

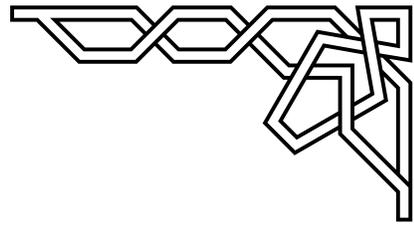


THE NINJA CRUSADE SECOND EDITION

QUICKSTART

INCLUDES:

- GAME AND RULES SUMMARY
- INTRO ADVENTURE
- 10 PREGENERATED CHARACTERS



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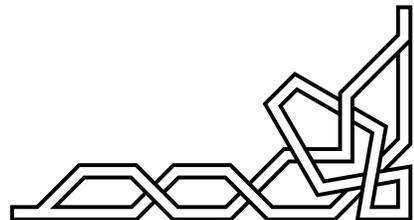
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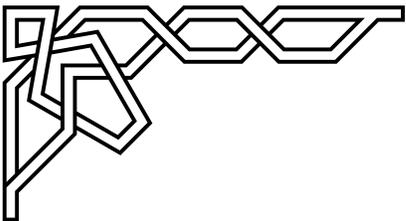
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INTRODUCTION TO THE QUICKSTART



WHAT IS THE NINJA CRUSADE 2ND EDITION?

For millennia, the ninja tradition has seen the rise and fall of many an empire and 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 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

INTRODUCTION TO THE GAME

game of bloodshed, excitement and drama.

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.



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 manipulate tattoos 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

A FEW INSPIRATIONS

- ◆ **Naruto and Naruto: Shippuden:** 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.
- ◆ **Basilisk: The Kōga Ninja Scrolls:** 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.
 - ◆ **Kung Fu Hustle:** 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 worth the watch. Watch this movie, even if you are not going to use it as inspiration for *The Ninja Crusade 2nd Edition*.

THE NINJA CRUSADE

SECOND EDITION

RULES REFERENCE

APPLYING SKILLS TO COMBOS

| | |
|--------------|--|
| Athletics | For physical activities (jumping, climbing, etc.) |
| Crafts | To create art, take things apart or put things together |
| Deception | When there is an element of lying |
| Discipline | For mental defense or concentration |
| Empathy | To sense emotions, tell if someone is lying or control your own emotions |
| Fighting | Used for close combat fighting, unarmed or with a weapon |
| Fortitude | For physical resistance (vs. poison, sleep, etc.) |
| Holistics | When it involves medical knowledge |
| Intimidation | When trying to get what you want through fear/force |
| Intuition | For tasks utilizing instinct or gut feelings |
| Knowledge | When it's all about what you know (science, law, etc.) |
| Marksman | Used for ranged fighting, either throwing or shooting |
| Might | For anything requiring physical strength |
| Perception | To use one's senses to find or search for something |
| Perform | When one is putting on a show for an audience |
| Persuade | When trying to get what you want through negotiation |
| Speed | For tasks that need to be done quickly and with finesse |
| Stealth | To hide oneself, sneak around or camouflage |
| Survival | For surviving in environments, including navigation and tracking |
| Travel | Used for Journeys and riding (horse, wagon, etc.) |

DIFFICULTIES

- ◆ **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.
- ◆ **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.

SKILL USAGE

Most checks are made by taking the value of two different Skills, putting them together and then rolling that many d10s to try to get successes. For instance, repairing a wagon would require Crafts (to show you are fixing it) and Travel (because of what you are fixing). 7s, 8s and 9s count as 1 Success, while a 10 counts as 2 successes. Successes must meet the Difficulty (or opponent's roll if opposed).

- ◆ **Fate Die:** Bonuses may add dice and penalties may subtract dice. If a player is ever left with no dice in their combo after penalties, they may roll 1d10. Only a result of 10 has a chance of success.

BOOSTS

When successes on a check exceed its Difficulty by 3 or more the ninja gains an extra benefit, called a Boost.

