the secrets and ways of its entire people. He sought to have a fair and just reign, and he felt he should see the world before becoming trapped in the Imperial Palace. Knowing the people was the only way to care for the people. In his journeys, it is said he accomplished many great deeds, many of which have become the subject of numerous songs and highly reviewed plays. Perhaps the most infamous is also the last story about his wandering period, when he encountered the Silver Serpent.

THE SERPENT'S LIBRARY

As the Emperor traveled in 714 IE, he came to a fishing village along the sea where a small statue dedicated to his father was cherished and the people routinely left presents and coins for him. They treated the Emperor Mamoru well, but the village seemed nervous. When asked why they were so nervous, they told him that they feared a great beast that lived in the caves nearby. The Emperor, at only fifteen years of age, declared that no one should live in fear in his land. He quickly set off to face the beast, taking only three Golden Lions with him.

The beast's lair was a solitary stone cave, and the Emperor had to climb through a small entrance to enter. Forced to leave behind his bodyguards and his armor, the Emperor soon emerged in a great hall filled with scrolls and books from every city in the Empire. The wealth of knowledge was priceless, but the Emperor could not find his foe, only a small Serpent sitting on a pedestal. The Emperor asked the Serpent where his enemy was, and the Serpent responded, "A threat as small as I may bring down even your kingdom, little Emperor."

The Emperor tried to strike the Serpent with his sword, but the creature grew into a ferocious monster with a single pearl on its head that blazed with fire. Their battle lasted for hours, and when the Emperor's men came searching for him, they found him inside the cave, with the dead

CHAPTER SEVEN - LIFE IN THE EMPIRE

TIMELINE

- 691 IE Birth of the Emperor
- 718 IE Marriage to Izou Hana
- 720 IE Birth of Izou Yasou (1st son)
- 725 IE Birth of Izou Megumi (1st daughter)
- 728 IE Birth of Izou Kano (2nd son)
- 737 IE Death of Yasou at the hands of ninja
- 751 IE Hana's death and Megumi's poisoning at hands of ninja
- 752 IE Ninja Crusade begins
- 755 IE Establishment of so-called Lotus Coalition
- 757 IE Ninja's seige on Daiwa
- 758 IE Founding of Danketsu
- 759 IE Empire forces return en masse
- 762 IE Major Summoner Skirmish
- 764 IE Year of Floods
- 766 IE Present

IE = In the year of the Izou Empire

body of the beast around him and all the books and scrolls torn to pieces. The Emperor surveyed the room and said, "I now understand the lesson it meant to teach me."

THE NINJA CRUSADE

Of all the great works and deeds that Izou Mamoru will be remembered for, perhaps the greatest will be the loss of his family and the beginning of the persecution of ninja throughout his Empire. Though his Empire would not have been founded if not for their teachings, his wrath and thirst for vengeance for the death of his heirs at the hands of ninja sparked the Ninja Crusade.

When the Emperor's heir, Yasou, was training outside in the woods one day in 737 IE, he became involved in a conflict between two rival clans and was killed in the crossfire. Mamoru's sorrow was great, and he declared laws to crack down upon the open demonstration of ki manipulation in the Empire designed to hurt the ninjas' cultural heritage and hopefully save other families from a similar fate. He and his beloved wife, Hana, still had their love and two remaining children who could continue their line. When his wife was slain and daughter, Megumi, poi-

soned by rebel ninja years later in 751 IE, however, his lasting sorrow turned to outright hatred. Izou Mamoru declared the Ninja Crusade, now ready to cleanse the Empire of their evil.

He named his son, Crown Prince Kano, who suffered as well for the death of his mother and siblings, as general of the Izou armies. The Golden Lions, the only authorized ninja left in the Empire, were gathered together, to create a new special caste of soldiers known as Executioners. These Executioners learned forbidden arts of jutsu destruction and gained access to the most deadly and profane jutsu texts kept in the Grand Library.

Their fury was swift and merciless, and the few known ninja villages burned in the night. All who were caught in their initial attacks were slaughtered mercilessly, and roads throughout the Empire were lined with executed ninja to be seen as a warning to those who would threaten the Empire. The Emperor made great speeches to his people, encouraging them to rise up against the vile ninja who threatened to destroy their leaders. With advancements of steam and gunpowder, he proved the Izou army was a match for the ancient techniques of mere ninja.

So began the Ninja Crusade. This was not the end of Mamoru's story, as rumors of his death abound throughout the Empire, but his subsequent reappearance has only added to his legend. Those who get the honor to speak with him see him as a divine being, and many see his renewed health as a good sign for the Empire's fortune. Others are not so sure...

THE TRIALS OF WAR

The Ninja Crusade is not summed up by how many battles are fought or the places where they took place, but rather by the significance of these battles. The conflict began in 752 IE to purge the Empire of the corrupt and traitorous clans who manipulate people from the shadows and commit crimes against man and the Celestials. The Emperor has not spared mercy for ninja and their families who believe they are above the law. He sees the Ninja Crusade as not just a battle between the Empire and ninja, but rather as a necessary battle to save his Empire from superstition and tyranny.

To this end, he has commissioned numerous plays and stories to be spread throughout the Empire to portray the ninja as criminals who threaten to steal away children and murder parents. The reclusive nature of the clans has worked in his favor, and many villages that once offered sanctuary to the ninja now report them to the Emperor's soldiers and chase the clans from their territories.



DANKETSU

AND THE EMPEROR

For three years, the ninja were forced on the run from the Empire's forces, and hundreds died. The Emperor had numerous advantages over the ninja, and the clans struggled to survive. They soon began to unify, and the Lotus Coalition was able to aid them in their survival. Despite the alliance being new and relatively untested, the ninja were desperate and needed only a moment to solidify their positions.

The Emperor's forces soon overreached. Despite the army's early advantage, the clans were able to plan a unified siege on Daiwa believed to be the last assault needed to end the Ninja Crusade. It would perhaps be their last chance to eliminate the driving force behind the war — Emperor Mamoru. Sensing the Emperor had withdrawn most of his forces away from the capitol, the Lotus Coalition sent a strike force of one hundred ninja to assassinate the Emperor in the summer of 757 IE.

The Emperor's palace seemed defenseless at first, with the few guards being eliminated quickly. As the ninja, who were all hand-selected as the most dangerous warriors the Lotus Coalition had to offer, made their way through the halls, they discovered the Emperor was not defenseless after all. The Golden Lions, paired with several Silver Blades and Executioners were ready and waiting for the ninja to strike.

The palace halls echoed with the sounds of combat, as the deadliest men and women in the Empire fought what they believed to be the war's last conflict. Though outnumbered, the ninja fought valiantly until only one of their number remained; a Ronin by the name of Danketsu. He had managed to slip away from the fighting and make his way into the throne room, where the Emperor was waiting for him. Danketsu knew the Emperor was a formidable opponent, and though no one knows the words they shared in that room, the two soon fought each other. The result of their duel has become a mixture of legend and rumor.

Danketsu somehow managed to escape the palace, where he made his way to one of the largest of the Lotus Coalition camps. His sword was broken and stained with blood, but his wounds were too severe for even the best healing the ninja had to offer. As he lay dying, he managed to share his last words surrounded by the clans he fought to save: "The Emperor is dead by my hand, and soon I shall see him in the afterlife."

In thanks for his sacrifice, the Lotus Coalition named their first permanent hidden village in his honor. Danketsu became a place where it was increasingly ok to be a Ronin ninja as well, which had been unheard of previously.

CHAPTER SEVEN - LIFE IN THE EMPIRE

THE EMPEROR LIVES

The clans celebrated for days as the news of the Emperor's death spread throughout the Empire. General Kano declared a state of emergency, but news of the Emperor's death was never disseminated to the Empire. In fact, reports of the Emperor's increasing health and vigor were instead the headline. This was an obvious and pitiful ploy by the Imperial Army to hide the truth and save face. The ninja, believing victory to be imminent, gathered their allies for a raid upon General Kano's encampment in early 759 IE, while the winter snow still fell.

The Lotus Coalition's hopes were sundered when the Emperor appeared on the field of battle at the head of his army once more. He seemed strong and healthy and moved through the battlefield like a scythe, cutting down several ninja with each stroke of his sword. Forced to fall back, the Lotus Coalition retreated back to their hidden city. Due to the strange nature of the Emperor's new abilities, rumors abound of what truly happened to him and whether Danketsu actually killed him or was a liar.

THE SUMMONER SKIRMISHES

Unlike the wars to unite the Empire under one rule, this war exists not just on the battlefield but also in the streets, in homes and in the shadows. Conflict can break out anywhere, and the intensity of the conflicts can devastate the areas that both sides claim to protect.

In the Bridge to Battle Province, fighting between the Lotus Coalition and the Empire reached a bloody stalemate, where despite the tenacity and bravery of the ninja clans in the region they were unable to drive out the ninth Imperial Legion. Known as the Emperor's Shields, they had become entrenched and fortified several towns with cannons and rifle units. The local Lotus Coalition cell, the Divine Wave, was desperate and had become more vicious and ruthless in their conflict. They struck at officers and generals among the ninth, which led to the demoralization of their soldiers. The Izou army began to lose their ground, and the Emperor could not have that.

Believing that new methods were needed to break the ninja's spirits, the Emperor decided to use more radical means to drive them out. In 762 IE, a talented Summoner in the Golden Lions summoned a Greater Celestial Animal who had previously served one of his ancestors and bid it to wage war once again in his Empire's name. The barriers between the spirit world and the real world were said to give way at the slightest request, as the animal they summoned was ready to battle with a spirit blade in hand. Mists of blood and the sound of inhuman roars heralded the arrival of Vakhesh the Fire Ape, a massive Celestial Ape whose fists were made of molten metal, and a pair of iron horns emerged from its head.

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Vakhesh was not just a creature for terrifying opponents, but a brilliant commander. Using himself as a distraction, he ordered the ninth to strike the Lotus Coalition's bases while he fought their champions. Vakhesh was brutal, and slaughtered many in his wake. His methods were destructive, and fields burnt in the creature's wake.

The Divine Wave, realizing they needed assistance in facing such an opponent, decided to summon their own spirit to fight the beast. As they made an appeal to the Celestial realms for a protector, a nearby well exploded with mystical energy and Tetsuo the Aggressor appeared once more into the world. Tetsuo was a towering Celestial Bear, whose love of battle meant there was no need to tell him where to attack.

Destroying Vakhesh was no easy feat, and the surrounding countryside was devastated as a towering monstrosity of living flame and a reckless bear warrior seeking only the next fight battled alongside an ongoing war. Some believe the fury of their conflict drove the two Celestial Animals, giving them greater power as they dueled each other. It was only when Tsuki Misako, who sought to end the madness of the conflict, sacrificed herself to channel her ki and destroy Vakhesh on this plane that the conflict was brought to an end and fighting died down. Tetsuo disappeared after the conflict, roaming the countryside and challenging those he finds worthy to duels in order to test his strength.

In a three-month period, five towns were burnt to the ground and almost all crops in the Bridge to Battle and neighboring provinces were reduced to ash. An Emperor had not ordered the summoning of a Celestial Animal for war since the War of Withered Fangs, which struck fear into the hearts of the ninja. A time of the Ninja Crusade called the Summoner Skirmishes began, as the Emperor began calling Celestial after Celestial to do his bidding, from fire ape to poison scorpions to mountain-sized panthers. Those in the affected provinces saw black chains binding the animals; leading many to believe they did not willingly fight for the Emperor.

THE YEAR OF FLOODS

The Ninja Crusade was horrible and had taken countless lives by 764 IE, but it became worse when it coincided with terrible tragedies brought about by the weather. As summoned animals ravaged the countryside stamping out ninja, the rivers in the Silk Belt and Middle Provinces began to swell from intense rains. The rivers flooded into nearby villages and farmlands, ruining crops and driving people from their homes. As the rains continued in intensity, the flooding worsened until it soon spread to every corner of the Empire.

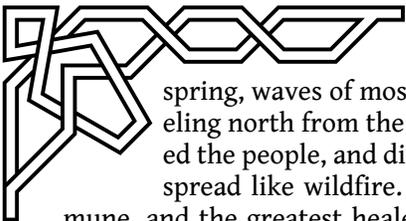
As floodwaters brushed away entire towns, a series of plagues ravaged the empire. In the

WHAT HAPPENED TO EMPEROR MAMORU?

No one knows for sure what happened to the Emperor. To the citizens of the Empire, they never lost him. He's given speeches and walked the streets of the capitol like always and seems as real as anyone. He shows no signs of injury or infirmity because of his age, instead many often speak of seeing him joking with merchants, praying with priests and blessing the sick and young at his palace once a month.

As for what truly happened, there are many stories told far away from the ears of Imperial agents.

- ◆ The Emperor was saved due to a pact with an ancient entity, and the Empire now serves its will.
- ◆ Danketsu was a known liar, and he fled the field of battle instead of dying with his friends.
- ◆ Danketsu killed a servant wearing the Emperor's robe, while the Emperor stayed safely away from battle.
- ◆ The Emperor has mastered a new jutsu to make himself beyond death's reach.



spring, waves of mosquitos and swamp flies traveling north from the Triumph Province devastated the people, and diseases not seen for centuries spread like wildfire. Even Danketsu was not immune, and the greatest healers of the clans struggled to heal ninja afflicted by sickness. The forces of the Lotus Coalition were hard pressed to support their own clans while trying to help the beleaguered peasants of the Empire. Many believed the unstoppable rains were a sign of Heaven's displeasure with the rampant use of Celestial Animals in the war. This sentiment, combined with the complete drain on the Empire's resources to help against the flooding, spelled an end of Celestial Animals for warfare.

As the plague of famine threatened to starve the Empire, the ninja suspected something else to be the true cause, soon uncovering signs of a cult taking advantage of the war, suffering and turmoil to power a forbidden ritual. They had summoned an Oni to serve their cult, and it had grown fat off the suffering the floods caused.

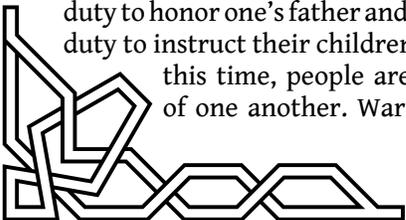
In one of the rare cases of cooperation among the Lotus Coalition and the Empire, a team of ninja and Golden Lions worked together to bring down the demon. It was rumored the leader of the Golden Lions betrayed her men and joined her lover in the Lotus Coalition soon afterwards, but this may be a rumor spread by the Lotus Coalition.

The floods continued for an entire year, the citizens almost never seeing the beloved sun until the following spring of 765 IE. Whether it was truly the demon who caused the weather or not, few can say. What is known is that the Empire has taken time to rebuild itself after the devastation brought first by Summoners and then again by the floods. The ninja have done their best to help the people recover, but the Empire seems more focused on rebuilding what will aid them in hunting down the clans, rather than what will aid its people.

A WORLD AT WAR

Historians often glorify the deeds of the heroes and villains on the battlefield, overlooking one small detail... the war's effect on the common folk. Forgetting about commoners is how the war has cascaded into such utter destruction, especially after both sides have suffered such terrible conditions. Still, the average, everyday citizen has their own lives they must contend with as well.

FAMILY



In the Izou Empire, family is everything. It is a child's duty to honor one's father and mother, and it is the parents' duty to instruct their children in the ways of the world. At this time, people are suspicious and mistrusting of one another. War has made people desperate

and degenerate, but family is still family. These desperate times have made family even more important than ever. A family who has lost their house in a flood most likely goes to the home of their closest relative who would never turn them away, because of their family bond. However, it does mean families are more insular than ever. People are highly unlikely to trust those outside of their circle of relatives. Paranoia about outsiders is rampant.

Paranoia may exist within one's family as well, since ninja are under constant persecution. Knowing a family member to be a ninja is holding a secret that can change everyone's lives forever. Turning them in seems like an easy choice, leaving the rest of the family to their lives, but yet the shame cast upon such an action, on a family that would turn on one of their own so easily, is haunting.

CLASS

For centuries, the society of the Izou Empire was one of rigid castes and classes. Peasants toiled away for the nobility and warrior classes, while the nobility provided protection for the peasants. Merchants traded. Arti-

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GEISHA

Geisha are highly skilled entertainers who excel at music, games, poetry and conversation; they are not concubines or prostitutes as the crude and uncivilized would like to think. Seen by many as living works of art, they are therefore treated with delicacy. As elite entertainers, geisha find themselves with plenty of work. The demand by the rich for distractions from the war has increased. With access to so many noble houses, the geisha often act as spies and messengers between the noble clans.

Geisha find themselves in the unique position as one of the few occupations who regularly interact with Silver Blades and Golden Lions. Being an elite warrior for the Emperor takes its toll and when it is time to rest, these dedicated Imperials often find comfort by conversing and spending time with geisha. This means that a canny geisha can wield tremendous power through subtle manipulations during such conversations.

sans crafted. The devastation of the long war, however, has led to a fraying and unraveling of society's fabric. In some provinces, rich nobles have been reduced to peasants after losing everything in battle, flood or pestilence. Wealthy merchants have lost their fortunes in the flames of conflict. Some have also risen in society by joining the Emperor's army and joining the fighter class, while others increased their lot by joining one of the many criminal societies in the Izou Empire.

For most, the class system still remains the norm. The idea of the separate classes within the Empire is tied to its dominant religions, so this aspect of life is not going away any time soon. However now, there are some who see new opportunities, in addition to others who have learned that nothing is guaranteed to them in this life.

COMMONERS

The Commoner includes the everyday people of the Empire. These are the farmers, the fishermen, the barmaids and apprentices. The vast majority of people in the realm come from this class and they have suffered the most from the lengthy war.

ARTISANS

Artisans were the hardest hit by the war. Before the advent of the Ninja Crusade, artisans created tools, artwork and even brilliant calligraphy. The war has sadly ruined the land's economy nowadays, meaning few can afford the work of craftsmen and fewer still are inspired enough to invest in works of beauty. Only the most elite Artisans can still find work. Most have fallen to become commoners - turning to simple farming or fishing to feed themselves. Others have simply become hermits, practicing their arts by themselves in hidden places. The only type of Artisan relatively untouched by the war is the geisha.

MERCHANTS

Those who trade or sell goods belong to the merchant class, though this category fits a wide swath of people. Everyone from a simple shopkeeper to a merchant prince who controls hundreds of traders would be considered part of the merchant class.

Currently, there is a keen division between the merchants of the Izou Empire, since some stay in business by selling their goods directly to the Emperor and his servants. Those who don't sell to Imperials often find themselves fighting over customers in the larger cities, where most merchants concentrate their efforts. The leftovers simply fall to the wayside, losing everything they may have built because of their inability to adapt.

WARRIORS

The warrior class is a step below nobles. Warriors serve the nobles directly, forming the ranks of their lieutenants and sometimes forming small, specialized bands. To be clear, a warrior is not a simple palace guard or rank-and-file soldier. Warriors are born, by family, into their role and taught at a young age how to fight. The Ninja Crusade has devastated many warrior families, but there are many throughout the land recently elevated to their status by a wave of the Emperor's hand in order to secure more loyal troops.

NOBLES

The nobles form the highest class in the Izou Empire and can be anything from the head of a city to the daimyo of an entire province. The cutthroat nature of the Imperial Court means nobles must be cunning, clever and political. Those who do not possess such guile simply do not survive. The war has thrown everything into chaos, making the noble court deadlier than ever. Numerous families were put to the sword by the Emperor's command or banished to undesirable provinces upon suspicion of allying with the ninja. Ironically, almost every noble house or clan has some ties to the ninja. No noble family could defend itself from its rivals without them.

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All nobles at least pretend to pay obeisance to the Imperial Throne. A small number of these families naively support the Emperor as the savior of the realm. Others are sycophantic to the Imperial Court, quailing in fear of the sword and fire. Yet other noble houses secretly despise the Emperor and his tyrannical rule. These families are only waiting for the right opportunity in which to aid the overthrow of their despotic master.

CRIMINALS

A new class has risen from the flames of war in the Empire – that of the criminal. Criminals have risen to prominence because a war-torn land is one that provides little security. If a farmer wants protection from raiders, she must often look beyond the aid of ninja or Izou soldier to get it. Sadly, the price most commoners pay for said protection is often too high. Many are the lowborn family who has had to give up a child to the nearby crime family to be molded into an enforcer, smuggler or prostitute.

Criminals in this era organize themselves into families called guilds, a system cribbed directly from the system of nobility in the land. Guild leaders are determined by seniority and are referred to as Great Mother or Great Father. The criminals in any city may or may not be truly blood related, but it matters not. When one is adopted into a criminal family, they are considered to be blood, and that distinction lasts forever.

Reliance on guilds has grown to obscene levels in the previous years as the common folk look at both the army and ninja with disdain. Their conflict has cost regular people too much for them to pass over an alternative helpful presence, despite the high price it holds. Several villages have been bought and sold by this new criminal class, with the protectors keeping ninja and soldiers at bay equally well, as many of their numbers are Ronin and former soldiers.

UNTOUCHABLES

The lowest class of people in the empire is the Untouchable. These lowly souls fulfill all the roles other classes see as dirty or unworthy of attention, including butchers who must touch filthy animal blood, blacksmiths who work in the heat and soot and even gravediggers or corpse collectors who handle the dead. Their occupations make them unclean and undesirable.

In the wake of the Ninja Crusade, the ranks of the Untouchables have swelled. Merchants and farmers who lost everything have had to become street sweepers and dung collectors. Unrest and discord is rife amongst the Untouchables, who now have to fight each other for employment. Fueling the conflict is the unyielding rift between those who have always been of this lowest class and those who have newly joined. Those born into this class tend to look down upon the newest members of the Untouchables, the first time they've been able to do that in their lives.

FAITH AND RELIGION

The Izou Empire is far from a nation with a unified faith or system of religion. Most citizens believe in a system of reincarnation linked to the idea of dharma. One's life and position is a direct result of how they conducted themselves in a previous life. As one goes about in their daily life, one's deeds determine the next life they will be reborn into. Thus, the concept of class has been ingrained into the Izou Empire for centuries. Few try to actively improve their lives or better their class...until recently.

The upending of the faith in the karmic system has led many to turn to the worship of Oni, demons and spirits as well. The latter is universally practiced, with several household shrines for veneration of one's ancestors, but isn't really considered an official religion. Respect for one's ancestors is just expected. Worshippers in other sub-faiths turn to fearsome supernatural forces out of desperation. This means that the Izou Empire is a more superstitious, more primal and more fearful environment than ever.

THE TEN IZOU PROVINCES

THE MIDDLE PROVINCE

The Middle Province is not only named for its central location, but its place in the minds of the Empire's citizens. There are numerous villages and cities all around this land, making it the most urban of the provinces. The dusty roads and streets are filled with traffic, all watched carefully by the Imperial Guard. The Emperor's eye is watchful here and his banner flies from every street corner, a symbol of his recent resurrection.

While the war was thick in this province, most of the fighting was done by ninja, which means few areas were devastated or burned. Many within the Emperor's loyal court were killed in small skirmishes, and the system of nobles and their hierarchy has been largely rearranged. Many noble families have fallen into obscurity while new ones have risen to take their place.

PROMINENT CITIES

◆ **Daiwa:** The capital of the Izou Empire remains a shining city, albeit a quiet one. When fighting took place here, loyalist noble families fell. The city is dotted with family fortresses that now stand empty, for there are no nobles to populate them. The servants and guards of those dead palaces have long since moved on. The wide avenues see little traffic

and a subdued tone hangs in the air. The Shopping District remains a busy place, where over ten different large, tented markets spread their goods out beneath the shadows of noble towers.

A few sites of note are the Children's Palace, which was once an enormous playground for noble children, but is now a forsaken and eerie place, after a massive Summoner battle. Today, only the foolish or desperate travel there, out of fear of the Oni who are said to haunt the place. The Hall of Heroes memorial stands prominently in the city's skyline today as well, but few visit this site, not wanting to remember the woes of war. At the heart of all of this lies the sprawling Imperial Palace, with its thirty-foot high walls and numerous banners - all proclaiming the immortality of the Emperor.

- ◆ **Heigenchou:** This city is the agricultural center for the entire province. Some time ago, it was used as a testing ground for explosives and other wartime alchemies. Those days are now past, and this region is once-again pastoral farmland. Secret caches and laboratories still house hidden Izou gunpowder experiments, however. A number of ninja have travelled to this region on hunts for secret weapons, some of which are decades old.

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- ◆ **Nanchou:** The South City, once a large fortress created for war, has long stood as a penitentiary. In the wake of the Ninja Crusade, the titanic prison-city has now doubled in population. There is little Imperial control over the complex. Within its walls are entire factions of criminals, exiled warriors and deadly assassins. Many of the criminal families within these walls are able to exert influence on the world outside through the rampantly corrupt system of guards. Other are simply ninja who were lost to the battle they fought.

THE SILK BELT PROVINCE

The Silk Belt Province is one of the few places relatively untouched by the Ninja Crusade. Sweeping grasslands and ancient, shaded forests span across the horizon. As the name indicates, the number one export of this province is silk and quiet, tiny silk farms dot the land, punctuating the rolling landscape.

Lying quietly behind the peace of the Silk Belt Province is one of the largest secret villages for the Strands of Fate clan, formed centuries before the Ninja Crusade was a thought. Their specialized silk worms produce some of the most resilient and versatile thread the land has ever seen. Despite the Izou's best agents, the Strands' headquarters here has never been discovered.



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THE FLOATING CITY

Fouchou, the Floating City, began as a collection of merchant junk boats bound together in hopes of evading Imperial oppression. They roped their boats and began selling their wares off the coast of Kiwan, hoping that their distance from the city would protect them from normal merchant laws. Over time, they picked up more and more boats, turning some into stores and others becoming large homes, until the collection of boats became its own sprawling city of rope bridges and sails. Today, they travel up and down the western coast of the Izou Empire, selling their wares as the largest known marketplace in the world. A shopper can theoretically get whatever they want or need there... for the right price. There is no prejudice against ninja in Fouchou (with no one clan having the majority of influence), so there are often mystical items or ingredients available as well. Sadly, the moral fiber of the Floating City is often lacking, leading to some boats that pander to slavery rings or others that are dedicated drug dens. Truly, one may find anything here.

PROMINENT CITIES

- ◆ **Jikankei:** Renowned around the land as the City of Art, this city has been a refuge for artisans and historians for generations. Being a city of scholars, Jikankei surrendered immediately when the armies arrived during the Emperor's initial rise to power. This ancient city features over a dozen prominent museums. Thankfully, its status as a storehouse of knowledge remains untouched by the war. Ninja travel here often when seeking hidden knowledge in disciplines of history, magic or even Jutsu.
- ◆ **Tennokiba:** Also known as Heaven's Teeth, Tennokiba is a city known for its political wheeling and dealings. Today, this city acts as neutral ground for all manner of people in power. Nobles, diplomats, criminals and even ninja often use Tennokiba as a meeting place. The Strands of Fate once had their headquarters here, but have since moved it as the criminal elements have subverted much of the power structure of the city. The Strands still hold a great deal of sway in this city, however.

- ◆ **Unmeishi:** This is the land's second largest port city, mostly used to trade with the Land of Mountains and Valleys. Unlike many other places in the world, this place is busier than ever. The war means goods (mostly weapons) are imported from across the ocean to this city. Both the Imperial Army and the smaller noble armies are restocked by these imports. There is also a constant influx of refugees streaming into Unmeishi as well.

BRIDGE TO THE WORLD PROVINCE

One of the richest provinces in the land, the Bridge to the World Province serves as a major port hub. The majority of the Empire's imports and exports are traded here, and war has been good for business. The Emperor imports weapons, food and supplies constantly while refugees are steadily streaming out of the ports as well. With so much trade, the Bridge to the World is a place where a man or woman may increase their station in the world. A simple merchant can become a Merchant Prince or Trader Queen overnight, if they play the game correctly.

Amidst all of the trade and business, the Living Chronicle keeps its most sacred temple here called Shajisei'n, or the Temple of Scribes. Thousands of preserved bodies lie here in sacred niches, the chronicles upon their skin conserved for all time. In times of great need the bodies of the dead who lie here will rise to defend the temple itself.

PROMINENT CITIES

- ◆ **Kiwan:** The largest port city in the Land of Izou, Kiwan (Turtle Bay) is built up around a large canyon that opens out into the sea. Ships sail into the canyon and dock along the canyon walls. Kiwan City itself is built directly into the rock walls, with elaborate facades to each residence or business – all to display the power and status of the owners within. A web of rope bridges networks the community together.
- ◆ **Yuukou:** Often called the City of Vice, Yuukou (Oil's Light) earns its name and reputation for the thousands of lanterns that line its streets – lanterns that remain lit no matter the time of day or night. Just about any pleasure or service one can think of can be bought here. The Ninja Crusade means the city's population has swelled as many seek to escape the turmoil years of bloodshed has caused. The darkest aspect of Yuukou is its slave trade. From here, desperate families sell many a poor soul into bondage. Sometimes, slaves sell themselves to the market, as a last, desperate act to aid loved ones.



CRADLE OF LIFE PROVINCE

This highly domesticated province is where most of the Izou Empire gets its food. Farming villages, grazing land, cattle ranches and horse nurseries adorn this province. Today, much of the Cradle of Life Province lies in devastation. To try to cut the Emperor's food supply, ninja attacks salted many of the fields here, making them barren. The floods destroyed many of the farms as well. The remaining agricultural land is guarded jealously as the Izou Empire's lifeblood, for without this province, the Middle Province and many armies would starve.

The Pack of the Black Moon keeps a small but secret temple here in the ruins of Souchou, the City of Grass resting on Lake Higan, where once brand new crops were created. Today, the ghost of ninja who died in the floods guards it. These spectral beings float and look as if they are still underwater, even though they float through the air.

PROMINENT CITIES

- ◆ **Higandou:** During the War of Withered Fangs, this city was once a strategic launching point for soldiers attacking the Southern Lands. Today, it has seen a resurgence in this regard, as Imperial soldiers sail from these shores daily to renew attacks on the rising Recoiling Serpents. Soldiers line the streets, waiting before they are mustered into battle. Mercenaries wander the inns, brothels and gambling halls, hoping to make their business available.

FLAME RIVER PROVINCE

Ninja culture began here, crafted in the high mountains in the hidden places of the world. It was here that the first temples were founded and the secret craft of Jutsu was born. It is a land of angry, sharp mountains, that shakes and trembles with the whims of the Ensen volcano. The mountains breed tall and dark storms, which appear swiftly but disappear just as quickly.

When the Emperor first rose to power, this was one of the first regions conquered. The high mountains should have made the task difficult, but the people capitulated without a fight. This province's citizens knew, even then, occupying armies do not conquer ninjas. The Ninja Crusade raged thick in this province, for many a ninja attempted to hide within the jagged peaks and caves. Dry, exposed bones litter the stones here, the remnants of years of battle. The fighting has died down for now, but the gaping skulls among the rocks act as a reminder of those deadly years.



PROMINENT CITIES

- ◆ **Kakou:** This savage port is known as the Fire Port for a reason. It is a wild border town

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where outlaws, mercenaries and refugees all mingle. Imperial agents rarely travel there, not seeing it as worth the pains it would take to capture the city. Refugees from both the Land of Exalted Flame and the Land of Mountains and Valleys gather here, resulting in a vast squatter's metropolis outside of this city's borders.

- ◆ **Kokyuryu City:** The City of the Breathing Dragon is said to be the last of the Ancient Dragons thought to be lost. It is a city of old temples of monasteries, giving it an air of mystery. During the Ninja Crusade, the Emperor ordered this city to be sacked, as it was seen as a sanctuary for ninja. According to local lore, on the night of the raid, a massive dragon appeared in the sky and burned the Emperor's troops in his fury. Today, ash statues stand about in the streets, twisted in anguish – the supposed remains of the invading army. The city is said to be haunted now. At night, the statues come to life, reliving the dragon battle over and over again. Anyone caught up in this spectral combat is in danger of becoming an ash statue like the rest of the troops here.
- ◆ **Wu Ji Theater:** This grand theater draws nobles and pilgrims from all over to view its performances. Those who journey here walk beneath a series of titanic red arches, supposedly crafted long ago by giants. The original stages were destroyed in the floods, but new stages were erected so the show would continue, a display of the performers' confidence and power. Plays and music performed here are all overwhelmingly supportive of the Emperor, as not to draw too much negative attention from the Imperial army. However, a few satirical comedies have crept out, subtly poking fun at the Emperor.

BLACK VEIL PROVINCE

The forge of war has burned hot in the Black Veil Province. The Great Desert devastated this region when the Izou attempted their siege on the Land of Exalted Flame. The Ninja Crusade was also rough on this region as it was the site of many a Summoner Skirmish. Finally, the floods came, bringing with them dark and swirling water, which poisoned the ground and water supplies. Today, it is a nightmare land, filled with strange trees and warped birds, which emit unsettling cries.

The Grasping Shadows have their headquarters here. Their iron grip on the region has been loosened by recent events, but they still maintain powerful alliances with the region's leadership.

PROMINENT CITIES

- ◆ **Arashi Port:** This once-proud city was already dying before the Ninja Crusade due to the terrible sailing conditions in the bay. Today, Arashi Port is truly abandoned, nothing more than a ghost city due to the unassailable conditions left to the past residents by the

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Arashi Sea. Those who have visited it have said that at certain phases of the moon, the place becomes a spirit-town where nature spirits, both wicked and benevolent, take up the ancient tasks of fishing, sailing, and maintaining the town.

- ◆ **Kafukyuu:** The Widow's Tear has long been considered cursed, ever since a long-past Emperor was assassinated within its walls. This settlement was once known for its illicit delights, catering to the rich by offering all manner of pleasures on the border of the Empire, away from the watchful eyes of the authorities. Both war and flooding devastated this city. Today it is a cesspool of criminals, refugees, bandits and murderers. Those seeking to escape the law often find themselves here. After all, those with too high a price on their heads can always flee into the desert.
- ◆ **Kokudou:** Known as the Black Road, this city has been burned down a number of times, due to fire, war and even the rising of the Great Desert. Each time, it has returned. The number one import of Kokudou is, interestingly, soil. No viable soil exists within miles of this city, so its populace imports it by the cartload. Traders journey here also to collect Kokudou steel, which is only made in this distant settlement. The houses in this city are crafted low to the ground with stone rooftops to protect against frequently occurring sandstorms. The people of the city are likewise low and hard, wearing their loss and hardship like an armor.

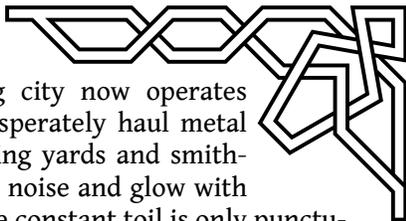
BRIDGE TO BATTLE PROVINCE

This Imperial state is named for its role in the War of the Withered Fangs. It was a major launching point for Izou soldiers to travel into the Triumph District for war. This wide land would be achingly beautiful for most, with its wide beaches, many rivers and shady bamboo forests. However, the province is once again caught up in the throes of war, becoming the center of many of the conflicts between the ninja attacking from the South and the Imperial army from the north.

The Virtuous Body Gardeners hold their main hidden village here, hidden within a bamboo forest of "infinite depth" if the legends are to be believed about the village's enchantments. The Inks find themselves beleaguered on all sides by open warfare. The Emperor's armies strike back from all angles, but they find themselves in the position of fighting several opponents at once.

PROMINENT CITIES

- ◆ **Heiminmu:** Emperor Izou believed "it should be every commoner's dream for the direct enjoyment of his betters." And thus, Heiminmu, or Commoner's Dream,



was born. This mining city now operates around the clock to desperately haul metal from the region. Smelting yards and smithies constantly ring with noise and glow with molten refinements. The constant toil is only punctuated by the moans from the sick or dying – caused by those who suffer from black lung or one of the many mining injuries. Barrack upon barrack of soldiers also stand here, awaiting to move south.

IRON PROVINCE

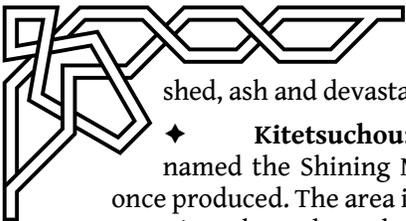
Emperor Izou first conquered the Iron Province as a flanking maneuver during the War of Withered Fangs. By occupying this land and founding Sensoumon (Gate to War), he surrounded the opposing armies in the Triumph Province and won the war. Today, the Ninja Crusade has set the land on edge. As the Empire stretches the limits of its coffers, the populace awaits the day when the Land of Five Blades will reassert itself and take the land back from the Izou. Being ever the combative people, major skirmishes between citizens and the Imperial armies have already broken out.

The Iron Province is bordered on the west by the Aikuchi Mountains, which makes for an impressive skyline. The Aikuchi peaks, ancient and weathered, peer up from the west like gangly old men. Seas of mist gather at the base of this forested range, pooling about their ancient roots. Those who mine in mountains always abide by a series of rituals, carefully paying homage to the myriad of spirits that are said to live here.

The Will of Iron has its most ancient temple in these mountains, hidden by one-dozen mystical spells that allow the temple to disappear from one peak to reappear on another instantly to avoid detection. The clan's influence on this region has seriously waned. It can no longer prevent the open war, which is now spreading in this region.

PROMINENT CITIES

- ◆ **Hotaru no Kouji:** The city of the Firefly's Path earned its name from the magnificent firefly symphonies that gather here in the summer. Ironically, also a city that has burned more than once due to attacks from either the Land of Five Blades, the Recoiling Serpents or the Izou Imperial Army. Constructed from the ashes of numerous battles, brilliant red stone buildings stand high, symbolizing this city's hope for peace. The brilliant, copper-adorned Palace of the Lions stands above all. It is in the Palace of the Lions where representatives from the Land of Seed and Blossom, Land of Five Blades and Izou Empire meet to work out peace and trade agreements. For now, the city remains a single point of quiet surrounded by a sea of blood-



shed, ash and devastation.

◆ **Kitetsuchou:** This vast mining area was named the Shining Metal City for all the iron it once produced. The area is honeycombed with numerous mines throughout the hills. At one time, it was said that a thousand columns of smoke could be seen coming from this one region. A large attack from the Land of Five Blades completely devastated this city, leaving it largely abandoned. Ninja miners now operate here clandestinely, for this region supplies the Lotus Coalition with most of its metal.

TRIUMPH PROVINCE

The Triumph Province is no stranger to war. It is here the battle between the Izou Empire and the Slithering Gods reached its pinnacle with the empire winning, hence the province's name. Today, it has descended back into the throes of war. In this emerald realm, the grass and bamboo grows high, thick jungle dots the land and its swamps drain the life from any who enter. Only steaming rice paddies, shining in the sun, punctuate the vibrant emerald landscape.

The Recoiling Serpents clan maintains power in this region, in a constant state of reasserting itself by lashing out against the Emperor's forces. They hide themselves in the sprawling swamps that dominate the center of the province. Battles between ninja, Imperials, and even mercenaries from the Land of Five Blades take place on a daily basis in this province.

PROMINENT CITIES

- ◆ **Dainiryoku:** This fortress-city was once the Southern Capital for the Izou Empire. Today, it is constantly in the stages of one siege or another. Trenches and pits surround the massive, spiny fortress, making the land around Dainiryoku look like a vision of hell. Every month or so, the siege is broken, but another force or army always returns. Some of the Izou army's greatest fighters trained here, even the infamous Golden Lions and more recently the Silver Blades. Its proximity to Danketsu is not without notice, and the ninja believe that breaking this city and claiming it for the Lotus Coalition could be the first step in winning the war.
- ◆ **Koshinchou:** Sickle City was named for the numerous sickles once found in this trading town. Once a proud trade-center, the warrior-farmers of this settlement used their sickles as both weapons and farm tools. However, years of assault from the War of Withered Fangs has left the fields salted and the buildings burned. Today, it is purely a military outpost, where wounded Imperial soldiers go for care or to move out of the range of battles. Triage here is constant,

CHAPTER SEVEN - LIFE IN THE EMPIRE

as are the moans of the wounded and dying.

- ◆ **Yanuma:** This city is known as Night's Bog, constructed over the ashes of the port that once stood there. Emperor Izou burned the entire city in one night and constructed a new city upon the bones of the old, a constant reminder of his power. In a twist of irony, the Recoiling Serpents re-took the town by flooding it, claiming it with water instead of fire. Today, this ramshackle, devastated town appears to be nothing more than a mass of stilted shacks, standing over muddy water. Yet, it remains a vital strategic point in the southern aspect of the war.

OAK LEAF PROVINCE

This province was given to the Izou Empire when the Land of Seed and Blossom signed its accords with the Emperor himself. As its name implies, this region is filled with towering oaks, whose thick trunks form forests of whispers and shade. As the Izou Empire has faltered, the Land of Seed and Blossom has acted to reassert itself, even reclaiming minor victories and land from this territory.

Danketsu has been settled in the Oak Leaf Province, and the majority of the Bamboo Herbalists have made it their permanent home. They have implemented enchantments to protect the city, causing intruders to become lost in the dim forest of mists.

PROMINENT CITIES

- ◆ **Kiheki:** This community, known as Wooden Wall, is a work of art. The palisades, buildings and bridges are all made from oak logs, which are intricately carved. Built from a specialized wood that will not burn, this city is a hardy fortress. For the past five years, this settlement has fallen back under control of the People of Seed and Blossom. The entire city has been repurposed by their strange culture. The central palace has become home to over a dozen families. Shops have become chicken coops and animal pens. Still, the world's greatest medicine folk congregate here, meaning that people from all over the world arrive here, seeking their healing or wisdom. It is no secret that many of the medicine folk here are Bamboo Herbalists, who are at the center of the medical arts in Kiheki.
- ◆ **Oriki:** The City of Broken Trees was one of the first communities in this region to fall to the Izou. Today, it represents the Emperor's last hold on the province. The buildings here are cobbled together from rubble and ruin. Rows and rows of long stakes stand around the patchwork city, giving the place a porcupine look from the outside.



THE FIVE KINGDOMS

The Ninja Crusade has left its mark on not only the Izou Empire and the ninja who live there, but the surrounding lands must also deal with the consequences and their choices in the face of being conquered. The choices are never black and white, and many lands wonder if they can ever go back to the peace they once enjoyed before the Ninja Crusade and the Empire's expansion. Those who have lived long enough know the answer to that question: there is no going back. There is only trying to make the future a better place than the present.

LAND OF CRASHING WAVES

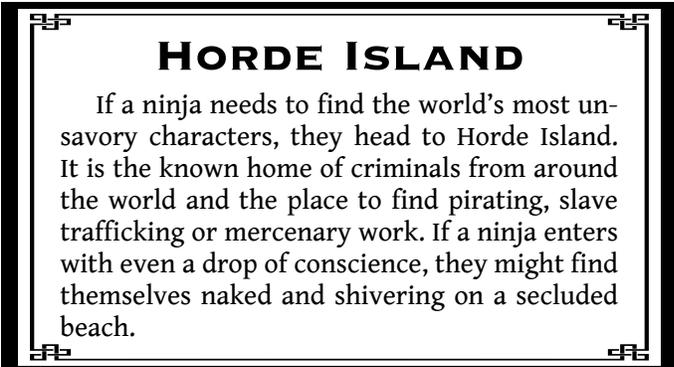
Comprised of a large archipelago, the Land of Crashing Waves lies across the Western Ocean and each island has its own culture and history. Overseeing all the islands is the Island Council located in Risutoa, the unofficial capital of the Land of Crashing Waves. The islands elect representatives to the council, who vote on propositions for the improvement of all who live there.

The Land of Crashing Waves was not always so democratic. Wars lasting centuries between the islands were a normal occurrence until the fateful explosion that created Lake Kansou started the Living Chronicle tradition, and led to the founding of the Council. Even today, old habits die hard, and tensions rule in the political sphere as representatives, advisors and assistants all have their own agendas. Deception and manipulation are the rule of surviving politics there.

The Izou Empire tried many times in the long past to conquer the islands, but the fiery residents backed by a superior navy and numerous pirate vessels, stopped them. The kingdoms were eventually able to join in an alliance and the Land of Crashing Waves still provides soldiers and ships to defend the Empire during the Ninja Crusade, though their resources and patience are growing thin. As the war drags on, the Island Council is less willing to sink their own people and ships for the sake of the Empire's foolhardy efforts.

Pirates turned privateers at the beginning of the Ninja Crusade are raiding the coast in larger numbers and are less likely to turn in the bounty to their bosses. Since their alliance with the Empire protected them from the majority of aggressors, the islands' main conflicts were mostly among themselves. At the start of the Ninja Crusade, these were minor: lobbying, takeovers and bribery, which the leadership handled easily. As resources continue to dwindle, these conflicts are becoming a violent problem that occupies the Council's discussions. It may be only a matter of time before the Land of

CHAPTER SEVEN - LIFE IN THE EMPIRE



HORDE ISLAND

If a ninja needs to find the world's most unsavory characters, they head to Horde Island. It is the known home of criminals from around the world and the place to find pirating, slave trafficking or mercenary work. If a ninja enters with even a drop of conscience, they might find themselves naked and shivering on a secluded beach.

Crashing Waves decides their alliance with the Empire is not worth the cost and focuses on the problems at home.

GRAND LIBRARY

In Risutoa, near the place the Island Council meets, the Grand Library stands. It is the largest collection of written works and preserved bodies in the world. The Library contains everything from ancient court rulings to philosophy, science, literature, humor and everything in between.

The Library that stands now is not the first Grand Library. Many years ago, a great flood destroyed the old library and many of the scrolls inside. The Council made way for the Living Chronicle to form in an effort to preserve the knowledge of the islands. Their order rebuilt the library and used their bodies to preserve history and culture instead of fragile parchment. The few scrolls that survived the flood were copied onto a Living Chronicle ninja and curated as precious artifacts.

In recent years, chronicles of the Ninja Crusade have found their way into the Library's catalogue. Tales of heroism and cowardice are written on Living Chronicle ninja and preserved, especially the tale of the returned Emperor. The Living Chronicle are eager to hear the end of that story and place it in their collection.