- ◆ **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 for a Boost.

KARMA POOL

Adding Dice: At the start of each session, the Karma Pool is equal to the number of players at the table. During play, events and character choices may add more dice to the pool:

- ◆ **Triggers:** The player or GM may activate a Trigger whenever conditions are met, usually adding 1 die to the Karma Pool.
- ◆ **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: Any player may use Karma Pool dice on their turn as long as no other player objects. 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.
- ◆ **Dramatic Rewrites:** They change something in the Scene to fit their needs in the heat of the moment. 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.

TURN SEQUENCE

- ◆ **Step One: Choose Action**
- ◆ **Step Two: Choose Defense**
- ◆ **Step Three: Choose Skill Combo**
- ◆ **Step Four: Resolve effects/Calculate damage**

DYNAMIC ACTIONS

Note: Ki may be spent reflexively for Dynamic Actions on a one-for-one basis.

OFFENSIVE USES

- ◆ **Avoid Backfire (1):** Negates Backfire effects.
- ◆ **Counter Attack (1):** After a successful Defense check, the fighter may make an immediate Action as a counter attack.
- ◆ **Deeper Cuts (1):** Causes +1 damage to a successful attack. Only once per attack, per target.
- ◆ **Enhanced Attack (1):** Gain a +2 bonus to an Attack.
- ◆ **Retreating Attack (1):** Make an instant attack on a retreating target (Moderate (2), unless terrain or circumstantial obstacles make it a harder check).

DEFENSIVE USES

- ◆ **Deflect Attack (2):** Use a jutsu to deflect an attack, reducing successes directly before making a Defense check. May only be used once against any given attack.
- ◆ **Enhanced Defense (1):** Gain a +2 bonus to Defense check.
- ◆ **Thicker Skin (1):** Negate 1 damage taken.

OTHER USES

- ◆ **Dynamic Interactions (1):** Use Dynamic Environments.
- ◆ **Extra Actions (1):** Take +1 Standard Action (up to Speed).
- ◆ **Ignore Conditions (1):** Ignores all active Conditions (like Pain or Bleeding) for a single Action.
- ◆ **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):** Interrupt someone's Action. Only once per Round.
- ◆ **Zen Mind (1):** Gain +1 ki (of either type) from a single mold. May only spend up to 2 Dynamic Actions at a time.

RANGE

- ◆ **Grappling:** Touching and grabbing onto each other.
- ◆ **Close:** Fighters within about 5ft. of each other.
- ◆ **Near:** Fighters within 6ft. to 15ft. Weapons with Reach allow for strikes at this Range. Non-ranged weapons can be thrown at Near opponents, but suffer a -2 penalty.
- ◆ **Far:** Usually as far as the character can see clearly. Thrown non-ranged weapons will not make it to Far Range.
- ◆ **Distant:** Often too far to hit anyone with accuracy. At this Range, even Ranged weapons suffer a -2 penalty.

WEAPON QUALITIES

| NAME | EFFECT |
|----------------|--|
| Blunt | Boost = Cause a Pain 1 Condition. |
| 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 | Boost = Cause a Bruised 1 Condition. |
| Disarming | May disarm opponent's weapon on a Boost. |
| Fragile | The weapon does not deal extra damage. |
| Heavy | Target suffers -1 penalty to Block |
| Master-Crafted | Immune to being broken, disarmed or affected by jutsu. +1 bonus to all checks. |
| Quick | Wielder gains +1 Initiative |
| Ranged | May attack targets at Far or Distant Range. |
| Reach | May attack targets in Near Range. |
| Paired | +1 bonus to Block. Using only one, however, creates a -2 penalty to all checks. |
| Piercing | Weapon ignores 1 level of Armor |
| Poisonous | Boost = Cause a Poisoned 1 Condition. |
| Sharp | Boost = Cause a Bleeding 1 Condition. |
| Skilled | Gives +1 bonus to listed Skill while wielding |
| Slow | Wielder suffers -2 Initiative |
| Unpredictable | Target suffers -1 penalty to Dodge. |
| Unwieldy | Attack checks suffer a -1 penalty. |