LAND OF EXALTED FLAMES

To the east of the Izou Empire is the mysterious Land of Exalted Flame. Their elders indoctrinate them from birth into The Way, the teachings of the great Kasai, a peace-maker and philosopher from millennia ago. These teachings include reverence for one's elders and ancestors and the following of sacred texts that forbid harm to another. They are highly religious, passionately pacifist and believe in being members of a community over individualism, frequently forgoing personal desires for the good of the land. Customs such as arranged marriages are the norm, and dancing, creativity and free will are replaced with The Way. Their leaders are those who have obtained a perfect state of being and make all the decisions for the Land of Exalted Flame. They reside in the capital of Seishin.

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When the Izou Empire sought expansion, they believed the pacifist Land of Exalted Flame would be an easy conquest. At first, they were right. The Empire slaughtered hundreds of thousands of Exalted warrior-monks, leaving the nation only one chance to survive. The most powerful ninja in the Land of Exalted Flame worked together to scorch hundreds of miles of land between them and the Izou Empire. They burned hundreds of war parties and even some of their own settlements in the process. This destroyed land is known as the Great Desert, or the Desert of Black Sand. It is too barren to live on, and too hot to cross without certain death.

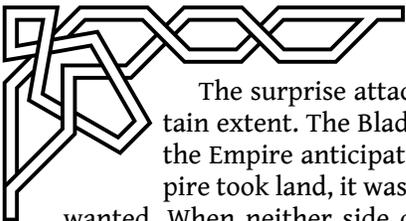
When the Empire attempted to attack them by ship, the ninja created a massive hurricane that still swirls and rages to this day, giving the body of water its name: The Arashi Sea. The animosity between the kingdoms solidified; the Land of Exalted Flame are the only nation to refuse aid to the Empire, and as the war drags on the Exalted Flame feel this was a wise decision. No one has seen much of the Exalted Flame in recent years. Messages from other kingdoms go unanswered and it is near unheard of to see an Exalted Flame ninja or diplomat in the Empire. The Blazing Dancers fled the Land because of their insular attitude and it has only gotten worse. The legendary displays of ki and spirit manipulation the Exalted Flame possess now exist only in stories.

KAEN ISLAND

When an Exalted Flame child comes of age, they make a pilgrimage to the holy land on Kaen Island. They must shed their most prized possessions into the great Kaen Volcano and cement their connection to the kingdom and The Way. This is done without the aid from others and minimal food and water. Their foreheads are marked with ash from the Great Desert where they start their quest. The truly devout travel on their knees, bowing to the island every ten steps.

LAND OF FIVE BLADES

Strength, conviction and warrior culture are hallmarks of the region southwest of the Empire known as the Land of Five Blades. It is a land of seven nation-states rather than a unified kingdom. The largest is in the center and boasts the capital Monotagari. The horizon is dominated by spiraling metal buildings and smoke created by their many factories. It is unlike any other region in the world. The Blades were the first to discover steam power and put it to use, which is what attracted the Empire to attack them in first place. The Empire knew they could not win against the technology of the Blades in a fair fight, so they used secret assassins, scout parties and covert assault squads to take out key locations and incapacitate the Blades.



The surprise attack worked, but only to a certain extent. The Blades were much stronger than the Empire anticipated and even though the Empire took land, it was not the victory the Emperor wanted. When neither side could gain a true advantage and a stalemate was evident, rather than drag out their skirmish, the two sides struck an alliance.

In the early years of the Ninja Crusade, the Blades supplied sources of metal to the Empire to manufacture their guns and other machinery. They also provided dozens of warriors to help the campaign. In exchange for their knowledge and resources, the Blades ensconced their people into the Izou political system. They hoped to use this power to benefit their country, but it has not gone as they had hoped. Over the years, they've lost several of their people to assassination, and even more are being pushed out of their positions or demoted, especially those who are vocal about putting the needs of the Blades above the needs of the Empire. The most powerful in the Land of Five Blades have come up with a plan to put an end to this, but what that might be, nobody knows. Knowing the Five Blades, it may come down to a battle unlike the world has seen so far.

They are a people who follow a strict code of honor and often take part in ceremonial, and occasionally, celebratory battles. This may include fights for the right to marry, to settle disputes or reach adulthood. These duels are rarely to the death and used instead to hone their skills and gain respect. They have a reputation for taking defeat gracefully, but retaliating when necessary and the time is right. This code appeals to Celestial Animals (pg. 167) and makes the Land of Five Blades a haven for many of them.

Recently, a Summoner Skirmish erupted because of the Emperor's search for the ultimate weapon to win the war once and for all. The Blades, of all the nations, took this as a personal affront because of their relationship with the Celestial Animals. They looked down on the Summoners who sold their talents to the Empire against the ninja and the Blades themselves reforged their own connection to the Celestial Animals in order to protect themselves.

Five of the world's greatest sword masters are from the Land of Five Blades, and this fact serves to bolster the land's reputation for battle. Those who wish to seal their own reputation often travel south in hopes of defeating these great swordsmen, but few find a guarantee of anything other than a swift death. The Will of Iron and the other clans who hail from here have mastered some of the most lethal and aggressive jutsu in the world, making them worthy opponents for anyone wishing to test their mettle.

CHAPTER SEVEN - LIFE IN THE EMPIRE *SWORD TOWER*

Legend says the 300-ft. centuries-old Sword Tower is a remnant of the last great battle between rival clans of ninja who wielded the awesome power of the colossal Celestial Animals. The Blades quickly carved a structure out of the giant sword impaled into the ground. They used the metal, imbued with celestial magic, to forge some of the most legendary weapons ever seen.

LAND OF MOUNTAINS AND VALLEYS

The Land of Mountains and Valleys, directly to the north of the Izou Empire, is a place where the gap between rich and poor, clean and dirty, noble and commoner is an impassable canyon. The region once enjoyed unity, but for the past 30 years, civil war has ripped it apart. The Empire sent ambassadors and sentries to assist and gained an alliance with the western portion of the Land of Mountains and Valleys. The West now provides the Empire with saltpeter and other war supplies.

The East, at the beginning of the Crusade, continued their guerrilla attacks against the West. Now, the West has started to fight back as the Ninja Crusade enters its long stretch. It reminds the elders in the region of the first Ninja War against the Orime. Some wonder if this war will turn out the same way.

The war between the East and West started when the Kishin family took over all the business and political interests in the region. The family and their colleagues mined ancient ruins that were supposed to be preserved and spent the money on gaudy tributes to their power. This lasted until a small fishing village named Shori came together and started a rebellion against the family. At the peak of the fighting, powerful Way of the Earth masters created a divide between the East and the West with an artificial mountain, a physical manifestation of their now haunting duality. Both sides blame each other for the country's troubles and neither ever bothered to name the artificial mountain that divides them. Today, the country is still fighting, but the Empire and their battles and their own internal struggles have put a great strain on the kingdom's economy. The gap that separates rich and poor is growing thinner as the economy fails and that scares those in power more than the war itself.

The West has still kept its alliance with the Empire and this has allowed them some advantage in their insular war, because they have the resources of the Empire on their side. They have managed to win more than one major skirmish and hold out hope that they will be able to win a deciding victory soon.

CHAPTER SEVEN - LIFE IN THE EMPIRE

FROZEN WASTELANDS

Beyond the Land of Mountains and Valleys, at the top of the world, are the Frozen Wastelands, a land of ice and snow. Creatures not seen anywhere else parade the tundra, an enticing trophy for skilled hunters. There are also many herbs that only grow in this harsh climate, a worthy journey for any healer. The stars truly seem endless there and, if a ninja can withstand the harsh conditions, it is worth the trek.

LAND OF SEED AND BLOSSOM

At the same time the Empire attacked the Land of Five Blades, they also attacked the Land of Seed and Blossom in the southeast. Unlike the Blades, the Land of Seed and Blossom were not able to hold off the Empire's forces and succumbed in order to prevent their extinction.

Until this time, the region enjoyed peace and the freedom to explore the Untamed Wilds in the east. When the Empire attacked, the Land of Seed and Blossom did not have the artillery of the Blades and could put up only a token fight as the Empire swept through. After they were conquered, the Empire now had more medical aid and extra troops when they could be spared.

An enormous jungle makes up the region and the people in it form a single tribe. There are several self-ruled villages, but they also answer to the Elders. The eldest man and woman in the land travel to the capital, Yuuki, where citizens there grant their every wish and care for them. In return, the Elders become default rulers of the land and their wisdom dictates the actions of the land. When the Ninja Crusade began, the male Elder died and the replace-

ment has been more "war-minded" than the previous one.

In the ten years since, the Land of Seed and Blossom has focused on excursions into the Untamed Wilds in hopes of gaining an advantage over the Empire and forcing them to leave the region. The Elders, in their wisdom, have also decided their resources are too precious to give over to the Empire as they once did and have started finding ways to secretly protect their medicines until they gain the advantage they seek.

The Izou Empire still controls the territory between the Land of Seed and Blossom and the Land of Five Blades. The two nations, however, secretly wage wars on the Hantai Sea in an effort to explore the mysterious Lost Island protected by strange, magical barriers. This competition has gone on for over a century and does not show signs of stopping anytime soon.

The Bamboo Herbalists who hail from the Land of Seed and Blossom are more settled in the Izou Empire and it has been many years since they felt a part of their homeland. Blossom ninja are masters of manipulating their bodies, disease and transformation. These things would be taboo in other places, but not where these ninja came from.

RUINS OF SEISEKI

When a child is born in the Land of Seed and Blossom temple priests implant a birthstone into their forehead. It brings good luck and a personalized understanding of the world. Families would bring their children to the Temple of Seiseki (Birthstones) to perform the ritual, but the Empire destroyed it during their expansion. There were propositions to rebuild the temple, but in the end, the Elders decided to leave the ruins as a memorial. Now, families who once rejoiced at making the journey see the stark reminder of their culture's greatest loss.

UNTAMED WILDS

One of the rare untouched areas of the world not under the control of a nation is now smaller than it once was. Rare flora and fauna still frolic in the natural jungle and the Land of Seed and Blossom still tries to preserve what they can despite their own excursions and hope for an end to the war. However, even the best efforts cannot prevent the effects of years of war. Battles and campaigns have taken their toll on the edges of the land, shrinking what was once a large verdant jungle. Tribes still send their young ones into the Wilds to test their adulthood, but who knows how many species they might have found before the war that are now lost forever.

Isamu rested his hand on his grandson's shoulder to stop him from running into the road. The hard thud of soldiers' feet echoed between the alleyways around them. Thankfully, Mashahiro heeded his grandfather and stopped by his side. They both turned toward the sound, and moments later rows of Izou soldiers marched around the corner. Their faces remained stern and focused as they passed. No one dared move or speak while the soldiers marched.

When the Izou rounded the next corner, the whole road heaved a collective sigh and the unintelligible hum of the market returned. Mashahiro looked up at Isamu with wide eyes.

"Why do they hunt ninja, grandfather?"

The familiar rush of anger that his grandson even knew of such things rose in his chest. He should be playing and going to school. He should not wonder if every adult he met hated and hunted ninja. It was, however, a necessity that he know because their village lay on the road to the city.

"It was not always this way," Isamu answered. He took Masha's hand and continued to walk. Mashahiro was getting to an age where he would not want to hold hands anymore, but for now, Isamu enjoyed the fact he still allowed his grandfather this small pleasure.

"They weren't?"

Isamu smiled. "Years ago, the ninja were friends of the Empire. They were respected as greatly skilled, which they still are. They used their training to help the citizens and the land. Everyone worked together and knew that, in times of trouble, the ninja would help them. The Empire prospered and education was our focus, but then something bad happened."

"What?"

"Patience, Masha."

"Sorry, grandfather."

They wove in and out of the thinning crowd with ease as Isamu continued, but the old man's mind was far away remembering the time before the *Ninja Crusade*. The hustle and bustle of the market died down as they made their way out of the village and into the peaceful farm fields.

"The Emperor's family was killed and he believed the ninja were to blame. That's why his soldiers hunt them now."

Mashahiro's face screwed up as he thought about the story. The pair stopped under the shade of a tree and settled on the grass. Isamu handed Mashahiro the fruit they'd bought as a treat, a rare delicacy these days.

"Do you think ninja killed the Emperor's family, grandfather?"

"I really don't know."

"Will the Emperor ever like the ninja again, grandfather?"

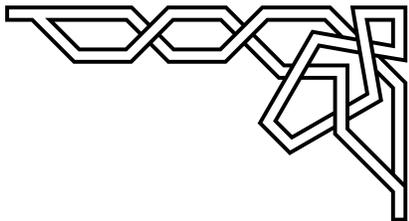
"I hope so, young one."

"You do?"

"Yes, that's why I told you that story, Masha. That's why we tell stories, so when children grow up they will know another way. Maybe when you grow up and become a ninja, you will help bring an even better way to the world."

"I will, grandfather. I promise."

"That's a good boy. Now go practice your katas." Isamu watched the boy finish his fruit and begin to practice. A little bit of hope for the future forming in his chest.



CHAPTER EIGHT

NINJA STORIES

INSPIRATIONS

The world of *The Ninja Crusade 2nd Edition* is very much an amalgamation of different Asian cultures and myths. The Izou Empire is a clear parallel to many Chinese dynasties that have existed throughout time, while ninjas themselves obviously descend from Japanese history and folklore. The Five Kingdoms reflect many amazing stories and legends of Thai, Tibetan and Korean culture as well. Here we combine all of these elements to create a universal, fictional world, which draws influence from each, but is not beholden to any one myth.

There are many things players can do to get in the mood for *The Ninja Crusade 2nd Edition*. One of the main ways to do this is to consume media that pertains to the game and gets everyone in the right mindset. Below are some inspirations for the game, sources one may search out to inspire themselves.

ANIME

Inspiration for the game comes from anime as much as actual Asian cultures. It fills each and every page and inspires the jutsu and various character interactions. Watching any one of these anime should get ideas flowing.

- ◆ *Avatar: The Last Airbender* (2005-2008): A tale of a single boy fated to save the world. Created by Nickelodeon, it is a perfect example of a setting troubled by an ongoing war; and how characters can exist within such a setting without it consuming their spirits. It is often cheery and light, but has moments

of darkness and emotion in it, giving this anime real heart. It displays the true light and dark tales that easily comes to life in *NC2E*.

- ◆ *Basilisk: The Kōga Ninja Scrolls* (2003-2004): While *Ninja Scroll*, as many would agree, was the quintessential ninja anime that crossed into the US years ago, it was also not that creative team's best work. Enter *Basilisk*, a one-season, 24-episode exploration of what clan wars are truly like. It is the story of the Iga and the Kouga, and the bloodshed that ensues once their peace treaty dissolves. It is very graphic and beautifully illustrates what it's like to be a ninja in this game.
- ◆ *Brave 10* (2012): *Basilisk* can be a bit much, especially for younger viewers, but *Brave 10* is a great substitute if this is the case. It tells the story of Isanami, a shrine maiden, Saizou, an Iga ninja and their weird and adorable relationship. Along the way, we run into a number of other ninjas, as everyone is out to get Isanami for some reason (no spoilers). It is a good example of how ninjas from different clans and different walks of life can work together, a great resource for *NC2E*.

MOVIES

There have been a number of fantastic movies released that can definitely be used to spur ideas for *The Ninja Crusade 2nd Edition*. While obvious choices like *Hero* or *House of Flying Daggers* are worthy inspirations, the following were higher on our list.

CHAPTER EIGHT - NINJA STORIES

RANDOM SURNAMES

ROLL	NAME	MEANING
2	Fukui	fortunate
3	Tachibana	wild orange
4	Ikari	anchor
5	Yamamoto	base of the mountain
6	Wakahisa	forever young
7	Akiyama	autumn people
8	Maki	black pine
9	Gushiken	strong willed
10	Nakahara	middle field
11	Kaneko	children wealth
12	Otaki	big waterfall
13	Himura	scarlet village
14	Sakurai	cherry blossom well
15	Inazuma	flash of lightning
16	Amemori	rain forest
17	Umezawa	plum swamp
18	Koizumi	little spring
19	Seki	barrier
20	Oshiro	big castle

◆ **Journey to the West (2013):** It's the story of Sanzang, who wants to be a Buddhist hero but falls for a demon hunter named Miss Duan. Along the way, they face magical foes and eventually meet the Monkey King. It is a great display of how far you can take a martial arts fight, and has some beautiful jutsu displays. There are also some genuine funny and scary moments throughout the movie, again showing off the highs and lows of our setting.

◆ **The Sorcerer and the White Snake (2011):** It is a lovely story, again with many different types of demons, but really shows the dynamic way to choreograph battles of this sort. It tells the story of a monk who tries to save a man from a snake demon with whom he has fallen in love. While well intentioned, this ends up creating more problems than it solves. If players want to insert demons of any type into their game, this is the movie to watch.

◆ **Kung Fu Hustle (2004):** It's the story of the dreaded Axe Gang versus a bunch of retired martial arts masters. It is definitely comical, as it is a Stephen Chow movie, but the martial arts scenes in Kung Fu Hustle are truly without match. Watch this movie, even if you are not going to use it as inspiration for *The Ninja Crusade 2nd Edition*.

NARUTO AND NARUTO: SHIPPUDEN (2002-PRESENT)

From its long-spanning manga to its multi-seasoned anime series to the several movies released to amp up its greatness, Naruto and its follow-up Naruto: Shippuden deserve their own place on the list of inspirations for *The Ninja Crusade 2nd Edition*. It tells the story of a young boy, cursed with a demon inside his soul, who spends a lot of time trying to find his place in the world. He becomes a ninja and uses this to earn legitimacy, meet new friends, learn amazing jutsu and defeat some truly terrifying enemies.

Naruto is more modern than *The Ninja Crusade* in some ways, but in others it is a great parallel for people to get a real sense of the setting. They have ninja wars going on and villages with multiple clans living together within its domain. Naruto skirts the lines between conflicts, easily switching from ninja vs. ninja to village vs. village to country vs. country without blinking. Many of its great tales also include summoning animals from other realms to assist the ninja, a concept NC2E has adopted into the Celestial Animals.

If there were any one anime that could be said to have influenced *The Ninja Crusade 2nd Edition*, it would be the entire Naruto series. Do check it out if you haven't already.

DEVELOPING STORIES

A successful ninja story involves a combination of memorable characters, interesting locations, a plot that keeps the action flowing at a reasonable pace, intense conflict that mixes political and physical warfare, and a conclusion to leave players wanting more. Of course, this type of story takes time to develop, but the deeper players explore their characters and the world, the quicker the group will find their sweet spot for telling stories they care about.

FINE-TUNING CHARACTERS

Players often enter into games with grand ideas for their characters and deep backgrounds that sometimes do not match the numbers on their sheet. It is important, first and foremost, that all players are happy with their final choices for their characters. This may take a session or two, depending on the individual player's understanding of how the rules work. A player may find the Skills they chose to put points into really doesn't work with their concept as well as they thought or think they'd have more fun playing if they switched one of the life-path Choices made during character

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RANDOM NAMES FOR WOMEN

ROLL	NAME	MEANING
2	Naoko	honest child
3	Ayane	iris
4	Chinatsu	thousand summers
5	Rei	bell or lovely
6	Masuyo	benefit to the world
7	Aimi	lovely beauty
8	Ume	plum
9	Tsubaki	camellia flower
10	Kasumi	mist
11	Suzume	sparrow
12	Hoshi	star
13	Yuuko	abundant child
14	Shiori	bookmark
15	Setsuko	melody child
16	Yasu	peaceful
17	Takara	treasure
18	Shinju	pearl
19	Haruka	distant
20	Kokoro	heart, spirit

RANDOM NAMES FOR MEN

ROLL	NAME	MEANING
2	Michi	path
3	Yori	trust
4	Noboru	rise, ascend
5	Itsuki	tree
6	Aoi	blue
7	Kouta	big peace
8	Haru	sun or spring
9	Osamu	discipline, study
10	Katsu	victory
11	Gorou	fifth son
12	Arata	fresh, new
13	Yuudai	great hero
14	Hayate	smooth
15	Ryuu	dragon
16	Takashi	warrior
17	Kiyoshi	pure
18	Hikaru	light, radiance
19	Katashi	hard
20	Taichi	big one

creation. Game familiarity makes things easier overall, but may especially illuminate any player to issues like this.

The GM should allow for slight tweaks to a character in the beginning stages, even if this is just in the player's mind-set behind their character. Maybe they aren't that legendary warrior they wanted to be, but they are certainly on their way toward that goal. They can alternatively give all players a few extra XP to spend to make their characters slightly better.

EXTRAS

Creating interesting people for players' characters to interact with is very important. These people are called Extras, and include any character controlled by the GM, such as the master of their clan, warriors they fight beside, shop owners they try to haggle with or even soldiers they assassinate. Extras are there for a reason, but come in different varieties. Minor Extras are fleeting, for instance. The characters may stop to ask a guard a question, but it's not important to know that guard's entire backstory. They'll answer the question (or not) and then move on. A simple name and a quick personality type is often all that's needed in these cases. In the same category, seldom do ninja even need the name of a random

bandit they slay for trying to rob them.

Crucial Extras, however, are those who are important to the story. They should be fleshed out as much as (or close to) players' characters, with their own backgrounds, Triggers and quirks. The GM should first establish what role the Extra would take and the purpose they serve in the story. They could be an honored mentor for the group who gives direction when needed or a tricky enemy who keeps eluding the ninja no matter how hard they try to defeat her. Each character also comes with two Contacts (pg. 65), an Ally and a Rival, which the GM can use as their first crucial Extras. Together with the GM, they should come up with that contact's appearance, sentiments toward ninja, personality quirks and special abilities to fit the theme of the Extra and their relationship to the character.

Many of the greatest stories of all time come from protagonists hurdling through the challenges set forth by a great reoccurring enemy. These types of Extras are better crafted organically, instead of being forced on the players, and are even better if they have no idea who the enemy is until the bitter end. Often times it is an enemy the players thought they killed a long time ago, showing their face again, but coming back more



powerful and clever. Dealing with this kind of threat and seeing what the enemy has up their sleeve this time becomes part of the fun of these kinds of Extras.

No matter how tempting it is for a GM to create the coolest Extras with badass abilities or mysterious origins, only the players' characters really matter in the end. They are the story. Period. It is perfectly fine to have events happening in the background, but they should only come into play in as much as they affect the characters.

SETTING

The world of *The Ninja Crusade 2nd Edition* is vast and spans multiple provinces within the Empire and several countries known as the Five Kingdoms. Many groups spend their time gallivanting from important location to grand scenery, making the Life in the Empire chapter (pg. 183) extra fun for them. Other groups take a more homegrown approach and spend time figuring out what their home villages are like instead, since they'll be spending the majority of their time there, solving problems and enjoying downtime.

Their chosen location speaks to many of the themes they'll be exploring. For instance, villages within the Bridge to Battle Province are war torn and filled with Imperial forts, but may have areas where potential alliances can be forged with rebels within these populations. Those in the Middle province will be frequented

by Imperial regiments on their way to and from battle, but is also much wealthier than other provinces. Living in the Bridge to the World Province may mean more political drama for the group, as well as visiting emissaries from other countries becoming involved in their affairs. Whether they reside in a public village or a hidden village is also a big question to be answered. On top of all of this, questions like population size vs. village size, whether a single clan dominates the area and the general mood of the population can help mold a setting quickly. The GM should discuss these things with their group before play begins and create Extras to fill the locations as needed.

Danketsu is always an option of a place to start characters if detailing a home village is not something the group wants to do. It is set up rather nicely to allow characters to hail from any clan and still have the opportunity to live alongside each other. See pg. 20 for more information on Danketsu.

PLOT

A plot is a series of Scenes that tell a cohesive story the players get to play through. It is very much like the group is collectively co-authoring a novel or filming a movie in their minds, with all the events leading toward one of many different conclusions. It's not the end of the characters, but for that specific story. Future stories become sequels or even prequels and help players learn more about the ongoing,

CHAPTER EIGHT - NINJA STORIES

changing world and the characters themselves. These stories may take different forms, depending on the makeup of the players and the type of games they are playing.

MISSION BASED PLOTS

These types of plots are usually the most straightforward; the characters receive a task they must complete, usually against a time limit or an enemy who will cause problems for them along the way. Mission-based plots usually follow the same phases:

- ◆ **Planning:** How do the characters think they want to handle the situation?
- ◆ **Travel:** They must then get to where they need to be, which can often be an adventure unto itself.
- ◆ **Execution:** Things go according to plan maybe 10% of the time.

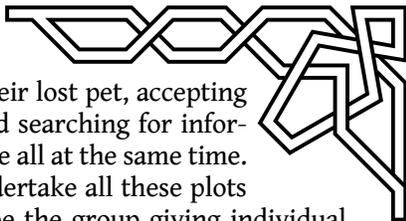
There is a famous military saying from German strategist Helmuth von Moltke that states “No battle plan survives contact with the enemy,” and nothing could be closer to the truth in *NC2E*. If everything went exactly the way the characters wanted it to, then there’s no need to play the game. Roleplaying choices, the randomization brought in by dice and the ability to call on Gifts and Triggers to interact with Scenes makes it interesting and dramatic to attempt high-stakes missions with the possibility of outright failure, or at least success at a major cost to the characters.

Even though GMs may want these plots to be as linear as possible, there is a difference between linear and taking away player choice. Just as the characters’ plans seldom fall into place so easily, neither will the GM’s plot survive contact with the players’ ideas and creativity. Some GMs become aggressive dictators over their games, while others may take an adversarial role of GM vs. players. These are actively discouraged when playing *The Ninja Crusade 2nd Edition*. Yes, GM generally stands for “Game Master,” a title worthy of someone who creates and becomes an entire world. However, try thinking about it as the “Game Motivator” or “Game Mentor” instead, since these terms are actually closer to the truth. It’s the GM’s job to direct the action, plots and stories, but players have the real control of the game’s direction. The GM controls the world, but they do not (and should not try to) control the characters.

SANDBOX PLOTS

A popular term in RPGs, sandbox games are literally where the GM drops the players in the middle of one of many different stories going on around them. The players then make the choice, through roleplay, of which story their characters are most interested in engaging. This is a good starting point for groups familiar with the established *Ninja Crusade* setting, who can add in their own elements on the fly.

It also involves the possibility of bouncing between responsibilities. This could include orchestrating a political

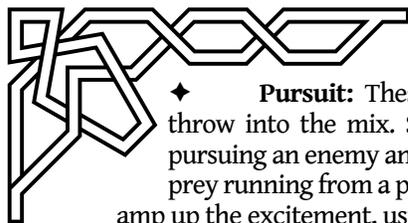


coup, helping a child find their lost pet, accepting a mission to find a killer and searching for information about a lost technique all at the same time. A single character could undertake all these plots simultaneously or it could be the group giving individual characters a spotlight during the session to pursue their plot before switching to another’s. It can be tricky and cost a lot of energy to manage multiple plot lines, so it is suggested the GM, or someone in the group, keep detailed notes to follow all the threads to their eventual conclusion when the time is right.

PACING

Now that a plot has been written, it’s up to the group to decide how fast they proceed along the path to the end. It’s the GM’s job to keep it from being too fast or too slow. A helpful tip when pacing a story is to vary up the types of Scenes as much as possible. There are a number of different Scene types to pick from:

- ◆ **Battle:** A common scene type, especially in a game about ninja, Battles flow through the world like water. They require everyone’s attention and lots of dice rolling as well. Too many Battle Scenes and the game is just a non-stop grind until the end, which can become very boring. Too few Battles will have players itchy to use their awesome abilities in any reasonable fashion.
- ◆ **Exposition:** Sometimes GMs need to get information to their players quickly, but an info dump isn’t nearly as fun as it sounds. A quick meeting with a higher-ranking ninja is an easy way to deliver said info, but creative GMs can also create actual props like books or scrolls to hand to their players to get this information. Exposition Scenes serve a purpose, but overuse of them can bore players to tears.
- ◆ **Intrigue:** Intrigue Scenes vary wildly, but usually involve interaction with Extras in hopes of creating conflict or drama. This could be a Scene of someone seducing their way into a charity ball, gaining knowledge of the enemy’s plan to them in a discreet setting. Alternatively, perhaps an unexpected visitor shows up who causes trouble or a reversal of expectations that surprises both the players and their characters. Too many Intrigue Scenes makes intrigue old hat, which it should never be. It is best placed in the middle of seemingly mundane Scenes to increase drama.
- ◆ **Investigation:** Information gathering is very important. This could be anything from researching a vast library, interrogating a prisoner or searching a crime scene. These Scenes are often procedural and can be solved with a few checks for the most part. They are good for preparing for the next Scene; the characters have dug up dirt to be used in the next Intrigue Scene or the location of the enemy to push forward the next Battle Scene.



◆ **Pursuit:** These are a fun type of Scene to throw into the mix. Sometimes the characters are pursuing an enemy and other times they become the prey running from a predator. This kind of Scene can amp up the excitement, usually ending in either a resting Scene or a Battle (depending on how well they did).

◆ **Rest:** Not every Scene needs to be high energy. Sometimes, the characters are at rest, whether camping under the stars or sharing a day at the bathhouses. These Scenes are great for character interaction, as they share stories and experiences with each other to gain a better understanding of each others personalities and quirks.

◆ **Transitions:** Most Transition Scenes can be left out entirely as the players move from one Scene to another. On the other hand, if part of the plot is traveling through rival ninja lands or known Imperial training grounds, then getting to their location becomes a challenge and worthy of a Scene. These should be used sparingly, however.

Groups that like lots of fights may have every other Scene be a Battle Scene, interspersed with other types. Other groups, who want to explore their characters more in depth, may have more Rest, Investigation or Intrigue Scenes, with only a couple Battle Scenes for flavor. Every group is different, so having a frank discussion before play begins about expectations can help ensure everyone has fun during the game.

CONFLICT

Conflict drives the story and gives characters a reason to keep pushing forward. At times, this conflict will be the ultimate battle between the group and their sworn enemy, but not all conflict is so easily defined with a Battle. Sometimes the conflict may involve moral dilemmas a character may have to make. Do they save the villagers currently under attack by raiders or protect the gates to stop others from storming in afterward. Likewise, surviving the elements or clashes of personality (especially with other players' characters) lend to great conflicts.

When conflict arises, it's important to figure out the stakes of winning and losing. Obviously, losing in a standard Battle brings the possibility of death or dismemberment no character wants to endure. What if this Battle is against a rival, instead of an outright enemy? This obviously changes the stakes from life and death to a scale of reputation and embarrassment. The higher the stakes, the more the characters want to win, but having every situation come down to life or death takes away from the story as a whole. Good conflict comes at different levels, eventually culminating in a satisfying conclusion.

CONCLUSION

The final Scene of a story is its climax and leads players to the final conclusion. This can be a

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final climactic battle against an undeniable force or maybe an epiphany that the power they sought had been inside them all along. That is not the true end, however.

The setting must now be shaped by the characters' decisions. If they traverse worlds, save innocents, piss off their enemies or conquer grand armies, the world and people around them should change to reflect these choices. After all, characters are given XP for personal change, so their world should change accordingly as well. No player wants a game where nothing they do actually "matters." Extras' opinions of them could have bettered or worsened during the course of the story, as well as the characters' reputations, which could spread. Did they pick up any new contacts or allies along the way, or did they discover information that would inform the most likely starting point for their next story?

The end is never truly the end. Characters can and should continue on to new stories and adventures, each time bringing more personal growth and understanding of their world.

TYPES OF NINJA STORIES

NINJA IN TRAINING

All stories must start somewhere, so why not start at the beginning. The time spent between initiation into a clan and the final step into being a full-fledged ninja is a great place to start a game. Sure, a character's start could be explained in a brief summary or a single Prelude session, but this gives the players a greater chance to really grow into their characters' thoughts and personalities.

This type of story is also good for starting GMs and beginning players. It allows the group to grow into understanding the game, and how their characters interact together. Even seasoned players may find playing through their characters' student years is a refreshing start to a new campaign. This allows the players to focus on their characters' lives and events important to their development while the war rages outside their secluded village.

Student stories allow a bit of a collaborative setting design in which players act out the roles of each other's rivals and competition as they grow. The events that happen to a ninja as a student shape not only how they view the world, but also how they react to specific events. It's one thing to write into a backstory that as a student, a ninja's village suffered an attack where there was nothing they could do. It's completely another to play through that fight and watch as characters they have grown attached to fall to the enemy's sword.

Training stories can take on several different forms, and there's no right way to do it. Some GMs prefer to make the story a complete arc from beginning to end focused on the character. Another may want to run each session as a different key point in the characters' training and advancement.



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Others still may focus on a single character, with other players taking on the roles of mentors and fellow students, and swapping between characters each session until all characters are together to start a different chronicle.

Note: GMs may want to start characters less powerful than average starting characters. The player chooses an Element for the character normally, but skips Professions (they are too young or disinterested in a practical trade), Tragedies (their life has seen no hardship yet) or Forge (they have been sheltered from the war and have taken no part). When choosing their Clan, they select no Contacts and create only one Bond, as the others will develop naturally through play. During Step Six: Temple, they receive only one level of Martial Training, one Skill specialty and only 3 skill points to spend. For Step Seven: Sky, they receive only 4 points to spend and may not select Advanced level jutsu. Ronin receive only 3 points.

STORY HOOKS

- ◆ **Final Test:** The very last mission a student must go through is often the hardest, designed to test the mettle of the student and allow the master to determine if they are ready to become full-fledged ninja. This test is different for each clan or if they hail from Danketsu, but often requires the use of both social and physical skills.
- ◆ **Messenger:** Few clans trust birds or other animals to carry important messages, fearing the Emperor's spies will intercept them. Instead, they send their students with messages and items all across the Empire.
- ◆ **Friendly Competition:** The best way for students to learn is to test their mettle against each other. The students have all been given the same task to complete. Whoever finishes first wins their mentor's favor and advances in their studies. There's a catch though, because finishing first is not always a matter of finishing fastest.

CLANS AT WAR

The Ninja Crusade has taken its toll on the ninja, just like the rest of the Empire. While the Lotus Coalition is stronger now than it's ever been in the past, some grudges never go away. Once the clans warred against each other openly, but the Emperor's most recent attacks have forced the clans to band together as allies to survive. This doesn't mean the bad blood between clans no longer exists. While in public, the Recoiling Serpents and Pack of the Black Moon may speak of working together, but in the shadows their animosities continue. Assassinations in the night, intercepted messages, false information and secret duels now rule the clan interactions.

Stories focused on the shadow wars between clans allow the players to focus on delving into the world of the clans and how they interact with each other. The Ninja Crusade and

the war become secondary concerns to the characters as they attempt to bring honor to their clans through the downfall of others. This gives them an opportunity to gain a strong sense of their role in their clan and how ninja advance within the clan's ranks.

These stories tend to take place in a single city or village. Age-old animosity and rivalries are not lost in a single night, despite whatever damage the Emperor might have inflicted on the hidden villages. Now, instead of an entire village openly at odds with another, members of those clans must live in cities together, working to undermine the other. Some hidden villages are still out there, and those hold a certain amount of power and safe haven, allowing clans the luxury of more open hostilities.

STORY HOOKS

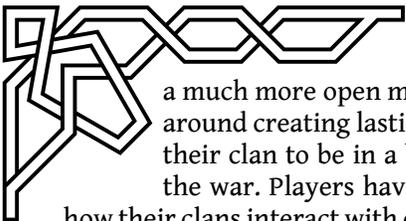
- ◆ **Assassinations:** Sometimes clans do not have the luxury of setting up a duel to settle a dispute or resolve an insult. Sometimes particular members of a clan must be dealt with, and open war is no longer an option. Many clans have resorted to assassinations. This type of mission is rife with dangers, as leaving evidence of which clan is responsible for the act could spell disaster for the clan.
- ◆ **Sabotage:** Clans working in the same city must appear to be on good terms. Few townships are friendly to ninja anymore, and those that are do not want to deal with the trouble of warring clans. Therefore, the ninja work to undermine each other's efforts. Characters are given missions to thwart or otherwise sabotage another clan's plans.
- ◆ **Secret Duels:** When back and forth exchanges between clans escalate to the point where only blood can satisfy the honor of the clan, a duel is in order. Instead of happening in the open, these are set up in secret locations with exclusive invitations. Great honor can be found in these exhibitions, and not only for the combatants. Those who attend are always on the lookout for ways to exploit their enemy's weaknesses.

CLAN POLITICS

Not all interactions between clans fall into two neat categories of friends or enemies. Many clans have grudging alliances through the Lotus Coalition, but that doesn't mean they aren't taking notes for later. On the surface, these clans say they are putting aside old grudges, but even in public they politic with one another to gain the upper hand. Clan interactions in the public arena have become elaborate shows of compliment and insult aimed at just the right time and towards the right ears. While shadow wars rage behind the scenes, politics rage out in the open.

Stories about clan politics allow the players to explore how the clans interact with each other in

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a much more open manner. These stories revolve around creating lasting alliances, or jockeying for their clan to be in a better position at the end of the war. Players have the opportunity to change

how their clans interact with each other, dealing in secrets and fulfilling promises for their clans. The Ninja Crusade is a secondary concern for the characters, who are tasked with missions directly relating to their clans interests.

These stories are usually centered in a single location. The neutral city of Danketsu is an excellent setting for this kind of story, as many of the clans are represented there. An entire campaign may revolve around a single goal — secure an alliance with the Blazing Dancers in the shadow war against the Recoiling Serpents. Or the GM may set the characters along a series of missions to increase the clan's status amongst the other clans.

STORY HOOKS

- ◆ **Diplomatic Envoy:** Not all clan interactions are negative. Some clans naturally work well together and formalizing alliances is just as important as subverting an enemy. Some clans rely on maintaining a neutral status, but gaining any favor with those clans would be seen as a major boon.
- ◆ **Espionage:** A common mission for ninja is to follow an enemy around, tracking their every move. Sometimes this requires disguising themselves to fit into the crowd. Other times this means paying off members of their target's trusted retinue or guards. That is, if they can get close enough. When the target is another ninja, this can often be difficult, as they are trained to notice ninja tricks. Espionage between clans is careful and dangerous work.
- ◆ **Political Coup:** The ninja of the Coalition do not follow orders from each other, though they do respect each other enough to listen to advice. Of course, whose advice is worth respecting or not is always a matter for debate. If a clan's honor is smudged or they gain too many enemies, then their political power within the Lotus Coalition is diminished.

THE FRONT LINE

The most common type of story is one at the front line of the Ninja Crusade. The land is in disarray, recovery is slow, and ninja must still fight the seemingly overwhelming force of the Izou Empire, which has the advantage of guns. The ninja still have their jutsu to fight against them.

This kind of story is a great place for having a mix of ninja from different clans. The true strategy behind the Lotus Coalition was to break the Izou Empire's expectations with a mix of different clans and jutsu. Now, the clans must work together as the Empire

has ravaged and destroyed their hidden villages, and left their people destitute. Even with clan rivalries, the characters must learn to work together as a team to defeat the Empire.

The Izou Army is a large force of trained men and women. Regardless of how powerful the jutsu at a ninja's command, a small squad of ninja cannot face an entire army head on. The ninja must use guerrilla tactics against the Empire if they hope to win. These stories take place in various locations as the ninja force the Empire's units into skirmishes with them. The characters must perform missions to thwart a force, disrupt supply lines, reclaim hidden villages from Imperial occupation, or to retrieve necessary supplies for the other ninja who are fighting.

The GM is urged to consider an end goal for this kind of story. The actions of a single squad of ninja may not win the war, but the tide of the war may be changed by their actions. Have a particular goal in mind, such as forcing the Empire out of a specific territory or rebuilding key hidden villages in certain areas to ensure the training of new ninja for the war.

STORY HOOKS

- ◆ **Coordinated Strike:** The Izou Army is moving through the territory, but their rear guard is stretching thin. The characters have an opportunity to strike and separate this unit from the main force, weakening the rest of the Legion in the process.
- ◆ **Relief Efforts:** A hidden village is under attack by the Izou Army. The ninja inside have been under siege and are in serious need of supplies and aid if they are going to beat back the Empire's forces. The characters must sneak supplies into the village and then help the ninja inside to fight back against the forces.
- ◆ **Defense:** The Izou Army is reported to be marching on the hidden village within the week. The ninja are sent out to forestall the army and give the village enough time to set up defenses. They must lure the army around for at least two extra days, but if they succeed, what is waiting for the army back at the village is sure to destroy them.

IMPERIAL INTRIGUE

The war against the Empire is not always fought on a battlefield or with weapons. The clans must also gain information about the Empire, its plans and movements, if it has any hope to stave off the Izou Army. Ninja routinely risk their lives by infiltrating the ranks of the Empire to learn important information and send it back to their clans.

These stories take place all over. The characters may need to infiltrate the Izou Army, following it through territories and reporting its movements back to their clans.

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They may be tasked with going directly to the Imperial Palace and getting close to important nobles. These dangerous missions require the characters to watch what they do and say at all times to ensure their lies are not discovered.

Like on the front lines, the make-up of characters in this kind of story come from different ninja clans. Different clans excel at different things, making the right combination important for a successful infiltration or information gathering mission.

To make this kind of story even more challenging or exciting, different clans may have different goals for their ninja while infiltrating the Izou Empire. These conflicting goals are often secondary to whatever main goal the mission entails, but the characters are expected to fulfill their individual clan goals, even if they conflict. The Grasping Shadows may want an important noble assassinated, while the Living Chronicle may want that same person interrogated. While both goals can be accomplished, if the characters choose not to discuss their actions beforehand, the result could be that one or the other misses their chance.

STORY HOOKS

- ◆ **Infiltration:** The characters are tasked with infiltrating an important noble family's household. They must come up with a plan for getting into the stronghold and setting up their new identities. Once inside, they are to report on what the family is doing to help the Emperor.

- ◆ **Watching Troop Movements:** The characters must act as forward scouts for the Lotus Coalition so that they have up to date information on where the Izou Army is moving. However, they aren't just supposed to watch from the sidelines. The only way to really know where they are going and what they are planning is to fall in line with the army and hope no one notices them.
- ◆ **False Truths:** The Emperor is still looking for information about hidden villages and where the ninja are hiding. The characters are charged with feeding the Izou spies false information to foil their plans. They must find ways to get this information to the spies in ways that seem believable. What's more, they must find out who these spies are and ensure they don't find out the truth in the meantime.

HERO'S JOURNEY

Not all stories in Ninja Crusade require a group of characters to tell. Indeed, some of the most compelling stories are those of a single lone hero wandering the world and doing good deeds. Sometimes ninja need time for self-discovery, or to build a name for themselves.

This kind of story usually only needs the GM and a single player to play through. The player has an opportunity to



STORY TRICKS

There are a number of great ways to enhance any story, and a GM only gets better at it the more games they are able to play. Players, likewise, become more comfortable in their characters as time goes on, making it easier to get together to play more often. This means, however, that GMs need to keep their game-running skills as primed as possible, and we've compiled some story tricks you can use to push a story forward.

USING GIFTS

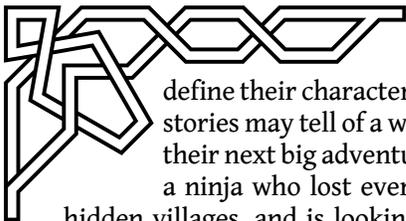
More mechanically minded players select their Gifts during character creation with purely utilitarian logic. However, each of those Choices that gave their character a Gift, also provided an important roleplaying cue to help provide context for how they'll interact with a Scene. There is no reason to have characters all meet in the proverbial bar at the beginning of the game, when they have so many ways they can be connected to the goings-on of a story.

If a child has been kidnapped, there are many reasons a character may accept the contract to find them. An Honorable character (pg. 51) may see this as a coward's ploy and seek to quell the dishonorable one. An Altruist (pg. 53) may not be able to help themselves from attempting to save the kid. An Escapist (pg. 58) may relate to what it's like to be confined and want to free the child from a prison they knew once before. Likewise, a Diplomat (pg. 61) may self-servingly see the child as a bargaining chip with the child's family to garner favor. Whatever the case, all characters should have a stake in what is going on, even if it is to make sure their squadmate stays safe during the story.

USING TRIGGERS

The flip side of Gifts is the potential Triggers each character gains. Many of them are left purposely vague, allowing them to be used in a variety of situations. Like the different Scene types discussed earlier, however, overuse of Triggers (especially the same ones again and again) can be a drain on the story's fun. Think about what Triggers represent: the weakness of the character. It is fun to explore these weaknesses from time to time, but if the characters show a constant streak of weakness all the time, always giving in to their instincts with no chance to be intelligent or brave, it can frustrate the players.

When used properly, a single Scene shouldn't have more than two to three total Trigger uses. More than that and the game can get derailed quite easily. These can be activated by the player who owns the Trigger, if it fits the Scene, or by the GM. Either the player or the GM can also refuse to use a Trigger at any time if it really doesn't fit the Scene or if its use would derail the story too much. An example would be during an interrogation, where the player may say they want

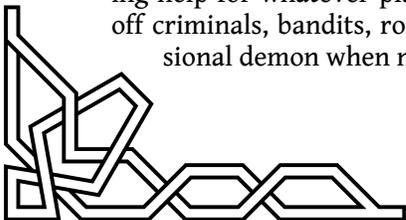


define their character through their journey. Some stories may tell of a wandering Ronin searching for their next big adventure. Another story may follow a ninja who lost everything in the attacks on the hidden villages, and is looking for a new purpose in their life. Still yet another story may follow an older ninja who has decided it is time to contemplate what their life has meant until this point. If multiple characters have shared a similar history, they may all be looking for the same thing, allowing for multiple players, but no more than three.

The war between the great ninja clans and the Izou Empire touches everyone's life, but to different degrees. Those who wander in small numbers are capable of easily evading the Empire's forces and can mostly ignore the war. The hero's journey is a story of self-discovery and personal growth, not of bringing about the end of the war or defeating the Empire. That's not to say the story will not intersect with the Ninja Crusade at times, as great personal growth and conflict can come from helping those in need or attempting to save someone.

Much of what a character goes through should be hard choices with definite consequences. GMs should consider creating scenarios that challenge the character's long held beliefs and help define new beliefs in the process. These stories are great on their own, but also work well as a prelude to a greater campaign story in which the character eventually meets up with others. This kind of story also works well as an interlude between larger campaigns in which characters go their separate ways for a while to change and grow.