JUSTU ACTIVATION

Min Ki: Minimum Ki level needed to use jutsu

Difficulty: Successes needed to avoid Backfire

| Type | Min Ki | Difficulty |
|----------------|--------|------------|
| Basic Jutsu | 1 | 2 |
| Median Justu | 2 | 3 |
| Advanced Justu | 4 | 4 |

STRENGTH CHART

| 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 |

DETERMINING INITIATIVE

Initiative is a static value for all characters, determining in what order they'll act every Round in order of highest to lowest. So, a character with Initiative 5 would act before another with Initiative 4. This value can be changed by spending Dynamic Actions.

DYNAMIC DICE

At the beginning of each Round, each player will roll their Dynamic Dice. Each success (determined normally) gives them another Dynamic Action in addition to the those they have automatically. A Rank 1 ninja, for example, starts with 1 Dynamic Action and 3 Dynamic Dice. If they roll 3 successes, they have 4 Dynamic Action for the Round, which can be spent on a number of awesome effects, including increased damage, extra Actions or ignoring Conditions.

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.

HANDLING 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 member 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.

ANTAGONIST TECHNIQUES

Skills with a "+" beside them indicate the foe receives a +1 bonus against any roll made with that Skill. Skills with a "-" beside them means the foe suffers a -1 penalty whenever they face an opponent who uses that Skill.

ACTION TYPES

- ◆ **Inflict Harm:** An attempt to deal physical or mental damage to another character. Deals damage equal to net successes. Weapons add +1 damage.
- ◆ **Plan Attack:** Taking a moment to plan one's action, adds a +2 bonus to their roll.
- ◆ **Affect Composure:** Changes the emotional state of the target and deals 1 mental damage.
- ◆ **Disarm:** Remove the target's weapon.
- ◆ **Initiate Grab:** Grab on to your opponent. victims suffer a -1 penalty per person holding them. Those in the grab can use Might as a Primary Skill instead of Fighting.
- ◆ **Break Grab:** Cancels a grab on the character.
- ◆ **Knock Back:** Their target stumbles backward (Attacker's Strength - Defender's Strength)x5 ft. and take 1 physical damage. If more than 20 ft., the target is Knocked Down too.
- ◆ **Knock Down:** Fall to the ground and take 1 damage. Must take Prepare Action to get back up.
- ◆ **Mold Ki:** Generates 1 Yin or 1 Yang ki (to replenish spent Ki or meet Ki minimums for using Median or Advanced jutsu)
- ◆ **Retreat:** Cut ties to current Battle and run away.
- ◆ **Sprint/Rush:** Run at fastest speed, gaining +2 bonus to hit and +1 damage to followup attack. Ranged attackers suffer -2 penalty to hit the character while sprinting.
- ◆ **Use Jutsu:** Use of any jutsu requires an Action, unless it is listed as Reflexive.

DEFENSE TYPES

- ◆ **Block:** Use your body or a weapon to stop and incoming attacker. If blocking a weapon unarmed, suffer a -2 penalty.
- ◆ **Brace:** Let the attack hit you and use (Fortitude/2) or (Discipline/2) as Armor against the attack. Damage can only be reduced to 1 this way.
- ◆ **Catch:** Grab something nearby or something that was thrown. If the item is sharp, suffer -2 penalty.
- ◆ **Dodge:** Get out of the way.
- ◆ **Find Cover:** Hiding behind something else. The cover takes the brunt of the attack.
- ◆ **Protect:** Take damage for another target up to (Movement/2) away.

CONDITIONS

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. Rather than taking damage, the character may choose to take on a Condition, removing damage equal to the level of the Condition and jotting down the Condition on their character sheet instead.

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.