STORY HOOKS

- ◆ **The Exile:** The ninja was once a member of one of the great ninja clans, but has been exiled. Now, the ninja must make their way on their own without the backing and family support they are used to having. They must discover how to live on their own and how to exist without a clan.
 - ◆ **Lost Hero:** The ninja has been separated from their family and clan. They do not know the status of the war, but they do know that they must reunite with their family. They follow in the wake of the Izou Army, looking for evidence or signs, but instead find grief and people who desperately need their help.
 - ◆ **Ronin:** Being clanless has always been a state of life for the character. They care nothing about the war, other than it causes pain and suffering for those who don't deserve it. They go from village to village offering help for whatever plagues the people. They fight off criminals, bandits, rogue ninja, or even the occasional demon when necessary.
- 

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to activate their Loquacious Trigger of blurting out secrets at the wrong time. The GM has the right to refuse the Trigger, either because it doesn't quite fit the Scene in the first place or because keeping the secret is central to the conflict of the Scene. The GM may also give in to the Trigger and follow the Scene to its logical conclusion.

Using Triggers to create tension between players' characters is a great tool, but it should never be used to disrupt the group overall. There may be slights against one another or strain put on the group, but outright hurting other characters or their personal stories should be avoided. A Recoiling Serpent activating their Trigger (pg. 39) on an Extra who called them a name, which then leads to the group being run out of town is one thing. Using it as an excuse to kill an Extra who is special to another character is quite another.

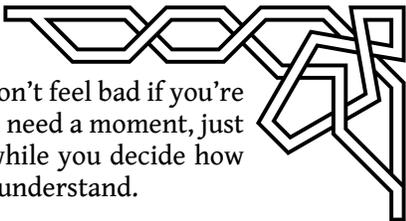
DOWNTIME

Downtime is otherwise known as the time that passes between two stories, where characters aren't pursuing any active goal or mission. This is where the majority of XP is spent, yes, but there is no need for this time to be boring. GMs should ask each player what they did during their downtime before beginning another story. This allows the player to come up with almost anything their character is capable of doing, usually reflected by where they spent their XP. One player may jot down a new Ally and say, "I spent time to get to know Akako better. I think the beginnings of love may be in the air," while another player raises their Survival and Fortitude Skill and says, "My character went out into the woods for one month straight, surviving on his own and braving the elements." Some GMs may even award additional XP for players who want to write out their downtime adventures for everyone to enjoy. It's a useful tool for any GM, as downtime can usually clue them in to where the players would like the story to head.

HAVE FUN!

It is the GM's privilege to craft a story they and their players will all enjoy, and any game should be played with the intent of having fun above all else. The moment that creating the story and setting becomes a chore, or that players stop having fun, is the moment the game falters. If this feeling strikes, take a break (perhaps go for a food run) and regain your bearings. Everyone will have more fun if the GM is focused and having fun as well.

Bottom line: Having fun is what it's all about. Even a totally intricate story, full of twists, turns and mystery needs to take a backseat if the players are not having fun. The players may be in the mood for a fight or for a moment of character interaction. The story could be focusing too much on plot and not enough on the ninja themselves. As the GM, it's helpful to be able to change course on the fly, maybe inserting a Scene type they haven't had in a while.



This is a learned ability, so don't feel bad if you're not great at it to start. If you need a moment, just call for a 15-minute break while you decide how to proceed. The players will understand.

IMMERSION

There is nothing better than having a gaming group fully invested in the ongoing plots and stories being told around the table. A clever GM can utilize a few different things to help with his or her players' immersion level.

BE DESCRIPTIVE, NOT DEFINITIVE

One of the GM's roles is to filter descriptive information in the best way to create mood and feeling. When players enter a new Scene, describe the environment and other Extras they may encounter, but be sure to leave out exacts and avoid being too definitive. Compare these two descriptions of the same Scene:

"You arrive at a temple, where you see your Living Chronicle contact praying."

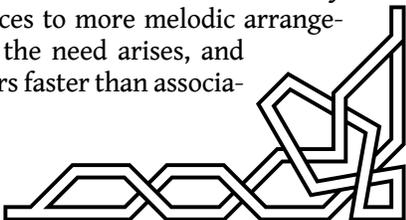
vs.

"You enter a simple temple with dragons carved into many of its banisters. You notice a minor crack in its infrastructure, speaking to its age. Inside, most of the prayer mats are empty and the temple doesn't look like it's been tidied in weeks. The lights flicker from candles lit along the walls and the smell of incense permeates the room. There's a man meditating silently in the middle of the room. He has words tattooed all along his arms and sides, and has stubble on his face as if he's been meditating for days."

Several elements are missing from the first example. It doesn't evoke emotion or imagery, and the Extra is defined much too quickly. The second description uses the imagery of "words tattooed" to make the characters assume it is a member of the Living Chronicle. The GM then has the option to introduce a Codex, a ninja from a different clan with similar tattoos, someone disguised as a Living Chronicle or even someone with a botched tattoo job. Being descriptive keeps mystery alive and makes things more interesting.

USING MUSIC AND LIGHTING

GMs are encouraged to have a soundtrack playing in the background as players game. This can help to really set the stage with the proper planning of which pieces of music to play during specific Scenes. Clever GMs will have a way to switch between faster pieces to more melodic arrangements (or vice versa) when the need arises, and nothing helps immerse players faster than associative sound.



Likewise, setting the mood with proper use of lighting can be quite beneficial for any story. If the characters are having a private meeting with a contact late at night in a shady corner of the city, the GM can dim the lights to help heighten the Scene. Likewise, turning the lights on, bright and loud, the moment their meeting is interrupted by assassins pushes this technique ever further.

HONORIFICS

One piece of immersing players into an Asian world is to begin using honorifics with their characters' names. In reality, not using honorifics, such as *-san* or *-sama*, is a declaration of either extreme familiarity or complete indifference to the person being addressed. This would create a host of issues if improperly addressing a daimyo or higher-ranking ninja. Below are some common Japanese honorifics used when referring to someone.

- ◆ **Chan:** This honorific translates roughly to “cute” and means the speaker finds a person endearing. It can be used for babies, children, grandparents, animals, lovers or even between friends, but never to a superior.
- ◆ **Dono:** Roughly translates to “lord” or “master,” but does not denote noble status. It is below *-sama* in the level of respect.
- ◆ **Kun:** This honorific is multi-faceted. It is often used by someone in senior status to address someone of junior status, when referring to children, or teens or among close, personal friends. It can also be used to refer to someone the character has a strong emotional attachment for.
- ◆ **Sama:** A more respectful version of *-san*, *-sama* is used for people of higher rank or who are older than oneself, as well as guests or those the person greatly admires.
- ◆ **San:** Roughly equivalent to titles like Mr., Mrs., Miss, or Ms., *-san* is the most commonplace honorific, used typically between equals of any age.
- ◆ **Senpai:** Used to address one's senior, respected colleagues in a school, dojo, clan or club. *-senpai* denotes the person has more experience and is of higher rank than the speaker, but is not their teacher.
- ◆ **Sensei:** This honorific is used to address and show respect to teachers (most commonplace), doctors, politicians and other authority figures, especially if they have achieved mastery of a particular art or skill.

PLAYING AS EXTRAS

There will be times when the characters split ways temporarily to perform solo missions, execute their part of a strategy or possibly to handle personal business. This means the other characters won't be making an appearance in the Scene, but there's no reason why



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the other players should sit around twiddling their thumbs. Instead of the GM assuming the role of every other character in the Scene, they may assign certain Extras to the players whose characters are not in the Scene. This should be accompanied with a personality type and a goal. Maybe the player has to play “a surly guard, who can’t let the character into the party but is so tired of dealing with nobles,” or “the character’s wife who is happy most of the time, but has found out a secret she just has to reveal.” This ensures everyone is having fun, and also adds a satisfying feeling of players helping another player’s concepts come to life.

PLAYING WITH TIME

Anyone who has watched anime knows they are seldom linear in their storytelling. There are many ways to use the passage of time to enhance a story throughout.

STARTING IN THE MIDDLE

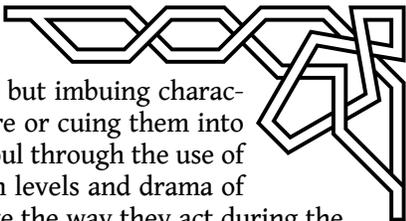
The mysterious man rode into town and tied up his horse. He booked a room at the inn and walked up the stairs. He opened the door, poured himself some cinnamon sake and entered the bedroom. When he arrived, there was a man waiting for him with a blade to his throat, saying, “Surprised to see me?” The beginning of a Scene is boring. It’s so much better to begin in the middle of a Scene instead, cutting right to the intensity. When combined with Sourcing the Players, this type of Scene can become even better.

FLASHBACKS

Flashbacks are a useful tool for GMs, helping to not only emulate the anime genre, but also to take a deeper look at the development of characters. Many times, flashbacks show themselves during particularly intense situations that remind the characters of certain decisions they’ve made in their past. They may be directly related or only thematically linked, allowing the character to interpret them as they wish. For example, during a gruesome fight with a battalion of Izou soldiers, the character comes face to face with a soldier without a helmet and looks into his eyes before landing her final killing blow. However, she is brought back to a Scene where she once met a young soldier who had dreams of bringing peace to their village. How they react in this Scene may come into play when they jump back to present day. Do they still deliver the final blow? Has this memory changed them or hardened their views even more? Players should be allowed to act within a Flashback however they would normally, with the caveat that they can’t undo something that has already happened. This is a flashback, not time travel.

DREAMS AND PORTENTS

Being able to tell the future is a fun storytelling device when used properly. A few powers wielded by ninja actually



give this ability straight out, but imbuing characters with visions of the future or cuing them into the presence of something foul through the use of omens can help raise tension levels and drama of any Scene. It also may change the way they act during the story if they start to see the vision becoming reality. Not all dreams or visions should allow players to respond, as they are often there as a warning. They should also not always be clear or linear, giving the characters (and their players) something to ponder as they go about their business.

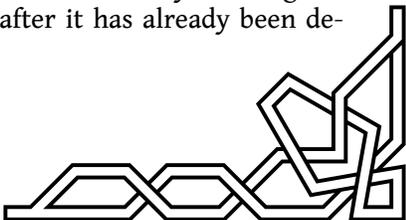
SOURCING THE PLAYERS

No GM is faultless, and there will be times when he or she just doesn’t have an idea for a new location or Extra who needs to be detailed for the story. This is when sourcing the players becomes a key skill to utilize. It should always include asking what this new story element is and adding some other detail that may become important to the story. For instance, it can be something as easy as asking “What is the Extra’s name and why is it urgent for the ninja to talk to them right now?” This puts the responsibility of detailing on the players. This can likewise be done with locations, “What is this town known for, and why has it become increasingly dangerous for ninja?” or with background information “What is the legendary object everyone is talking about, and why is it important for the Lotus Coalition to get it before the Emperor does?”

An extreme version of sourcing the players is turning over the framing of certain Scenes if the GM doesn’t know where they want to take the story. Instead of forcing it along any predetermined path, they may hand narrative control to a player, who gets to determine where the players are, what they are doing, why they are there and what is going on around them. At that point, the GM picks up the control and runs the rest of the Scene. This is not only a quick way to frame a Scene, but also a look into the types of Scenes your players want to see (otherwise, why would they suggest it?).

Either of these options brings with it a certain change to the rules of *The Ninja Crusade 2nd Edition*: giving up narrative control to the players. This can be scary for GMs who like to control everything, but as we discussed earlier, too much control can actually hurt a game. A group of players who all trust each other with the story, however, should have no problem letting everyone describe Extras and frame Scenes. Some groups run their games entirely in this way, while others employ these techniques sparsely. Finding the right balance for your group is key.

Note: This is not the same as spending Karma to influence a Scene. Karma expenditures are a way to change or alter something in a Scene after it has already been described and accepted as fact.



AKIYAMA MIHOSHI

ELEMENT: WATER, TEMPERAMENT: DEVIOS

- ◆ **Gift:** She has an underhanded streak. +1 Fighting if attacking in unsportsmanlike ways.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma when cheating the wrong person comes back to hurt her.

PROFESSION: NOBLE, FOCUS: KUGE

- ◆ **Gift:** A truly skilled aristocrat. +1 Discipline during tough conversations.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma if political skeletons rear their heads.

TRAGEDY: CIVIL DISCORD, AFFLICTION: STAR CROSSED

- ◆ **Gift:** +2 Knowledge to try to impress someone with trivia.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 2 Karma whenever the ninja misses a detail due to distraction

WARTIME ROLE: COMMUNICATIONS, TITLE: SPY

- ◆ **Gift:** She is an expert duelist. +1 Fighting in a one-on-one battle.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma when she underestimates her enemy and they gain the edge.

CLAN: HIDDEN STRANDS OF FATE

- ◆ **Clan Gift - Orchestrated Life:** They understand their tribulations. Tragedy Gift and Trigger doubled.
- ◆ **Clan Trigger - Giving More to the Clan:** Gain 1 Karma if following a secret, secondary objective causes problems.

CONTACTS

- ◆ **Ally: Kakuta Soseki (Fighting):** A mercenary for hire, he is a coin away from being at someone's throat.
- ◆ **Rival: Natsume Mitsuyo (Persuade):** A politician in the Izou courts, she is known for being able to convince anyone to do anything.

MARTIAL TRAINING

- ◆ **Summoning 1 (Cats):** +1 Athletics, **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma if the cat slows progress with their pride.
- ◆ **Yin and Yang 1 (Paired Style):** Once a Round, she can sacrifice dice from Attack to Defense or vice versa.

WAY OF SPUN THREADS

Training: Automatic use of Attached jutsu on a Boost.

Backfire: -1 penalty to Spun Threads activations from being tangled.

- ◆ **Skilled Strands (Basic, Yang + Intuition):** Use skills at a Near Range (no modifier) or Far Range (-2 penalty). Boost = -1 penalty instead.
- ◆ **Pulling Strings (Med, Yang + Persuade):** Victim suffers a Convinced 1 condition per success.

WAY OF METAL

Training: +1 bonus with Metal tools/weapons.

Backfire: -1 penalty to use metal tools/weapons, and -1 to Block or Brace against them.

- ◆ **Blade Dance (Basic, Yang + Athletics):** Gains +2 Perform. In Battle, opponents have -1 penalty to hit ninja for (Successes) Rounds.

WAY OF THE BEASTS

Training: Bring out the beast. +1 Initiative and +1 Fighting.

Backfire: Suffers a -1 cumulative penalty to social checks.

- ◆ **Beast Form (Med, Yang + Fortitude):** Transforms into a wildcat. +2 Athletics in this form.

STATS OF NOTE

Health: 6, Psyche: 8, Yang: 1, Yin: 2, Rank: 1, Initiative: 8, Dynamic Actions: 1, Dynamic Dice: 3, Strength: 1, Movement: 9, Weapon: Parasol/Hidden Sword (Concealable, Sharp, Paired, Fragile)

When Mihoshi was a young girl, she had a friend; another young girl of noble birth named Chizu, but the two families were always at odds with each other and forbade them from interacting, despite the loving relationship they had developed. Everything in Mihoshi's adult life has been to reconnect with Chizu, though family obligations have stood in their way at every turn. Mihoshi has become a spy among the Izou courts, using her beauty and status to manipulate others' emotions and to acquire damaging information on her targets. A better person would care about the lives she's ruined, but Mihoshi is often single-focused to a fault. Of course, the Hidden Strands see this as a benefit, not a flaw.

Akiyama family lore holds that their bloodline descends from Celestial Felines, which they used to ascend to noble status. Those like Mihoshi, who go on to become ninja, often become Summoners to further connect with this part of themselves.



SKILLS

Athletics 1, Crafts 0, Deception 3 (Misdirection), Discipline 3, Empathy 1, Fighting 2, Fortitude 1, Holistics 0, Intimidation 1, Intuition 2, Knowledge 2, Marksman 0, Might 0, Perception 2, Perform 4, Persuade 3 (Seduction), Speed 3, Stealth 1, Survival 0, Travel 3

ARAI KAEDE

ELEMENT: WATER, TEMPERAMENT: CALM

- ◆ **Gift:** Has a calming spirit. +1 Discipline to stay calm and ignore distractions.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma if/when her calm demeanor comes off as cold.

PROFESSION: SCHOLAR, FOCUS: SAGE

- ◆ **Gift:** She is often hired as an expert. +1 Knowledge to analyze evidence.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma when a client's needs come before the group's.

TRAGEDY: VICTIM OF CIRCUMSTANCE, AFFLICTION: DISPLACED

- ◆ **Gift:** Having lost her home, she knows how to make something from nothing. +1 Crafts to make items on the fly.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma when her independent nature causes her to ignore important assistance.

WARTIME ROLE: PACIFIST, TITLE: REFUGEE

- ◆ **Gift:** She has moved all around the world. +1 Travel to journey through other lands.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma when they get lost in the memories of all they've lost.

CLAN: LIVING CHRONICLE

- ◆ **Clan Gift - Knowledge of the Ages:** Knowledge is power. Gains Knowledge as successes against fear or to remain calm.
- ◆ **Clan Trigger - Respect the Word:** Gain 1 Karma when put in danger to save historical knowledge or a relic.

CONTACTS

- ◆ **Ally: Aoki Hyobe (Perception):** A top advisor to a young Daimyo, though he has a loose tongue when he drinks too much (which is often).
- ◆ **Rival: Kurokawa Iwa (Marksman):** A hunter who grew up in the same village as the ninja, and sometimes resents their gifts.

MARTIAL TRAINING

- ◆ **Pushing on Crane's Wings 1 (Crane Style):** -1 penalty to Block, but a success throws attacker 10ft.
- ◆ **Portents 1:** Sense Ki and Divination. (Immune to ambush, and +1 to find/avoid traps. May interpret dreams, and significance of it)

WAY OF KEPT LORE

Training: Enriches their minds. +1 auto-success to Knowledge for next check.

Backfire: -1 cumulative penalty to Intuition

- ◆ **Perceive the Words (Basic, Yin + Knowledge):** Transfer info from book to tattoos. +3 Knowledge for subject.
- ◆ **Setting the Words Loose (Basic, Yang + Crafts):** Transfer info from tattoos to books. Lower Confused or Dazed Condition by 1.
- ◆ **Rewriting History (Med, Yin + Intuition):** Roll non-successful dice on a roll. Spend 1 Yin to use reflexively.

WAY OF THE WATER

Training: +2 bonus to next Defense.

Backfire: -1 penalty to Movement and Defense.

- ◆ **Like Water (Med, Yin + Intuition):** Moves become more fluid. +2 bonus to Block, Dodge, Brace or Find Cover, for the Battle.

STATS OF NOTE

Health: 5, **Psyche:** 6, **Yang:** 0, **Yin:** 3, **Rank:** 1, **Initiative:** 8, **Dynamic Actions:** 1, **Dynamic Dice:** 3, **Strength:** 0, **Movement:** 7, **Weapon:** Bo (Reach, Blunt)

Kaede is relatively new to the Izou Empire, but her clan has sent her to aid the Lotus Coalition and record their advances since the Year of Floods. Her heart also goes out to the Izou people, as she too has lost her village to such ravages. She earned this task by serving beside several corrupt nobles or advisors within the Land of Crashing Waves and exposing them. Arriving in Danketsu, Kaede's goal is to uncover any possible moles within the ninja fighting forces and acquire knowledge to use against the Empire.

Her Living Chronicle training has left her with a calm and quiet demeanor, only usually speaking when spoken to and showing little concern in times of emergencies. Those close to Kaede know she can open up in the weirdest ways, as she is a fan of goofy faces and stumping others with random trivia about the latest romance novels.



SKILLS

Athletics 0, Crafts 2, Deception 0, Discipline 1 (vs. Fear), Empathy 2, Fighting 3, Fortitude 0, Holistics 2, Intimidation 0, Intuition 3, Knowledge 4 (Five Kingdoms), Marksman 1, Might 0, Perception 3, Perform 0, Persuade 2, Speed 2 (Quick Thinking), Stealth 2, Survival 1, Travel 2

CHUUSHIN NAOMI

ELEMENT: METAL, TEMPERAMENT: HONORABLE

- ◆ **Gift:** Lives by a code. +1 Fortitude to stave off deprivation for her honor.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma if her honor gets in her own way.

PROFESSION: WARRIOR, FOCUS: SOLDIER

- ◆ **Gift:** She served in a militia turned bandit force. +1 Discipline vs. Pain.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma when her loyalty to the group and to her old army conflict.

TRAGEDY: UNENDING STIGMA,

AFFLICTION: FORMER BANDIT

- ◆ **Gift:** Was once a criminal. +1 Marksman during an ambush.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma when her past comes back to haunt her.

WARTIME ROLE: STRIKER, TITLE: GLADIATOR

- ◆ **Gift:** She is an expert duelist. +1 Fighting in a one-on-one battle.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma when she underestimates her enemy and they gain the edge.

CLAN: WILL OF IRON

- ◆ **Clan Gift - Steel Never Lies:** +1 bonus when using metal tools/weapons. +2 if they made it themselves.
- ◆ **Clan Trigger - Black and White:** Gain 1 Karma when she stands firm on preserving the law to their detriment.

CONTACTS

- ◆ **Ally: Koga Harue (Fighting):** A warrior who operates his own mercenary company that offers protection to villages and towns, Harue's strict enforcement of the law makes him a useful ally or a sympathetic foe.
- ◆ **Rival: Imoto Samuru (Stealth):** A trainer of pigeons and rodents for use as messengers, he lost his brother to a violent criminal and does his best to help justice.

MARTIAL TRAINING

- ◆ **Shatter Weapons 2 (Blunt Style):** Shatter any weapon (wooden or metal) used to defend against her with a Boost.

WAY OF HEAVEN'S JUDGEMENT

Training: On a Boost, they gain a +1 bonus against an active criminal.

Backfire: Suffers a Confused 1 Condition.

- ◆ **Sense the Guilty (Basic, yin + Empathy):** Senses if target is guilty. Boost = gets visions of their crime.
- ◆ **Blind Justice (Med, Yang + Intuition):** Ignores any sight penalties. +1 Perception for all other senses.
- ◆ **Eye for an Eye (Med, Yang + Empathy):** Any physical damage or conditions she takes is dealt to the attacker as well. Lasts the Battle.

WAY OF METAL

Training: +1 bonus with Metal tools/weapons.

Backfire: -1 penalty to use metal tools/weapons, and -1 to Block or Brace against them.

- ◆ **Sharper Blade (Basic, Yang + Fighting):** +1 Fighting and +1 damage for (Successes) attacks.

STATS OF NOTE

Health: 6, **Psyche:** 6, **Yang:** 1, **Yin:** 2, **Rank:** 1, **Initiative:** 7, **Dynamic Actions:** 1, **Dynamic Dice:** 3, **Strength:** 3, **Movement:** 6, **Weapon:** Tetsubo (Heavy, Crushing, Brutal, Unwieldy)

Naomi has just recently become a full member of her clan and is already quite revered. Born to the Chuushin family, those who founded the Wardens of Equilibrium, she grew up in a world of corruption and disgrace. As a young girl, she even served in one of the clan's many bandit formations. Once she was of age, she cast aside her birth family and reached out to the Will of Iron to take her in, so she could uphold the law. Naomi constantly seeks the approval of her new clan, hoping her criminal past doesn't haunt her forever.

To prove her worth, she serves the Lotus Coalition and dispenses justice on their battlefield. She doesn't hesitate to strike down an enemy, often serving in duels for her clan, and loves to investigate crimes against the innocent. Naomi has even turned her old bandit gang to the law, through her contact Koga Harue, proving that justice can spread with enough effort.



SKILLS

Athletics 0, Crafts 1, Deception 2, Discipline 1, Empathy 3 (Spotting Lies), Fighting 4, Fortitude 1, Holistics 1, Intimidation 3, Intuition 3, Knowledge 0, Marksman 2, Might 3, Perception 2 (Searching), Perform 0, Persuade 1, Speed 1, Stealth 1, Survival 1, Travel 0

FUJIMOTO EIJI

ELEMENT: FIRE, TEMPERAMENT: CONFIDENT

- ◆ **Gift:** He's incredibly brave. +1 Empathy vs. Fear.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma if he becomes overconfident.

PROFESSION: FARMER, FOCUS: HERDER

- ◆ **Gift:** Travels with cattle, keeping them hidden from predators. +1 Stealth in fields and forests.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma when he sticks out in urban settings.

TRAGEDY: TORMENTED MIND, AFFLICTION: ESCAPIST

- ◆ **Gift:** Was once imprisoned. +1 Travel to find escape routes.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma if his wanderlust leads to danger.

WARTIME ROLE: FOOT SOLDIER, TITLE: CHAMPION

- ◆ **Gift:** He fights against sicknesses. +1 Fortitude against poison
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma whenever sharing the truth about the war with the wrong person causes conflict/trouble

CLAN: RONIN

- ◆ **Gift - I Can Do That Too:** May spend 1 Dynamic Action to substitute a Skill they possess for another Skill for a single check. Ronin may also select jutsu from any list (including Clan-Specific).
- ◆ **Trigger - Unaligned:** Gain 1 Karma when acting out their independent nature puts them or their group in danger.

CONTACTS

- ◆ **Ally: Motohoshi Yuji (Discipline):** Once a legendary wrestler, he has faced many challenges in his day and now finds life boring. He seeks greater and greater thrills to keep him motivated.
- ◆ **Rival: Mitsuyoshi Tamiko (Speed):** An excellent street musician, she passes messages across the city under the nose of even the most observant city guard.

MARTIAL TRAINING

- ◆ **Summoner 1 (Rats):** +1 Deception, **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma if their hesitation to attack causes issues.
- ◆ **Blade Storm 1 (Sharp Style):** Opponents within Close Range make a Mod (2) Fortitude + Speed check to avoid Sensory Loss (Blind) 1 Condition.

WAY OF FIRE

Training: Boost = +1 fire damage on impact and for each Round until put out.

Backfire: Fire set to environment. Critical = Suffer Burned 1 Condition.

- ◆ **Fire Punch (Basic, Yang + Might):** +1 fire damage for (successes) attacks. Boost on attack = causes Burned 1 Condition.

WAY OF THE WATER

Training: +2 bonus to next Defense.

Backfire: -1 penalty to Movement and Defense.

- ◆ **Soothing Waters (Med, Yin + Perception):** Heals (Yin) damage to target. Boost = affect (Intuition) targets at the same time.

WAY OF EBONY CLUTCHES

Training: Shadows surround him. +2 Stealth on a Boost

Backfire: -1 cumulative penalty to Stealth.

- ◆ **Shadow Pocket (Basic, Yin + Knowledge):** Stores items in shadow realm.

STATS OF NOTE

Health: 6, **Psyche:** 7, **Yang:** 2, **Yin:** 1, **Rank:** 1, **Initiative:** 6, **Dynamic Actions:** 1, **Dynamic Dice:** 3, **Strength:** 5, **Movement:** 10, **Weapon:** Big Sword (Sharp, Heavy, Piercing, Slow)

Born a farmhand, yet always looking to the stars, Eiji lived a simple life in the southern parts of the Black Veil Province. When the Ninja Crusade began, however, imperial forces overran his village, pillaging their land for many resources needed for the Emperor's war machine to continue moving. Eiji led his villagers in a resistance against the army, which led to many deaths and his own incarceration for years. Other inmates shared their ninja secrets with him, and he picked them up quickly, learning how to harness both the destructive power of fire and the healing powers of water to balance himself and be useful in the war effort regardless of the role he needed to fill.

It was a great day when he signed the Summoner's Scroll and befriended the Celestial Rats. They not only helped him escape prison, but continue to help him survive in this harsh world. His usual companion is Denbe, a small rat who often takes naps inside his scarf.



SKILLS

Athletics 3, Crafts 0, Deception 0, Discipline 2, Empathy 1, Fighting 4, Fortitude 1, Holistics 1, Intimidation 1, Intuition 1, Knowledge 2, Marksman 1, Might 2 (Pushing), Perception 2, Perform 0, Persuade 2, Speed 2, Stealth 2, Survival 2 (Tracking), Travel 1

HEBI INE

ELEMENT: WOOD, TEMPERAMENT: PERFECTIONIST

- ◆ **Gift:** Loves to do things perfectly. +1 Speed to repeat a successful combo (non-cumulative).
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma if she becomes fixated and won't stop until it's perfect.

PROFESSION: OUTSIDER, FOCUS: DRIFTER

- ◆ **Gift:** Has traveled the lands extensively. +1 Fortitude against environmental effects.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma when she lacks resources when needed.

TRAGEDY: RAVAGED BODY,

AFFLICTION: IMPAIRED SENSE

- ◆ **Gift:** Lost her left eye. -1 Perception (Sight), +1 for all other senses.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma when her lack of sight causes trouble.

WARTIME ROLE: FOOT SOLDIER, TITLE: ENFORCER

- ◆ **Gift:** She knows how to get what she wants. +1 Intimidation for interrogation.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma when disobeying an order (as she is prone to do) causes issues.

CLAN: RECOILING SERPENTS

- ◆ **Clan Gift - Serpent's Body:** Her body is sleek and bendable. +2 Athletics for flexibility or escaping confinement.
- ◆ **Clan Trigger - Rattle Then the Bite:** Gain 1 Karma when she can't help but take revenge in the heat of the moment.

CONTACTS

- ◆ **Ally: Akiko (Holistics):** An enigma known for their skill at creating poisons, she accepts payment only in trinkets of personal value to the ninja.
- ◆ **Rival: Hebi Misaki (Fortitude):** A restaurant owner with a flair for cooking, she knows the best ways to kill a man without being detected.

MARTIAL TRAINING

- ◆ **Poison Striking 1 (Snake Style):** Poison coats all of her attacks. Can apply a Poison 1 Condition with a Boost.
- ◆ **Alchemy 1 - Area of Study:** Mind. Can create the following potions: Forgetfulness.

WAY OF GREAT SERPENTS

Training: On a Boost, they may raise or reduce a Poison Condition with Near Range by 1

Backfire: Suffers a Slowed 1 Condition.

- ◆ **Long Tongue (Basic, Yang + Fortitude):** Tongue extends (Yang x3ft) long, but acts just like any limb.
- ◆ **Swallow (Basic, Yin + Fortitude):** Swallow something up to half their size. Boost = same size.
- ◆ **Shed Skin (Med, Yang + Fortitude):** Refreshes them, healing 3 Health. Boost = heal 2 Psyche too.

WAY OF SURVIVAL

Training: Heal 1 Psyche. If done 3 times in same Scene, they may reduce a Condition by 1.

Backfire: -2 penalty to next Resistance or Defense check.

- ◆ **Escape Technique (Basic, Yang + Speed):** Free themselves from being confined or captured.
- ◆ **Danger Sense (Basic, Yang + Intuition):** Make them immune to ambushes, and gains +2 Initiative for Round 1 of any combat.

STATS OF NOTE

Health: 8, **Psyche:** 6, **Yang:** 2, **Yin:** 1, **Rank:** 1, **Initiative:** 5, **Dynamic Actions:** 1, **Dynamic Dice:** 3, **Strength:** 5, **Movement:** 10, **Weapon:** Katana (Sharp, Quick)

Ine is the descendent of one of the Recoiling Serpents' legendary warriors, a general who led the War of Withered Fangs. Always in search of a way to perfect herself and live up to her status, she single-handedly took on a Celestial Bear by the name of Tetsuo. She survived the bloody battle, but lost her eye in the process; though she took the bear's eye as recompense as well. Ine hopes to continue training and eventually meet Tetsuo again to finish the fight.

She is spiteful, cold and completely out for revenge most of the time. Ine is incredibly easy to anger, and some say they hear a snake's rattle when she approaches. This made her perfect to become an Enforcer for the Lotus Coalition, getting information out of Izou soldiers in the most despicable ways possible. Ine doesn't take orders well and is likely to do the opposite of what she's told for the hell of it, unless it suits her purposes.



SKILLS

Athletics 3 (Climbing), Crafts 3, Deception 1, Discipline 1, Empathy 0, Fighting 3, Fortitude 2, Holistics 3, Intimidation 1, Intuition 0, Knowledge 1, Marksman 1, Might 2, Perception 1, Perform 0, Persuade 1, Speed 2, Stealth 3, Survival 2 (Swamps), Travel 0

HIGASHI MASERU

ELEMENT: FIRE, TEMPERAMENT: HOT HEADED

- ◆ **Gift:** Gets mad easily. +1 Might when he is flying off the handle.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma if he just can't stop himself.

PROFESSION: ENTERTAINER, FOCUS: TUMBLER

- ◆ **Gift:** Knows how to flip and tumble around. +1 Athletics for such things.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma if he fails in front of a crowd, to his embarrassment.

TRAGEDY: TORMENTED MIND, AFFLICTION: HAIR TRIGGER

- ◆ **Gift:** His reputation precedes him. +1 Intimidation when their target knows of their hair trigger.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma if he loses his head when level heads are needed.

WARTIME ROLE: SCOUT, TITLE: SLEEPER

- ◆ **Gift:** He's very convincing. +1 Deception to convince others of your loyalty.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma when staying undercover costs them something important.

CLAN: BLAZING DANCERS

- ◆ **Clan Gift - Performance Mastery (Acting):** +1 bonus to any check that can use their specialty. +2 if used with Perform.
- ◆ **Clan Trigger - Disrespected:** Gain 1 Karma when the clan's bad reputation puts them in a bad situation.

CONTACTS

- ◆ **Ally: Odoriko Mao (Crafts):** A brilliant costumer, Mao is well known for his expert disguises and stage dress.
- ◆ **Rival: Ryoko Naoko (Perform):** A fellow troupe performer, she can carry a song like no one else, but doesn't like to share her fame.

MARTIAL TRAINING

- ◆ **Unstoppable Attack 1 (Paired Style):** May attack twice with a single action, but both attacks suffer a -2 penalty
- ◆ **Vanishing 1 (Monkey Style):** Opponents suffer -1 penalty to detect his presence.

WAY OF THE IMMACULATE SHOW

Training: Illusions of the story they are trying to tell come to life.

Backfire: -2 Initiative and audience displeasure.

- ◆ **The Perfect Show (Basic, Yang + Perform):** Gains +2 bonus to next Perform check.
- ◆ **Trick Shots (Basic, Yang + Marksman):** For (successes) ranged attacks, they get +1 bonus to hit, ignore cover and returns to the ninja.
- ◆ **Star of the Show (Med, Yang + Perform):** Illuminates (Yang x10ft) area, and the ninja may attempt to Block any attack on them (or a nearby teammate) with a Yang + Perform check.

WAY OF FIRE

Training: Boost = +1 fire damage on impact and for each Round until put out.

Backfire: Fire set to environment. Critical = Suffer Burned 1 Condition.

- ◆ **Fire Punch (Basic, Yang + Might):** +1 fire damage for (successes) attacks. Boost on attack = causes Burned 1 Condition.
- ◆ **Bright Star (Basic, Yang + Persuade):** He shines so bright it's hard to look at him. Opponents suffer (Yang) penalty to attack him for 1 Round. Boost = Lasts the Battle or Scene.

STATS OF NOTE

Health: 10, **Psyche:** 6, **Yang:** 3, **Yin:** 0, **Rank:** 1, **Initiative:** 4, **Dynamic Actions:** 1, **Dynamic Dice:** 3, **Strength:** 4, **Movement:** 9, **Weapon:** Kama (Paired, Sharp)

Years ago, Higashi Maseru was a name almost everyone knew about. He was the inventor of many new forms of entertainment and took on his share of students in his day. Today, Maseru is out-of-shape, but still as boisterous as ever. Maybe his glory days are long past, but he's unwilling to let them go and the Odoriko Clan was built on loyalty. The few performances he's allowed often end in embarrassment, but he is the consummate performer and able to play them off as jokes for the kids' amusement. Many believe he is extremely lucky and rub his bald head for luck before shows. Maseru loves this tradition, because it keeps him close to his life's passion, even if he isn't setting foot on stage.

With the start of the Ninja Crusade, he got really good at listening and observing his environment. He can step into almost any situation, fit in and then report back to the Lotus Coalition with important information. Who's the fool now?



SKILLS

Athletics 3 (Jumping), Crafts 1, Deception 0, Discipline 1, Empathy 2, Fighting 2, Fortitude 5, Holistics 0, Intimidation 1, Intuition 0, Knowledge 1, Marksman 1, Might 1, Perception 2, Perform 3 (Dancing), Persuade 1, Speed 1, Stealth 2, Survival 1, Travel 1

ICHATSUKO NO KINO

ELEMENT: WOOD, TEMPERAMENT: LOQUACIOUS

- ◆ **Gift:** Likes to draw a crowd. +1 Perform to draw others to her.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma if they let a secret or important info slip at the wrong time.

PROFESSION: HEALER, FOCUS: HERBALIST

- ◆ **Gift:** She knows her herb and ingredients. +1 Holistics when creating potions.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma when she's forced to do something she doesn't want to to get a rare ingredient.

TRAGEDY: VICTIM OF CIRCUMSTANCE, AFFLICTION: PLAGUE SURVIVOR

- ◆ **Gift:** Seeing many die before her, she gains +1 Holistics to heal the sick and downtrodden.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma if she lets her urge to heal put her in danger.

WARTIME ROLE: MEDIC, TITLE: KUSURIYA

- ◆ **Gift:** The war brings new injuries and sickness all the time. +1 Holistics to treat something she's never seen before.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma if a procedure fails and it's all her fault.

CLAN: BAMBOO HERBALISTS

- ◆ **Clan Gift - Long-Lived:** They take potions to enhance their bodies. +2 Fortitude vs. poisons or sickness. Can go (Fortitude) days without food, water or sleep and ages 1 year for every 2 that pass.
- ◆ **Clan Trigger - Dare Accepted:** Gain 1 Karma when their thrill seeking ways get the better of them, much to the detriment to themselves or their group.

CONTACTS

- ◆ **Ally: Nomura Jotaro (Empathy):** An expert counselor, able to help people fix a wrecked life or accomplish just the opposite.
- ◆ **Rival: Ibuka Sakura (Fighting):** A drinker and a brawler, she is never one to turn down a good fight.

MARTIAL TRAINING

- ◆ **Flailing Body 1 (Dragon Style):** Opponents suffer a -1 penalty to grab or hold her. She also receives a +1 bonus to escape binding if she does get caught.
- ◆ **Alchemy 1 - Area of Study: Alertness:** Can create the following potions: Awake, Sloth and Special Wine.

WAY OF CARING HANDS

Training: Lower any Condition within Near Range with a Boost.

Backfire: Raise any Condition within Near Range with a Boost.

- ◆ **Quick Needle Technique (Basic, Yang + Fortitude):** Creates (Successes) needles that are Quick and Sharp. If used for acupuncture, gain +1 Holistics.
- ◆ **Paralysis Needles (Med, Yin + Marksman):** Target cannot move for (Successes) Rounds. On a Boost, this becomes the Battle or Scene.

WAY OF WOOD

Training: A Boost gives a +2 bonus to using wooden tools or weapons.

Backfire: Cumulative -1 penalty to Might and Athletics checks.

- ◆ **Tree Hopping (Basic, Yang + Athletics):** 3x Movements in forests and jungles.
- ◆ **Hiding Place (Med, Yang + Holistics):** Meld into a tree to become undetectable. Heal 1 physical and 1 mental damage every 10 minutes.

STATS OF NOTE

Health: 7, **Psyche:** 5, **Yang:** 3, **Yin:** 0, **Rank:** 1, **Initiative:** 7, **Dynamic Actions:** 1, **Dynamic Dice:** 3, **Strength:** 3, **Movement:** 9. **Weapon:** Katana (Sharp, Quick)

Kino is an old ninja in a young ninja's body, but still has the youthful outlook on life. She studied under the famed herbalist Utah Hikaru, learning how to fight and heal with the best of them. She became so well-versed in navigating forests, she took on the name Ichatsuko No Kino, or Kino of the Forest. She was more than happy to simply be a local healer, but the Bamboo Herbalists couldn't let her talents go to waste. Her training was long and laborious, but she achieved her ninja status through hard work and determination.

She is known for talking a lot, taking on any dare and going farther than any other explorer of her generation. Plagues hit her village and she lost so many people, Kino now rarely thinks about the danger involved if there are rare herbs to be found or people to save. Her ability to act under pressure and her cheery smile, make her the favorite medic to attend to the front lines, and her expertise in alchemy helps her be as efficient as possible.



SKILLS

Athletics 2 (Jumping), Crafts 2, Deception 0, Discipline 0, Empathy 2, Fighting 2, Fortitude 2, Holistics 4, Intimidation 0, Intuition 2, Knowledge 2, Marksman 2, Might 1, Perception 1, Perform 1, Persuade 1, Speed 2, Stealth 0, Survival 3 (Tracking), Travel 1

ISHIKAWA RYOTA

ELEMENT: METAL, TEMPERAMENT: AUTHORITATIVE

- ◆ **Gift:** Is striking and controlling. +1 Intimidation to issue commands
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma if/when he makes a wrong call.

PROFESSION: NOBLE, FOCUS: KUGE

- ◆ **Gift:** A truly skilled aristocrat. +1 Discipline during tough conversations.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma if political skeletons rear their heads.

TRAGEDY: TORMENTED MIND, AFFLICTION: PARANOID

- ◆ **Gift:** Everyone is truly out to get him. +2 Intuition to detect an ambush.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 2 Karma if his paranoia leads the group into danger.

WARTIME ROLE: VILLAGER, TITLE: SHEPARD

- ◆ **Gift:** Helps get people out of dangers situations. +1 Perception to spot hidden items or the enemy.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma if he ever forgets an important name or face.

CLAN: HIDDEN STRANDS OF FATE

- ◆ **Clan Gift - Orchestrated Life:** They understand their tribulations. Tragedy Gift and Trigger doubled.
- ◆ **Clan Trigger - Giving More to the Clan:** Gain 1 Karma if following a secret, secondary objective causes problems.

CONTACTS

- ◆ **Ally: Asaito Yukio (Travel):** A talented wagoner, she is able to get clients any number of places or make it harder to get from one city to the next.
- ◆ **Ally: Network of Spies (Gatherers)**
- ◆ **Rival: Kakuta Soseki (Fighting):** A mercenary for hire, he is a coin away from being at someone's throat.

MARTIAL TRAINING

- ◆ **Master of Spies 1 (Gatherers):** Gains information Gatherers as an Ally.
- ◆ **Patience As Reward 1 (Crane Style):** With no attacking, gains +1 to all Defense checks for the Round.

WAY OF SPUN THREADS

Training: Automatic use of Attached jutsu on a Boost.

Backfire: -1 penalty to Spun Threads activations from being tangled.

- ◆ **Invisible Threads (Basic, Yin + Stealth):** Their threads are invisible. Targets suffer -1 Defense.
- ◆ **Spider's Scry (Basic, Yin + Perception):** Listen in on conversations around strings.
- ◆ **Thread Web (Basic, Yang + Crafts):** Creates web to stop fall or seal opening. Health = Successes.
- ◆ **Skilled Strands (Basic, Yang + Intuition):** Use skills at a Near Range (no modifier) or Far Range (-2 penalty). Boost = -1 penalty instead.

WAY OF THE METAL

Training: +1 bonus with Metal tools/weapons.

Backfire: -1 penalty to use metal tools/weapons, and -1 to Block or Brace against them.

- ◆ **Iron Mind (Med, Yin + Discipline):** Steels the mind. +2 bonus against mental attacks.

STATS OF NOTE

Health: 6, **Psyche:** 7, **Yang:** 0, **Yin:** 3, **Rank:** 1, **Initiative:** 9, **Dynamic Actions:** 1, **Dynamic Dice:** 3, **Strength:** 1, **Movement:** 7, **Weapon:** Nunchaku (Chain, Blunt)

Ryota was born to the distinguished Ishikawa family, which has served in the Imperial Courts for centuries. He stands strong and authoritative, constantly fighting off political attacks and debating the important issues that keep the Izou people from advancing. His family has had connections to the world of ninja since his great, great grandfather stalked the night. The constant threat of ninja or other huge attacks has led to some issues with paranoia.

He serves the Lotus Coalition directly by continuing his life as a Kuge, fighting the Ninja Crusade from the inside. His meetings with other ninja are usually in secret, but his influence can get his allies into places they'd never think possible. His status within the Hidden Strands has earned his master's attention, and Ryota is being asked to do more and more, putting his cover in jeopardy. He is not a young man, but is quite patient... always waiting for the right time to strike.



SKILLS

Athletics 0, Crafts 0, Deception 3 (Misdirection), Discipline 2, Empathy 2, Fighting 2, Fortitude 1, Holistics 0, Intimidation 3, Intuition 3, Knowledge 2, Marksman 0, Might 1, Perception 2, Perform 1, Persuade 3 (Oratory), Speed 2, Stealth 1, Survival 1, Travel 1

ISHIMOTO SAYURI

ELEMENT: EARTH, TEMPERAMENT: RESPONSIBLE

- ◆ **Gift:** She helps others to live a good life. +1 Persuade to get others to do the right thing.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma if she pays for someone else's mistake.

PROFESSION: ARTISAN, FOCUS: SMITH

- ◆ **Gift:** Has expertise in crafting materials, especially arrows. +1 Marksman to hit small targets.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma when she chooses brute strength and it turns out horrible.

TRAGEDY: RAVAGED BODY, AFFLICTION: SCARRED

- ◆ **Gift:** Ritualistic scarring and tattoos. +1 Fortitude vs. Pain.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma if she frightens people when she doesn't mean to.

WARTIME ROLE: FOOT SOLDIER, TITLE: CHAMPION

- ◆ **Gift:** She fights against sicknesses. +1 Fortitude against poison
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma whenever sharing the truth about the war with the wrong person causes conflict/trouble

CLAN: WILL OF IRON

- ◆ **Clan Gift - Steel Never Lies:** +1 bonus when using metal tools/weapons. +2 if they made it themselves.
- ◆ **Clan Trigger - Black and White:** Gain 1 Karma when she stands firm on preserving the law to their detriment.