PHYSICAL CONDITIONS

- ◆ **Bleeding:** To do anything physical (Attack or Defense), the character must make 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:** Has no food, water, sleep, breathable air or some other sustenance they require. They may not recover Health damage until the Deprived Condition ends.
- ◆ **Injured:** The character suffers a penalty equal to the Condition level to all checks with a chosen limb.
- ◆ **Knocked Out:** The character falls unconscious until the Condition ends. Every day they are unconscious, they make a Tough (3) Fortitude check to lower the level by 1.
- ◆ **Sensory Loss:** Loss of senses, such as being temporarily blinded or deafened. Suffer a penalty equal to the level to 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. Suffer a penalty to Initiative equal to their Condition level.

MENTAL CONDITIONS

- ◆ **Afraid:** The character has been frightened by something. Make a Tough (3) Discipline + Empathy check at the beginning of each Round on contact with the source. If they fail, they lose their Action. They suffer a penalty to this check equal to their Condition level.
- ◆ **Confused:** While Confused, any 1s rolled during a check subtracts 1 success.
- ◆ **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 can only use their highest Skill in a Skill combo or do not receive the +1 bonus for a Single Skill check.
- ◆ **Embarrassed:** Suffer a penalty equal to level 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.

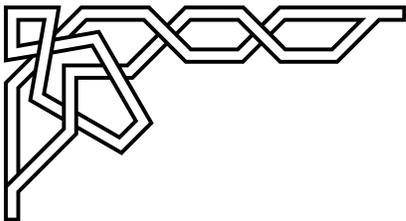
CROSSOVER CONDITIONS

- ◆ **Broken:** They suffer a penalty to a chosen Skill equal to their Condition level.
- ◆ **Dosed:** Effects from a potion created with Alchemy.
- ◆ **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. They 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. Natural healing is also halved.

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.



ADVENTURE: THE NOBLEMAN'S DAUGHTER

This adventure introduces new players to the world of *The Ninja Crusade*, 2nd Edition. It works well as an overview of how court politics, Izou soldier abuses, clan mixing, infiltration and the wonderful powers of jutsu can work together. It is, more than anything, an investigative story with plenty of action elements. Best suited for 2 to 5 ninja of beginning level (such as the ninja included). Experienced players should feel free to create their own characters, since this adventure is good for all types.

It takes place in the Middle Province during the blossoming season of spring. The skies are clear and the weather is beautiful, but the air stinks of war. The region has many expansive fields with tall grass and a few forests. Remember: Details make the story.

SCENE 1: RECEIVING THE MISSION



The story begins in the Bokusou ninja camp, a secret multi-clan camp found hidden within the forests of the eastern region of the Middle Province. This mixed camp is the norm among the Lotus Coa-

lition ever since the founding of Danketsu. That doesn't mean, however, that the occasional fight between rival ninja doesn't still pop up. Still, any ninja from any clan (even Ronin) is allowed within the camp where the leaders of the coalition hand out missions they feel fit within the expertise of certain ninja. Of course, some missions come with ample warning, while others do not.

Each of the ten major clans has representation within Bokusou. However, with so many major battles occurring simultaneously, only the players' characters seem to be available for this particular mission. Each character receives a note to gear up and report to Chuushin Gurasu, camp leader and member of the Wardens of Equilibrium.

Chuushin Gurasu is a merchant prince from Daiwa, rich and young, and holds a lot of sway in the Lotus Coalition, so it makes sense that he is the camp boss. He has devastating abilities to make an opponent's ki explode within their body; so few ninja choose to cross him. Chuushin Naomi is his third cousin, but she has chosen to follow a different clan instead, the Will of Iron, and they don't really get along.

Once the group is assembled, he delivers the following information:

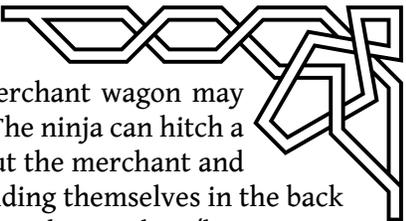
“We have been contacted by Neitaki Sai, a nobleman who currently resides in Heigenchou. His daughter, Neitaki Maya, has gone missing and you are now tasked with finding her. This particular nobleman holds sway within the Izou courts and is one of few who actually fights to have the Emperor end the Ninja Crusade. If he is successful, then this ridiculous war can end and we can all return to our normal lives. He has called for us to assist and we will heed that call or risk losing his support entirely. This mission is of the utmost importance, so you’d best be on your way to Heigenchou.”

He’ll answer any follow-up questions the characters may have, but Gurasu’s information is limited to the short letter, written in code, that he holds in his hands. To get more information, the characters will have to venture to Heigenchou and get answers directly from the nobleman. After checking in with their respective clan leaders, the group can head off whenever they feel it is appropriate.

SCENE 2: HEIGENCHOU, THE CITY OF PLAINS

Their destination is Heigenchou, the City of Plains. The city currently houses some of the largest farming communities outside the Cradle of Life Province and was the first to try out advanced agriculture techniques for the empire. A city in unrest, heavy guard and powerful forts occupy the city, and have for decades, to ensure the workers continue producing the food needed to feed the thriving noble tradition. As the characters approach, they’ll see that tall stone walls surround the city, with several manned guard towers and guards at the southern gate. Finding a way in is very important, but isn’t that easy. The characters, being ninja, likely have no official travel papers that would allow them entry to such a highly-guarded city, and others have recognizable faces. There are plenty of ways that they can go about this.

✦ **Sneaking In:** They are ninja after all. The characters can attempt to get close to the wall and vault over or climb it to get to the other side undetected. Kumori Kunio and Hebi Ine can easily accomplish this task.

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- ✦ **Hitching a Ride:** A merchant wagon may be going into the city. The ninja can hitch a ride by either taking out the merchant and taking his/her place, hiding themselves in the back of the wagon while others distract him/her or even pretended to be hurt so the merchant will bring them in for treatment. Ichatsuko No Kino and Sakamoto Tadao, specifically, are fond of talking their way through tough situations.
 - ✦ **Take Out the Guards:** Simply sneaking in may not be enough. The ninja could try to take out the guards and get through the gate. If it’s late at night, it may even be doable. During the day is much too dangerous though. Tsuki Kurayami, Sumi Rika and Chuushin Naomi would be first to jump into a fight. They’ll have to be quick about it, however, since causing too much commotion could attract even more guards.

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

- ✦ **Walk In:** Characters from illustrious backgrounds can, essentially, just walk in – they’d have the right papers to go just about anywhere. If they are suave enough, they can even convince the guards the other ninja are their servants (scribes, bodyguards, etc.). Having Ishikawa Ryota (a noble) or Arai Kaede (a monk) in the group can have this effect.
- ✦ **Traveling Troupe:** The city is in need of some jovial entertainment, so if the group can convince the guards that they are there to put on a show, they’ll likely be escorted inside without too much trouble. Then, of course, they may have tagalongs until they actually do put on a show. Having Odoriko Minori in the group makes this much easier, since he already carries performance clout and reputation.

Now within the walls, the characters can see a city almost split in three separate sectors. One section is full of large fields of



farmers tilling under the supervision of soldiers and another, a small town of sorts, full of small shops and even smaller homes. The third sector is heavily guarded and appears as a military headquarters for the Izou.

SCENE 3: INTERVIEWING NEITAKI SAI

However the characters get inside the walls, their next stop is to see Neitaki Sai. Within the residential sector are a handful of estates, built to house the few nobles who live in Heigenchou. Those with political or high-class knowledge, like Chuushin Naomi and Ishikawa Ryota, would instantly know why so few nobles live in this city. Other characters can make a Moderate (2) Knowledge x2 check. The reason is simple - this town is where political careers go to die. Neitaki Sai was sent to Heigenchou by the Emperor himself to "tend to the workers," as way to get him out of the courts and make it that much harder for his anti-Crusade message to be heard. He has been attempting to build political clout for the last few years to get himself back into the court's good graces, but this recent setback could prove to be a horrible distraction.