CONTACTS

- ◆ **Ally: Kusamura Yume (Perform):** A monk on pilgrimage who performs for villages in exchange for room and board. She has much to share with anyone who cares to listen.
- ◆ **Rival: Koga Harue (Fighting):** A warrior with his own mercenary band that protects villages and towns. Strictly enforces the law.

MARTIAL TRAINING

- ◆ **Portents 1:** Sense Ki and Divination. (Immune to ambush, and +1 to find/avoid traps. May interpret dreams, and significance of it)
- ◆ **Chain Dance (Chain Style):** +1 Fighting per level with chains.

WAY OF HEAVEN'S JUDGEMENT

Training: On a Boost, they gain a +1 bonus against an active criminal.

Backfire: Suffers a Confused 1 Condition.

- ◆ **Detect Disturbance (Basic, Yin + Empathy):** Drawn to nearest crime or injustice

WAY OF THE WARRIOR

Training: Steels their warrior spirit. Dynamic Actions give +2 damage for next attack.

Backfire: Their body breaks, suffering a Broken 1 Condition.

- ◆ **Fighter's Focus (Basic, Yin + Perception):** +1 bonus on attack/defense against target. Boost = do +1 damage.
- ◆ **Fighter's Trance (Adv, Yin + Discipline):** +4 to Initiative, ignore environment penalties and Boost with only 2 more successes.

WAY OF METAL

Training: +1 bonus with Metal tools/weapons.

Backfire: -1 penalty to use metal tools/weapons, and -1 to Block or Brace against them.

- ◆ **Mold Metal (Basic, Yin + Crafts):** Able to mold metal like clay

STATS OF NOTE

Health: 8, **Psyche:** 7, **Yang:** 0, **Yin:** 3, **Rank:** 1, **Initiative:** 6, **Dynamic Actions:** 1, **Dynamic Dice:** 3, **Strength:** 6, **Movement:** 9, **Weapon:** Sickle-Chain (Chain, Sharp, Skilled (Climbing), Slow)

Growing up, Sayuri was the tallest girl in her village. Realizing she wouldn't gain a betrothal by her appearance, Sayuri's parents convinced the village blacksmith to take her on as an apprentice, and soon her muscles matched her height. She might have continued in this fashion, but one night a demon brutally attacked Sayuri's younger sister and her boyfriend. Grabbing a nearby branch, Sayuri managed to kill the demon, but not without getting wounded in the process. Sayuri managed to heal, but not without sustaining some heavy scarring.

Sayuri was very religious and asked the village priest why the demon attacked. The priest couldn't give her an answer, but said the gods tended to favor those who helped themselves. Then they asked Sayuri to leave her village, hoping to remove it from retribution by future demon attacks aimed at her. However, the priest knew someone in the Will of Iron clan, and recommend Sayuri into its hands. She readily took to their teachings, though she is more concerned with protecting humans from unrighteous demon attacks than bringing human criminals to justice.



SKILLS

Athletics 2, Crafts 3 (Blacksmith), Deception 0, Discipline 2, Empathy 2, Fighting 4, Fortitude 3, Holistics 0, Intimidation 2, Intuition 1, Knowledge 2 (Demons), Marksman 0, Might 4, Perception 2, Perform 1, Persuade 0, Speed 2, Stealth 0, Survival 0, Travel 0

KUMORI KUNIO

ELEMENT: WATER, TEMPERAMENT: DEVIOS

- ◆ **Gift:** He has an underhanded streak. +1 Fighting if attacking in unsportsmanlike ways.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma when cheating the wrong person comes back to hurt him.

PROFESSION: ARTISAN, FOCUS: SMITH

- ◆ **Gift:** Has expertise in crafting materials, especially arrows. +1 Marksman to hit small targets.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma when he chooses brute strength and it turns out horrible.

TRAGEDY: CIVIL DISCORD, AFFLICTION: WANTED

- ◆ **Gift:** The empire has his number, so he's always looking over his shoulder. +1 Athletics to evade the law.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma if he gets recognized and things go badly.

WARTIME ROLE: COMMANDER, TITLE: TRAINER

- ◆ **Gift:** Trains others in terrain expertise. +1 Athletics in Forests.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma if the fear of failure gets the better of him.

CLAN: GRASPING SHADOWS

- ◆ **Clan Gift - Darkness Comes to Life:** +1Stealth in Shadows and Intimidation bonus when hiding = difference in successes.
- ◆ **Clan Trigger - Ninja Pride:** Gain 1 Karma when his belief that Shadows are better than other ninja get in the way.

CONTACTS

- ◆ **Ally: Akiyama Shigematsu (Discipline):** This monk has taken a vow of silence, but is one of the most connected men in the Empire.
- ◆ **Rival: Kumori Takashi (Marksman):** This thief has been a thorn in the side of the Izou for years, hiding in one of his many safehouses.

MARTIAL TRAINING

- ◆ **Raptor Needs to Feed 1 (Eagle Style):** May spend 2 Dynamic Actions for Extra damage.
- ◆ **Armor of Blades 1 (Sharp Style):** Close and Near attackers suffer -1 penalty to his him from constantly spinning blades. Defense Boost = +1 Fighting to next attack.

WAY OF EBONY CLUTCHES

Training: Shadows surround him. +2 Stealth on a Boost

Backfire: -1 cumulative penalty to Stealth.

- ◆ **Dark Eyes (Basic, Yin + Perception):** See in any darkness.
- ◆ **Puppetry (Basic, Yang + Perform):** +2 to impress audience or distract for -1 Initiative.
- ◆ **Shadow Tentacles (Med, Yang + Crafts):** Creates (Yang) tentacles. Attack with half dice pool and deal 1 damage. Can carry 200lbs.

WAY OF THE UNSEEN

Training: They becomes less visible. -2 Perception to those trying to see them.

Backfire: Suffer a -2 Stealth penalty.

- ◆ **Unnoticed (Basic, Yin + Stealth):** +2 Stealth at slow pace. Boost = Can move faster.
- ◆ **Unheard (Basic, Yin + Stealth):** Cancels sound in (Yin x10ft) radius. Boost = target (Yin) others.

STATS OF NOTE

Health: 5, **Psyche:** 9, **Yang:** 0, **Yin:** 3, **Rank:** 1, **Initiative:** 5, **Dynamic Actions:** 1, **Dynamic Dice:** 3, **Strength:** 2, **Movement:** 9, **Weapon:** Katana (Quick, Sharp)

Kunio survived the difficult training the Shadows provide. He graduated at the top of his class, and his cool demeanor gives him a certain amount of attitude. On his final exam, he even assassinated a high-profile aristocrat surrounded by dozens of Izou soldiers. This has earned him respect among his fellow ninja, as well as a warrant that no bounty hunter could pass up. His stealth and martial arts training has kept him from capture so far.

Kunio is a loner by nature, but he'll work with others who have proven themselves and accept him to lead any missions against the Izou Army. He has even taken to training other, younger ninja how to operate in rough terrain. The Lotus Coalition gives him missions, but he is a bit of a rebel and handles them "his" way. The job gets done, so the Lotus Coalition shouldn't complain, right? Ignoring orders doesn't win Kunio any friends, but neither does being an elitist.



SKILLS

Athletics 2, Crafts 1, Deception 2, Discipline 4, Empathy 1, Fighting 3, Fortitude 0, Holistics 0, Intimidation 2 (Stare down), Intuition 0, Knowledge 2, Marksman 3, Might 0, Perception 1, Perform 2, Persuade 0, Speed 2, Stealth 3 (Concealment), Survival 0, Travel 2

ODORIKO MINORI

ELEMENT: FIRE, TEMPERAMENT: EXPRESSIONIST

- ◆ **Gift:** Loves to create art. +1 Crafts when doing so.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma when he becomes enthralled with art to the point of inaction.

PROFESSION: ENTERTAINER, FOCUS: TUMBLER

- ◆ **Gift:** Knows how to flip and tumble around. +1 Athletics for such things.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma if he fails in front of a crowd, to his embarrassment.

TRAGEDY: UNENDING STIGMA,

AFFLICTION: SINGING FOR SUPPER

- ◆ **Gift:** Grew up poor. +1 Perform to beg or ask humbly for things.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma if he hordes something important away from the group.

WARTIME ROLE: COMMUNICATIONS, TITLE: DIPLOMAT

- ◆ **Gift:** Often the face of the party. +1 Perception to spot someone in a crowd.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma if their need to be charming hurts the group.

CLAN: BLAZING DANCERS

- ◆ **Clan Gift - Performance Mastery (Tumbling):** +1 bonus to any check that can use their specialty. +2 if used with Perform.
- ◆ **Clan Trigger - Disrespected:** Gain 1 Karma when the clan's bad reputation puts them in a bad situation.

CONTACTS

- ◆ **Ally: Suzuki Hidetoshi (Intuition):** One of the oldest members of the Odoriko Clan, he is always there to dispense wisdom or cast doubt.
- ◆ **Rival: Masumi Ichiro (Speed):** When messages need delivering, he is the one to call.

MARTIAL TRAINING

- ◆ **Blackout the Sun 1 (Ranged Style):** After a Boost on a ranged attack, he may attack again for free.
- ◆ **Beating My Wings 1 (Eagle Style):** Suffers -2 penalty, but may throw 2 ranged weapons at once.

WAY OF THE IMMACULATE SHOW

Training: Illusions of the story they are trying to tell come to life.

Backfire: -2 Initiative and audience displeasure.

- ◆ **Beautiful Dance (Med, Yang + Speed):** +1 Dynamic Action per (Successes) Rounds.
- ◆ **Destroyer's Dance (Adv, Yang + Perform):** Swirls fire and increased movement. +2 Armor, +2 damage and +2 to attack and defense checks. Last (successes) Rounds.

WAY OF MOVEMENT

Training: Enhanced movement. +2 Movement and +1 Initiative.

Backfire: Slowed. -2 Movement and -1 Initiative.

- ◆ **Tiger's Leap (Basic, Yang + Might):** Enhanced jump. Multiply distance by (Yang +1)

STATS OF NOTE

Health: 7, **Psyche:** 6, **Yang:** 3, **Yin:** 0, **Rank:** 1, **Initiative:** 8, **Dynamic Actions:** 1, **Dynamic Dice:** 3, **Strength:** 3, **Movement:** 10, **Weapon:** Kunai (Range, Sharp)

Considered one of the best students of Dancer teachings and a rising star of the Wu Ji Theater, Minori has become a stalwart member of the Lotus Coalition. He grew up very poor, so he is incredibly excited about life in general, since everything seems to be going his way. He's a member of a clan that supports his artistic pursuits, he travels around the Empire meeting with other diplomats and he puts on the greatest shows of all time, having picked up the skills needed to execute the Destroyer's Dance quicker than previous students ever have.

Minori has earned a small following of fans, and is an expert warrior in both ranged and close combat. He's also a bit of a womanizer, which can be a blessing and curse at times. He's a great performer, but is somewhat closed off behind doors, letting only his closest friends in to meet the real Minori.



SKILLS

Athletics 2, Crafts 0, Deception 2, Discipline 1, Empathy 1, Fighting 3, Fortitude 2, Holistics 1, Intimidation 1, Intuition 2, Knowledge 1, Marksman 3 (Kunai), Might 1, Perception 1, Perform 2 (Singing), Persuade 2, Speed 3, Stealth 1, Survival 0, Travel 0

REKISHI KO-NAA

ELEMENT: WATER, TEMPERAMENT: CALM

- ◆ **Gift:** Has a calming spirit. +1 Discipline to stay calm and ignore distractions.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma if/when her calm demeanor comes off as cold.

PROFESSION: SCHOLAR, FOCUS: HISTORIAN

- ◆ **Gift:** Knows his way around a library. +1 Speed to research quickly.
- ◆ **Trigger:** When a mistranslation or wrong info causes issues.

TRAGEDY: VICTIM OF CIRCUMSTANCE, AFFLICTION: DISASTER MAGNET

- ◆ **Gift:** Being used to danger, they get +1 Speed to avoid pitfalls and surprise threats.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma if saving himself passes the danger on to his comrades.

WARTIME ROLE: COMMANDER, TITLE: STRATEGIST

- ◆ **Gift:** Knows the historical significance of battles. +1 Knowledge to recall advantages or disadvantages of battle plans
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma if a strategy he created ends poorly for the group.

CLAN: LIVING CHRONICLE

- ◆ **Clan Gift - Knowledge of the Ages:** Knowledge is power. Gains Knowledge as successes against fear or to remain calm.
- ◆ **Clan Trigger - Respect the Word:** Gain 1 Karma when put in danger to save historical knowledge or a relic.

CONTACTS

- ◆ **Ally: Oishi Toshie (Knowledge):** One of the chief Historians at the Fortress of Scrolls.
- ◆ **Rival: Kurokawa Iwa (Marksman):** A hunter who grew up in the same village as the ninja, and sometimes resents their gifts.

MARTIAL TRAINING

- ◆ **Catching Prey 2 (Mantis Style):** Successful Block ends with a Grapple. -1 penalty if trapping against a weapon. Victim cannot use limb for (Might) Rounds and suffers a -2 penalty to use the limb for the rest of the Battle.

WAY OF KEPT LORE

Training: Enriches their minds. +1 auto-success to Knowledge for next check.

Backfire: -1 cumulative penalty to Intuition

- ◆ **Information Consumption (Med, Yin + Knowledge):** Ritual to remove (successes) pieces of information from the target's mind. Victim resists with Discipline + Fortitude and suffers a Dazed 2 Condition with a failure.
- ◆ **Removal of Bedlam (Med, Yin + Discipline):** Automatically succeed at Concentration checks for (successes) Rounds. Also grants +1 Armor against mental damage.
- ◆ **Work Smarter (Med, Yang + Discipline):** May replace a physical skill with Knowledge for (successes) checks. Boost = Knowledge becomes a bonus to an existing combo.

STATS OF NOTE

Health: 5, **Psyche:** 8, **Yang:** 0, **Yin:** 3, **Rank:** 1, **Initiative:** 4, **Dynamic Actions:** 1, **Dynamic Dice:** 3, **Strength:** 1, **Movement:** 6. **Weapon:** Bo (Reach, Blunt)

Ko is a devoted and loyal member of the Living Chronicle, having been raised within the Great Library of the Land of Crashing Waves from birth. He absorbs all information placed before him, making him one of the most intelligent people in the world, but he realizes that knowledge isn't everything. Ko's clan has sent him into the world to experience more, releasing him to the Lotus Coalition to restore the Izou Libraries lost to the emperor's petulance.

While young, Ko is overtly calm and a brilliant battle strategist, though he isn't one to attack first. Even though he travels with a walking stick, he seldom uses it in battle. He takes defensive stances to defeat his opponents and isn't above removing himself from their memory to hopefully quell any future aggression. He strives to learn the Mind Removing Technique to make him even more useful to the war effort.



SKILLS

Athletics 0, Crafts 2, Deception 0, Discipline 3 (Concentration), Empathy 1, Fighting 4 (Blocking), Fortitude 0, Holistics 1, Intimidation 1, Intuition 1, Knowledge 5 (History), Marksman 1, Might 1, Perception 3, Perform 1, Persuade 1, Speed 0, Stealth 1, Survival 1, Travel 2

REN

ELEMENT: FIRE, TEMPERAMENT: HOT HEADED

- ◆ **Gift:** Gets mad easily. +1 Might when she is flying off the handle.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma if she just can't stop herself.

PROFESSION: OUTSIDER; FOCUS: UNTOUCHABLE

- ◆ **Gift:** +1 Stealth to overhear conversations of the higher classes.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma when lowered status has a negative effect.

TRAGEDY: VICTIM OF CIRCUMSTANCE;

AFFLICTION: ORPHANED

- ◆ **Gift:** Gain +1 Survival whenever the ninja must rely on their own wits.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma when the ninja's fear of abandonment prevents them from making a solid connection.

WARTIME ROLE: MERCENARY, TITLE: ASSAILANT

- ◆ **Gift:** She's used to fighting a lot of enemies at once. +1 Fighting if outnumbered.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma when she loses something important to her (as often happens to a warrior)

CLAN: RONIN

- ◆ **Gift - I Can Do That Too:** May spend 1 Dynamic Action to substitute a Skill they possess for another Skill for a single check. Ronin may also select jutsu from any list (including Clan-Specific).
- ◆ **Trigger - Unaligned:** Gain 1 Karma when acting out their independent nature puts them or their group in danger.

CONTACTS

- ◆ **Ally: Katayama Suki (Survival):** A forest guide who knows the fastest ways in and out of cities, she favors helping the innocent, and will abandon the guilty to the elements.
- ◆ **Rival: Motohoshi Yuji (Discipline):** Once a legendary wrestler, he has faced many challenges in his day and now finds life boring. He seeks greater and greater thrills to keep him motivated.

MARTIAL TRAINING

- ◆ **Summoner 1 (Bears):** +1 Holistics, **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma if their hesitation to attack causes issues.
- ◆ **Mantis Feeds Well 1 (Mantis Style):** The mantis claw tears at flesh for +1 damage with unarmed strikes.

WAY OF MOVEMENT

Training: Enhanced movement. +2 Movement and +1 Initiative.

Backfire: Slowed. -2 Movement and -1 Initiative.

- ◆ **Lightning Fists (Med, Yang + Fighting):** Attack 3 times on one opponent (Close) with one check. Each defended against separately.

WAY OF THE WARRIOR

Training: Steels their warrior spirit. Dynamic Actions give +2 damage for next attack.

Backfire: Their body breaks, suffering a Broken 1 Condition.

- ◆ **Fighter's Focus (Basic, Yin + Perception):** Choose an opponent, and gains a +1 bonus on attacks and defenses against them. Boost = +1 damage too.

WAY OF TWIN BEASTS

Training: On a Boost, any jutsu also affects their dog.

Backfire: Wild mind, -1 cumulative penalty Initiative and jutsu activation.

- ◆ **Prodigious Howl (Basic, Yang + Intimidation):** Communicates by howls up to (Yang) miles away. Boost = Close Range resist with Discipline + Empathy or suffer 1 mental damage.

STATS OF NOTE

Health: 6, **Psyche:** 5, **Yang:** 2, **Yin:** 1, **Rank:** 1, **Initiative:** 6, **Dynamic Actions:** 1, **Dynamic Dice:** 3, **Strength:** 3, **Movement:** 9, **Weapon:** None.

Ren was born an untouchable, poor and beneath the majority of other people in the Empire. She's been on her own from a very young age, picking pockets and foraging in the garbage to survive. One day, a man took her in and taught her the way of the ninja, seemingly as a joke. Not only did she quickly learn the lessons he taught, but she surprised him when she took on a Celestial Bear and earned their respect without his assistance. Ren left her sensei behind, seeing no further use for him. He only saw her as a weak little girl, but she's a survivor above all else.

She met a forest guide who taught her how to survive for long periods in the forests and has faced many challenges, even battling the great Yuji, who always makes fun of Ren's age just to see her squirm. In her downtime, Ren carves wooden masks. She's got a fox, a bear and a bunny so far, and is getting better with each attempt.



SKILLS

Athletics 2, Crafts (Wood), Deception 1, Discipline 0, Empathy 1, Fighting 4, Fortitude 1, Holistics 1 (Self-Healing), Intimidation 4, Intuition 1, Knowledge 1, Marksman 2, Might 1, Perception 4, Perform 0, Persuade 1, Speed 2, Stealth 0, Survival 2, Travel 0

SAKAMOTO TADAO

ELEMENT: EARTH, TEMPERAMENT: INDULGENT

- ◆ **Gift:** Loves his drugs. +1 Holistics for potions for his own consumption.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma if he takes too much and isn't any use to anyone.

PROFESSION: MERCHANT, FOCUS: MONEYLENDER

- ◆ **Gift:** Has money and loves to make deals. +1 Persuade if bribes are a factor.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma if he just can't resist making a deal, even if it's bad for him.

TRAGEDY: CIVIL DISCORD, AFFLICTION: FAVORS OWED

- ◆ **Gift:** People are always looking to collect. +1 Deception to get out of uncomfortable situations.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma if a debtor catches up and causes trouble.

WARTIME ROLE: SUPPLIER, TITLE: HOARDER

- ◆ **Gift:** He has an eye for finding treasure in the trash. +1 Survival to find supplies in an area.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma if he leaves something important behind for safe hoarding.

CLAN: WARDENS OF EQUILIBRIUM

- ◆ **Clan Gift - Balancing Act:** Ki balance gives different bonus. More Yang = +1 Health. More Yin = +1 Psyche. Balanced = +1 both and +1 bonus to jutsu activation checks.
- ◆ **Clan Trigger - Unpredictable History:** Gain 1 Karma when he needs to break a promise or contract and it causes trouble.

CONTACTS

- ◆ **Ally: Sawai Yuuki (Persuade):** A toymaker and seller of candies, she is an expert at learning rumors through the aid of her child-informants.
- ◆ **Ally: Network of Spies (Thieves).**
- ◆ **Rival: Chuushin Taro (Crafts):** A master counterfeiter, his ability to reproduce priceless works of art has made him infamous among the art merchants in the region.

MARTIAL TRAINING

- ◆ **Thick Skin 1 (Bear Style):** Tougher than he looks. +1 physical Armor.
- ◆ **Master of Spies 1:** Gains Thieves as an Ally.

WAY OF BALANCING SCALES

Training: On a Boost, they may convert 1 ki to another type for free.

Backfire: Lose ki until they have equal values. If already equal, take 1 damage.

- ◆ **Penetrating Senses (Basic, Yin + Perception):** X-ray visions through (Yin) ft. thickness.
- ◆ **See Price (Med, Yin + Intuition):** Instantly know what it'll take to bribe someone and gaining +2 Persuasion.

WAY OF EARTH

Training: Boost gains +1 Armor vs. either physical or mental damage.

Backfire: -1 cumulative penalty to Defense and Resistance checks.

- ◆ **Muddied Steps (Basic, Yang + Deception):** Makes a (Yang x10ft.) area slick. Mod (2) check to keep from falling. If they fail, they also suffer a Slow 1 Condition.
- ◆ **Spitting Earth (Med, Yang + Marksman):** Roll with +1 Marksman to deal 1 damage. Boost = half damage to up to (Yang) targets instead.

STATS OF NOTE

Health: 7, **Psyche:** 8, **Yang:** 2, **Yin:** 1, **Rank:** 1, **Initiative:** 6, **Dynamic Actions:** 1, **Dynamic Dice:** 3, **Strength:** 0, **Movement:** 6, **Weapon:** Tessen (Sharp, Concealable)

Tadao is the son of one of the Lotus Coalition's founders, and has had a hand in directing the organization since its inception. He was inducted for his knowledge, substantial independent wealth and lust for medical potions, which he knows a lot about as he frequents many an opium den. Tadao's made a name for himself in the sale and trade of medicinal ingredients and services, but has built up a hefty debt of favors along the way. Since he's struck it big, people are always looking for the cut now.

Even though he's not the best medic, he knows many of the Empire's best. Tadao also works with a number of suppliers to ensure the Lotus Coalition gets their fair share of elixirs to serve the front line warriors. He is a humble man, and knows how to get what he wants without violence, instead preferring to use his words as weapons.