The nobleman's estate is located near the far northeastern wall and appears bare compared to estates found in other cities. Knocking on the door, the characters are greeted by Cho, the only servant the Emperor allowed Sai to bring with him. She is a petite commoner woman, barely 20 years in age.

Cho leads the characters to the main room, where they find Sai. With a successful Simple (1) Empathy + Intuition check, it is easy to tell he has been crying lately and is obviously distraught. When asked to explain the situation, he provides the following.

"My daughter Maya has been missing for three days. She's not been found at school and none of the city guards claim to have seen her. The last thing we did was fight when last I saw her - about her new friends and the fact that she would not bring them here to be officially presented to me. And now she's gone and I may never see her again. Please find her. She is the last remnant of the family I have lost to this ridiculous war."



A number of clues can be gathered from the estate, including those found below. The GM should feel encouraged to add others that may enhance their take on this adventure.

- ✦ **Family Portrait:** Looking around the house, in general, the characters should notice a portrait of the nobleman, his wife and Maya (giving them an idea of what the girl looks like – approximately 15 years old). If asked about it, he'll remark about how his wife died only a year ago, killed by an anti-ninja supporter – and that Maya has never forgiven him, leading to almost constant rebellion on her part.
- ✦ **Wildflowers Painting:** Along the wall, there are a series of paintings, each of which is of a different type of beautiful environment, from a lakeside to a mountain's peak. If remarked upon, Sai tells the characters that the painting of the fields of wildflowers was always Maya's favorite. It's where she used to play when she was younger, but to his knowledge, she doesn't go to that area, which is along the eastern city wall.
- ✦ **Interviewing Cho:** If questioned in front of Sai, Cho simply denies having any knowledge of what's going on. However, if she is pulled to the side and questioned separately, she can give some insight into the situation if the questioner makes a successful Moderate (2) Persuasion + Empathy check. She knows of two boys, named Goro and Isi, that Maya has been hanging around with. She has only heard their names offhand when Maya let them slip by accident; the girl was usually secretive about anything going on in her life.
- ✦ **Searching Maya's Room:** If the characters don't think of it, Sai will offer. "If you need to search my daughter's room, please do. I haven't entered it since I realized she was gone." Those who search the room must make a Tough (3) Perception + Intuition check. If successful, they will realize two things. First, they check the girl's bedroll to see a layer of dust at least 2 weeks old over it. She hasn't been sleeping here, that's for sure. They also uncover a slate in the floor underneath a vanity's leg that can be removed. In the hole is a leather bag that seems to have numerous pieces of jewelry inside. A quick Simple (1) Crafts + Knowledge check, to appraise the items, makes it clear these didn't belong to Maya. Not only are they in varying sizes and style, but also a few noble family crests can be found among different pieces.

WEARING THE JEWELRY

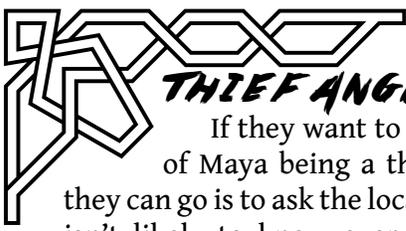
Some of the characters, specifically Ichat-suko No Kino or perhaps Sumi Rika, would have no problem keeping one of the pieces of jewelry for themselves. Wearing them prominently through the town or in the local sake house will attract attention in the form of the victim from whom the jewelry was stolen. For instance, if it was a ring, a drunken man may attack and claim that ring belongs to his wife. If it is a necklace, a woman and her friends who want to take it back may accost the ninja. The characters should be careful how they handle these situations. They may be able to glean another clue or might just attract the guards if they choose to use force.

Average Citizen (Squad)

Health: 15 **Psyche:** 12
Attack: 3 **Actions:** 1 (Squad)
Defense: 3 **Armor:** 0
Initiative: 3 **Damage:** +1
Dynamic Actions: 1
Suggested Skills (2 dice): Any four of choice.

SCENE 4: FURTHER EXPLORATION

The characters may have what they need to track down the girl – or – they may want to explore the situation a bit more before moving forward. Several angles exist that they may want to check into, but none of them are mandatory to continuing with the adventure. On the other hand, it may shed light on the current situation and events that have occurred, as well as provide more flavor to the city of Heigenchou. Three different leads can be explored in any order or not at all.



THIEF ANGLE

If they want to investigate the possibility of Maya being a thief a bit more, one place they can go is to ask the local guard. Your lowly guard isn't likely to know everything, though, so they'll point the characters to the public office and give the name Captain Kimura as a contact. The characters must wait a few hours to speak to him, and then he is not a very pleasant man to be around.

"What do you have to waste my time with now?" is how the characters are greeted (no matter their social station or demeanor), which should give a sign as to his disposition. If asked about any thefts in the city, he'll remark, "Yes. If you want to make a report of missing items, that's not me. Go talk to Kai." When the characters no doubt question further, he'll respond with, "Here to collect a reward, eh? There's a burglar out there, sure. He even stole my son's prized dagger. We have no leads at the moment, but there is a reward if you bring the bastard to justice. Double if you can get me my dagger."

He'll also reveal that the Ire noble family has claimed half of the reported thefts themselves. Note: Characters like Kumori Kunio, Sakamoto Tadao and Hebi Ine would jump at the chance to collect the reward, which could come into play later on in the adventure.

POLITICAL ENEMIES ANGLE

Some characters may suspect that Maya's disappearance could be yet another attack on Sai's family for political reasons. Characters with noble roots, like Ishikawa Ryota, may immediately begin running down the list of noble families in Heigenchou: Neitaki, Irei, Sousou and Rakusa. While Ryota can invite himself into any of their homes, anyone else must be invited to even get through the gates. The characters can visit the local letter station and find the delivery hawk belonging to each noble family. After writing a letter to request an audience, they attach it to a hawk's leg and it immediately flies toward that family's estate. Since they aren't residents to the town, they can only wait for a response (instead of leaving an alert notice near their own hawk). Two of the birds are returned within 20 min-

utes with refused audiences – the Sousou family refused outright while the Rakusa family letter remarked that they were out of town at the moment. The Irei, on the other hand, even after hours of waiting (which is very unusual for a family with as many servants as the Irei possess) give back no word.

The characters can leave the situation alone or attempt to investigate the Irei estate. Initially, the Irei estate appears to be much larger than the Neitaki estate, probably because the family head, Irei Daichi, has recently gained the Emperor's favor. However, there are no torches lit on the property and no candles visible from the inside. Picking the lock can be done with a Moderate (2) Crafts + Speed check, to let them in quickly. A successful Moderate (2) Perception + Intuition check reveals no audible sounds (if any character rolls a Tough (3), they can hear muffled sound). To search the estate requires a Perception + Knowledge check from all the characters with a +2 bonus to their check if they heard the earlier sounds coming from a floorboard that leads to a secret basement.

Lifting the wedged opening up, it reveals all of the family servants and the members of the Irei family lying unconscious on the ground. A Simple (1) Holistics x2 check reveals that, even though their breathing is shallow, they are still alive. A successful Moderate (2) Intuition + Perception check means the character caught a glimpse of the Irei family portrait as they entered... and their son isn't in the basement. None of the people in the basement remember what exactly happened to them, but it's pretty obvious they were either drugged or there was jutsu at work here, because they have been down there for two days (the length of time Maya has been missing). As happy as he is to see the characters and be to set free, Irei Daichi demands an explanation as to what the characters were doing on his property (especially if they are low-class). A good excuse and a successful Moderate (2) Persuasion + Intuition (to convince him that they were just curious and they apologize) or Deception + Intuition (to outright lie) can get them out of trouble and even gain the nobleman's favor in the future. A failed check and Daichi demands that the characters leave. If they refuse, he'll turn the crank of a siren to alert guards to the area, which could turn into a battle the characters may not actually want.