SKILLS

Athletics 0, Crafts 3 (Appraisal), Deception 2, Discipline 3, Empathy 2, Fighting 2, Fortitude 1, Holistics 1, Intimidation 1, Intuition 2, Knowledge 2 (Economics), Marksman 1, Might 0, Perception 2, Perform 2, Persuade 1, Speed 1, Stealth 0, Survival 0, Travel 3

SUMI RIKA

ELEMENT: FIRE, TEMPERAMENT: HOT HEADED

- ◆ **Gift:** Gets mad easily. +1 Might when she is flying off the handle.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma if she just can't stop herself.

PROFESSION: DEDICANT, FOCUS: REVOLUTIONARY

- ◆ **Gift:** +1 Fighting when battling for her cause.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma when she chooses her cause over the goals of the group.

TRAGEDY: RAVAGED BODY, AFFLICTION: SCARRED

- ◆ **Gift:** Ritualistic scarring and tattoos. +1 Fortitude vs. Pain.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma if she frightens people when she doesn't mean to.

WARTIME ROLE: MERCENARY, TITLE: ASSAILANT

- ◆ **Gift:** She's used to fighting a lot of enemies at once. +1 Fighting if outnumbered.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma when she loses something important to her (as often happens to a warrior)

CLAN: VIRTUOUS BODY GARDENERS

- ◆ **Clan Gift - Flowing Ink:** Expert artists. Gain +2 Crafts to produce art of tattoos. Pain penalties reduced by 2.
- ◆ **Clan Trigger - Prove Yourself:** Gain 1 Karma when she feels forced to act against her better judgement in order to prove herself.

CONTACTS

- ◆ **Ally: Yasutake Hizuru (Intuition):** A matronly midwife who claims to have helped more babies enter this world than the lives the Ninja Crusade has taken.
- ◆ **Rival: Sumi Chimaki (Speed):** A stunning beauty but deadly with blades, Chimaki is always the center of attention.

MARTIAL TRAINING

- ◆ **Never Forget a Taste 1 (Tiger Style):** After damaging an enemy, gain +1 Survival (Tracking), +1 Initiative and +1 Fighting against them.
- ◆ **Taste Your Own Blood 1 (Tiger Style):** On a Boost, she may reduce a Pain Condition by 1. Once per Battle, she gains +1 Initiative and +1 Fighting from this act.

WAY OF THE INKED SKIN

Training: May use Withdraw Weapon for free (no check) with a Boost.

Backfire: -1 cumulative Speed penalty

- ◆ **Artful Defense (Basic, Yin + Speed):** Absorbs incoming weapon as a tattoo.
- ◆ **Tiger Claws (Basic, Yang + Fortitude):** Grows claws that deal +1 damage and Pain 1 for (successes) attacks.
- ◆ **Withdraw Weapon (Basic, Yang + Fighting):** Draws weapon from a tattoo.
- ◆ **Shuriken Explosion (Med, Yang + Marksman):** Sprays a (Yang x10ft) radius for 2 damage.

WAY OF THE WARRIOR

Training: Steels their warrior spirit. Dynamic Actions give +2 damage for next attack.

Backfire: Their body breaks, suffering a Broken 1 Condition.

- ◆ **Sturdy Fist (Basic, Yang + Fighting):** Immediately make an attack with a +2 Fighting.

STATS OF NOTE

Health: 8, **Psyche:** 6, **Yang:** 2, **Yin:** 1, **Rank:** 1, **Initiative:** 9, **Dynamic Actions:** 1, **Dynamic Dice:** 3, **Strength:** 3, **Movement:** 11, **Weapon:** None.

Looking for a no-nonsense, take-no prisoners type of gal? Rika is a monster on the battlefield, able to take out soldier after soldier without hesitation, especially if they've done something to make her mad. When the Inks joined the Lotus Coalition, she jumped aboard and often fights on the front lines even when not asked to, often taking on five, ten or even twenty soldiers alone. She believes in the fight against the Empire, more so than she does her safety or even the Lotus Coalition itself. Bringing them down is often all she cares about.

Rika does have a tendency to get drunk on occasion, but even that doesn't make her any less deadly. She has the scars to prove her survivability under pressure. Her family is long-dead at the hands of the Izou Army, yet another reason for her zealous fight against them. Her blades have a single focus now.



SKILLS

Athletics 2, Crafts 2, Deception 0, Discipline 1, Empathy 0, Fighting 4, Fortitude 3 (Drinking), Holistics 0, Intimidation 3, Intuition 2 (Gambling), Knowledge 0, Marksman 1, Might 1, Perception 1, Perform 1, Persuade 2, Speed 4, Stealth 1, Survival 2, Travel 0

TSUKI KURAYAMI

ELEMENT: EARTH, TEMPERAMENT: RESPONSIBLE

- ◆ **Gift:** He helps others to live a good life. +1 Persuade to get others to do the right thing.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma if he pays for someone else's mistake.

PROFESSION: OUTSIDER, FOCUS: HERMIT

- ◆ **Gift:** Knows how to live off the land. +1 Survival to forage/hunt
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma when overwhelmed by busy locales.

TRAGEDY: RAVAGED BODY, AFFLICTION: SCARRED

- ◆ **Gift:** Ritualistic scarring and tattoos. +1 Fortitude vs. Pain.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma if he frightens people when he doesn't mean to.

WARTIME ROLE: SCOUT, TITLE: PATHFINDER

- ◆ **Gift:** Is sent into the field and is always first on the scene. +1 Crafts for trap-making.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma if he mistakes an innocent/friendly as an enemy.

CLAN: PACK OF THE BLACK MOON

- ◆ **Clan Gift - Entwined Souls:** Their ninja dog helps out. Gain +1 bonus when they do.
- ◆ **Clan Trigger - Primal View:** Gain 1 Karma when they forgo etiquette to the group's detriment.

CONTACTS

- ◆ **Ally: Tsuki Mei (Survival):** Known for being able to tame any animal, she often takes excursions into lost lands to find any exotic animal for clients.
- ◆ **Rival: Sanada Mako (Deception):** A trickster playing upon folktales and legends to scare Imperial soldiers away from her forests, she is a skilled illusionist and inventor.

MARTIAL TRAINING

- ◆ **Splitting Arrows 1 (Sharp Style):** Can Block ranged attacks normally with no penalty.
- ◆ **Trap Master 1:** -1 Difficulty for making Attack or Knockdown Traps.

WAY OF TWIN BEASTS

Training: On a Boost, any jutsu also affects their dog.

Backfire: Wild mind, -1 cumulative penalty Initiative and jutsu activation

- ◆ **The Hunt Begins (Basic, Yang + Perception):** Raises their hunting ability. +3 Survival (Tracking).
- ◆ **Canine Form (Med, Yang + Might):** Turns into a dog. +2 Athletics in this form.
- ◆ **Linked Souls (Med, Yin + Empathy):** Can share senses with their dog up to (Yin) miles.

WAY OF WOOD

Training: A Boost gives a +2 bonus to using wooden tools or weapons.

Backfire: Cumulative -1 penalty to Might and Athletics checks.

- ◆ **Tree Hopping (Basic, Yang + Athletics):** 3x Movements in forests and jungles.

STATS OF NOTE

Health: 8, **Psyche:** 5, **Yang:** 2, **Yin:** 1, **Rank:** 1, **Initiative:** 7, **Dynamic Actions:** 1, **Dynamic Dice:** 3, **Strength:** 7, **Movement:** 11, **Weapon:** Ono (Heavy, Sharp, Brutal, Slow)

After the Recoiling Serpents killed his wife and daughter and their unsuccessful attempt to kill him as well, Kurayami burned with righteous fury and wished nothing more than to mete out vengeance on the Serpents. With the ongoing war with the Empire, however, and the need to strengthen and support the Lotus Coalition, the elders convinced him to set aside his need to spill Serpent blood in favor of peacefully supporting the Pack's endeavors in Danketsu. When faced with the feigned atmosphere of cooperation, Kurayami's vengeance overtook him and he removed himself completely so as not to act against his clan.

He lives now as a hermit in the mountains with his dog Keiko, big and grizzled like him. Young pups frequently make the pilgrimage to find him, and learn from him as his field craft skills are peerless despite the horrible scarring at the hands of the Serpents. Few leave without an intense hatred of Serpents.



SKILLS

Athletics 4, Crafts 1, Deception 1, Discipline 0, Empathy 2, Fighting 4, Fortitude 3, Holistics 0, Intimidation 1, Intuition 2, Knowledge 0, Marksman 0, Might 3 (Grappling), Perception 1, Perform 1, Persuade 0, Speed 2, Stealth 2, Survival 2, Travel 1

TSUKINO MAKI

ELEMENT: EARTH, TEMPERAMENT: LINGUIST

- ◆ **Gift:** He knows a lot about different cultures and languages. +1 Knowledge to recall local/cultural information.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma if he recalls incorrectly.

PROFESSION: ARTISAN, FOCUS: SMITH

- ◆ **Gift:** Has expertise in crafting materials, especially arrows. +1 Marksman to hit small targets.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma when he chooses brute strength and it turns out horrible.

TRAGEDY: VICTIM OF CIRCUMSTANCE, AFFLICTION: PLAGUE SURVIVOR

- ◆ **Gift:** Seeing many die before her, he gains +1 Holistics to heal the sick and downtrodden.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma if he lets his urge to heal puts him in danger.

WARTIME ROLE: STRIKER, TITLE: ASSASSIN

- ◆ **Gift:** Always knows how to get the jump on his target. +1 Speed when making a Surprise attack.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma when he underestimates his enemy and they gain the edge.

CLAN: WARDENS OF EQUILIBRIUM

- ◆ **Clan Gift - Balancing Act:** Ki balance gives different bonus. More Yang = +1 Health. More Yin = +1 Psyche. Balanced = +1 both and +1 bonus to jutsu activation checks.
- ◆ **Clan Trigger - Unpredictable History:** Gain 1 Karma when he needs to break a promise or contract and it causes trouble.

CONTACTS

- ◆ **Ally: Chuushin Taro (Crafts):** A master counterfeiter, his ability to reproduce priceless art is unmatched.
- ◆ **Rival: Narumi Nao (Survival):** An expert animal trainer, her circus animals are a delight to see.

MARTIAL TRAINING

- ◆ **Firing Blind 1 (Ranged Style):** Ranged attacks ignore darkness penalties.
- ◆ **Alchemy 1 - Area of Study: Healing:** Can create the following potions: Miasma, Poison and Restore.

WAY OF BALANCING SCALES

Training: On a Boost, they may convert 1 ki to another type for free.

Backfire: Lose ki until they have equal values. If already equal, take 1 damage.

- ◆ **Harmonic Flow (Basic, Yin + Survival):** Environment can be tapped for ki +2 times. Boost = resets tapping value.
- ◆ **Harmonic Resonance (Adv, Yin + Empathy):** Using an Action to resonate give allies a Boost on any successful check and drawing a Karma die counts as 2 dice for everyone 1 taken.

WAY OF EARTH

Training: Boost gains +1 Armor vs. either physical or mental damage.

Backfire: -1 cumulative penalty to Defense and Resistance checks.

- ◆ **Stone Like Clay (Basic, Yin + Crafts):** Able to mold stone like clay.

WAY OF METAL

Training: +1 bonus with Metal tools/weapons.

Backfire: -1 penalty to use metal tools/weapons, and -1 to Block or Brace against them.

- ◆ **Mold Metal (Basic, Yin + Crafts):** Able to mold metal like clay

STATS OF NOTE

Health: 6, **Psyche:** 7, **Yang:** 1, **Yin:** 2, **Rank:** 1, **Initiative:** 5, **Dynamic Actions:** 1, **Dynamic Dice:** 3, **Strength:** 6, **Movement:** 9, **Weapon:** Throwing Spikes (Ranged, Sharp)

Maki is a large and seemingly well-fed male with a small beard, a constant smile and big sleeves. He sings a lot when he's working, unless it's a stealth mission (even then, he's tempted to hum). He carries an airy feeling about him, in contrasting harmony with his work as a forgemaster where he crafts throwing needles in endless varieties, but never leaves behind a good handheld projectile... even if it wasn't his when the battle started.

Maki's most gorgeous tools and weapons are made, not with forgecraft, but with his jutsu to mold stone and metal barehanded, turning everything from common iron to gemstones into gorgeous, paper-thin cutting edges and flawlessly-measured ornaments. Some ninja tend to bonsai plants as a hobby, but Maki uses his jutsu to remove dirt and rock from iron ore to create lattice-like trees of metal. When he's feeling contrary, Maki will do the opposite, using the Way of Metal to push away the ore and leave behind strange geodes and puzzle-mazes of stone.



SKILLS

Athletics 3, Crafts 4, Deception 1, Discipline 2, Empathy 1, Fighting 0, Fortitude 1, Holistics 2 (Alchemy), Intimidation 0, Intuition 1, Knowledge 2, Marksman 4 (Thrown), Might 1, Perception 2, Perform 1, Persuade 1, Speed 1, Stealth 2, Survival 2, Travel 0

ZENIGATA "SHO" SHOICHI

ELEMENT: METAL, TEMPERAMENT: AUTHORITATIVE

- ◆ **Gift:** Is striking and controlling. +1 Intimidation to issue commands
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma if/when he makes a wrong call.

PROFESSION: WARRIOR, FOCUS: SOLDIER

- ◆ **Gift:** He served in a militia turned bandit force. +1 Discipline vs. Pain.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma when his loyalty to the group and to his old army conflict.

TRAGEDY: CIVIL DISCORD, AFFLICTION: WANTED

- ◆ **Gift:** The empire has his number, so he's always looking over his shoulder. +1 Athletics to evade the law.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma if he gets recognized and things go badly.

WARTIME ROLE: FOOT SOLDIER, TITLE: ENFORCER

- ◆ **Gift:** He knows how to get what he wants. +1 Intimidation for interrogation.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma when disobeying an order (as he is prone to do) causes issues.

CLAN: WILL OF IRON

- ◆ **Clan Gift - Steel Never Lies:** +1 bonus when using metal tools/weapons. +2 if they made it themselves.
- ◆ **Clan Trigger - Black and White:** Gain 1 Karma when he stands firm on preserving the law to their detriment.

CONTACTS

- ◆ **Ally: Uefugi Miwa (Empathy):** Captain of the guard for a local village the Izou travel through often, she always has information to share.
- ◆ **Rival: Hagane Fuyuko (Intuition):** An investigator whose focus on solving crimes borders on zealotry, they find themselves constantly at odds with how their duty keeps them from ever truly resting.

MARTIAL TRAINING

- ◆ **Catching Prey 1 (Mantis Style):** Successful Block ends with a Grapple. -1 penalty if trapping against a weapon.
- ◆ **Bone Crusher 1 (Blunt Style):** +1 damage with Blunt weapons, and create Pain 2 Condition (instead of 1) on Boost.

WAY OF HEAVEN'S JUDGEMENT

Training: On a Boost, they gain a +1 bonus against an active criminal.

Backfire: Suffers a Confused 1 Condition.

- ◆ **Sense the Guilty (Basic, yin + Empathy):** Senses if target is guilty. Boost = gets visions of their crime.
- ◆ **Hunt the Guilty (Basic, Yin + Intuition):** +1 bonus to find clues, track perpetrator or interrogation.
- ◆ **Part the Mystery (Med, Yin + Intuition):** Learn who committed a crime or how or why it was committed. Boost = 2 out of the 3.

WAY OF THE WARRIOR

Training: Steals their warrior spirit. Dynamic Actions give +2 damage for next attack.

Backfire: Their body breaks, suffering a Broken 1 Condition.

- ◆ **Fighter's Focus (Basic, Yin + Perception):** +1 bonus on attack/defense against target. Boost = do +1 damage.

WAY OF THE WATER

Training: +2 bonus to next Defense.

Backfire: -1 penalty to Movement and Defense.

- ◆ **Like Water (Med, Yin + Intuition):** Moves become more fluid. +2 bonus to Block, Dodge, Brace or Find Cover, for the Battle.

STATS OF NOTE

Health: 6, **Psyche:** 7, **Yang:** 0, **Yin:** 3, **Rank:** 1, **Initiative:** 8, **Dynamic Actions:** 1, **Dynamic Dice:** 3, **Strength:** 4, **Movement:** 8, **Weapon:** Jitte (Crushing, Blunt)

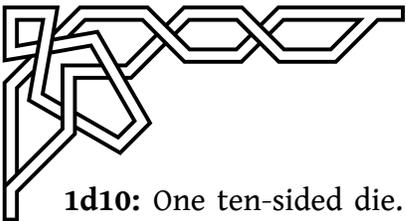
His story centers on his love for a magistrate's daughter. Sho chose to turn his back on his clan to serve as an imperial enforcer for the love of his life and their growing family. After several years of faithful service, his family connections were revealed and he was framed for the murder of his father-in-law. The Empire now sees him as a dangerous criminal, an animal backed into a corner.

Torn from the world he chose, many among the Will of Iron question his dedication to true justice. Sho is constantly proving himself to his clan and the Lotus Coalition. He knows he will one day face the soldiers he once called his friends, and cut them down. To remove this thought, he lives only to be reunited with his family and to take revenge against those who betrayed him. While a man of few words, he quietly admits to anyone willing to ask that he doesn't know what his future holds once the Ninja Crusade is complete.



SKILLS

Athletics 1, Crafts 0, Deception 1, Discipline 3, Empathy 4 (Hiding Emotions), Fighting 3 (Protect), Fortitude 1, Holistics 0, Intimidation 2, Intuition 3, Knowledge 1, Marksman 1, Might 3, Perception 1, Perform 1, Persuade 2, Speed 2, Stealth 0, Survival 0, Travel 1



GLOSSARY

1d10: One ten-sided die. Multiple d10s are listed with other numbers, such as 4d10 = four ten-sided dice.

Action (Standard): In Battle, any task the character instigates. This is anything from throwing a punch to picking a lock.

Armor: Protection against harm, negating damage equal to its rating.

Backfire: A negative effect for failing a jutsu activation check.

Battle: When characters engage in a battle of wits or fists against other characters or Extras.

Bonds: Storytelling cues that help individual squadmates begin play with connections already in place.

Bonus: Extra dice the players receive for their roll. If they gain a +3 bonus, they roll three extra dice.

Boost: An additional effect that makes a success even better. If the player gets 3 more successes than the Difficulty, they gain a Boost.

Character: Fictional roles created by players that exist in the setting and world created by the GM.

Check/Roll: Where the player attempts to meet or beat the Difficulty. Players usually roll a number of d10s equal to the total value of their Skill combo.

Choice: Selection along the life path character creation process, each giving a Gift and a Trigger. There are 5 major choices in *The Ninja Crusade 2nd Edition*, followed by Martial Training and Jutsu Selection.

Clan: Group of ninja, usually associated with family or social ties.

Combo: The combination of two Skills to determine a player's dicepool.

Conditions: Effects of taking on damage, such as Burned, Scarred or Poisoned.

Contact: Allies and Rivals a character can gain information or favors from during play. They receive two during character creation.

Consequence: A Critical Failure creates Consequences on the character, giving them negative effects that last usually for the Scene.

Critical Failure: When the player rolls no successes while any of the dice results in a 1, this means failure in a huge way.

Damage: Points subtracted from Health or Psyche, bringing the character closer to death or mental breakdown.

Defense: In Battle, any task the character takes in response to an Action against them.

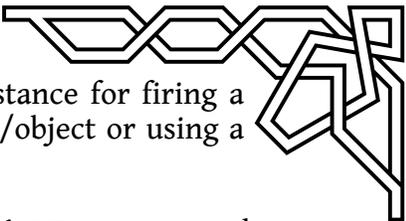
Difficulty: The target number needed to achieve a task, ranging from Simple (1) to Legendary (5). If total successes meets or beats the Difficulty, the task is successful.

Dynamic Actions: During a Battle, characters can spend Dynamic Actions for a variety of effects, from extra actions to increasing damage. Determined by Rank.

Dynamic Environments: Special terrain that puts characters in a crazy or dangerous situation outside of a normal Battle.

Experience Points (XP): Represents growth of characters and can be spent to raise existing abilities or learn new ones.

Extra: An Extra is any character controlled by the GM instead of a player.



Fate Die: If a player has no dice in their dicepool for a Skill Combo, they roll a Fate Die. They only succeed if they roll a 10.

Game Master (GM): The GM is the member of the roleplaying group who creates and controls the world the player's characters interact within.

Gift: Positive traits applied to a character from each of their Choices during character creation. Usually grants a +1 bonus to a specific type of roll.

Health: The numerical value of the character's ability to take physical damage. If Health drops to zero, the character is close to Death.

Initiative: In combat, used to gauge when a character gets their Turn within a Round.

Journeys: A series of checks that take the characters from one place to another.

Jutsu: Awesome magical powers wielded by ninja. They come in many different flavors.

Karma Pool: Dice placed in the center of the table after characters roll Critical Failures or activate Triggers. Any player can grab from this pool for bonus dice or to affect the Scene.

Ki: Building blocks of the universe, used to fuel the ninja's jutsu.

Movement: Gauges the character's running speed.

Penalty: Dice the player subtracts for their dicepool. If they suffer a -3 penalty, they roll three fewer dice. If this brings them to 0 dice, they still get to roll a Fate Die.

Player: You are the player, the one who assumes the role of the character.

Psyche: The numerical value of the character's ability to take mental damage. If Psyche drops to zero, the character falls unconscious.

Quality: A negative or positive attribute attached to a particular weapon.

Range: The effective distance for firing a gun, throwing a weapon/object or using a jutsu.

Rank: Tracks a character's XP progress and grants additional ki and dynamic actions.

Round: In Battle, this represents one full cycle of combat where all characters and Extras have exhausted their Actions. Initiative is rolled at the start of each Round.

Scene: The current situation happening to the characters. They are considered to have changed Scenes if they go to a new location or circumstances change.

Session: When your roleplaying group sits down to play.

Skills: Numerical values that represent a character's learned abilities.

Specialty: Grants a +1 bonus to a particular use of a Skill. Similar to Gifts, but not linked to a Choice.

Squad: The group of characters

Story: A story characters go through with a beginning, middle and end. At the end of each story arch, players should be awarded bonus XP.

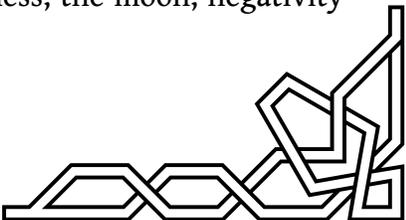
Strength: Gauges the character's ability to lift and carry items without a roll.

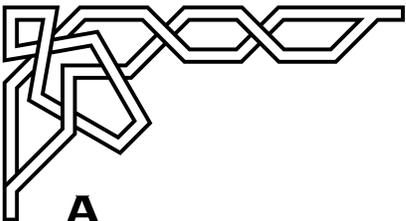
Trigger: A negative trait associated with a character's Choice during character creation. Can be activated to gain Karma.

Turn: A character's turn to act within a Round, determined by Initiative (or use of Dynamic Actions)

Yang: The power of light, the sun, positivity and activity.

Yin: The power of darkness, the moon, negativity and lethargy.





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