SCHOOL ANGLE

Some players may wish to ask other kids around Maya's age if they've seen her. Most say they have not had personal interaction with her, so far removed she is as a noble, but that Neitaki Maya was spotted at the local school several times over the last few weeks. The Heigenchou secondary schools are split into male and female sectors, making it easier to keep hormones in check. In this type of environment, with so few nobles who reside within the city itself, personal tutors are often used. There isn't a reason for her to attend the school, since all of her educational needs are taken care of in the home. This may raise questions.

The characters can speak with the school headmaster, groundskeepers and even Mayas teachers if they investigate during the day. All of them tell the same story freely: either they haven't seen her in school for days – or – she briefly showed up, only to become belligerent to her teachers and end up leaving school early. With a successful Persuasion + Empathy (to convince them that the they are trying to find her for her safety) or Intimidation + Persuasion (to browbeat more information), the teacher will reveal she has often been seen with a student by the name of Ganjou Isi. He hasn't been to class for two

days, but he was famous for skipping school, so few have truly pressed the issue.

SCENE 5: FINDING THE PATH

There are many ways for the characters to find their way on the next leg of this adventure. These choices can range based on which characters are in play and the creativity of the players.

- ✦ **Wildflowers:** If the characters asked Neitaki Sai about the wildflower portrait, they would have picked up a vital clue in finding the girl. The wildflower field on the east side of town can lead them to the wall.
- ✦ **Tsuki Kurayami:** Ninja from the Pack of the Black Moon are wondrous tracker and Kurayami has specific jutsu that can allow them to find an exact path of where the girl has gone by following her scent (requires an article of her clothing, which can be obtained from the Neitaki estate).
- ✦ **Ask the guards:** Something Sai hasn't tried is going to each guard individually and asking if they've seen Maya. This may take a few hours, but will prove fruitful for the char-



acters to learn that she has been seen a few times in the wildflower field on the east side of town.

- ✦ **Just happening upon the wall:** Simply walking around town, they may by chance find themselves on the east side of town and discover the wall (should require a Tough (3) Perception + Intuition check) without specific knowledge of what they are looking for. Enough wandering around town and causing random mischief should lead them here.

Finding their way to the east side of town, they can find several sets of tracks. With a Moderate (2) Survival + Perception check, however, they can tell one of the sets belongs to a female around the size and weight that Neitaki Maya is supposed to be. If they roll a Tough (3) check, they can tell there are two other sets traveling with her. The other tracks are spaced out, however, meaning they are not dragging or forcing her with them.

The tracks all lead to the eastern wall, where there is a small hole at the base of the wall. Apparently, the group snuck out of the town through this hole, escaping to the forest that is to the east of the city. Getting over the tall wall to leave

the city is just as difficult as it was the get in, but the ninja can crawl through the same hole to leave as well if they don't mind getting mud on their clothes. Ishikawa Ryota and Arai Kaede both wear fine silks, so they may be averse to crawling on their stomachs.

SCENE 6: THE THIEVES' CAMP

After another Moderate (2) Survival + Perception check to find the trail on the different terrain of the forest, the ninja are on their way. Thirty minutes of tracking goes by without word of catching up, until they overhear a slight sound. The characters can make a Moderate (2) Perception x2 check to listen closer, hearing the sounds of a crying boy if successful.

Creeping closer with a Simple (1) Stealth + Speed, the characters find a small clearing in the forest with two tents and a campfire in the center. At the fire is a boy (Ganjou Isi), no older than 16 years old, drinking from a large gourd of sake and weeping in his sorrows – saying things in the vein of “we deserve to die” and “we shouldn't have done it” over and over. Continued rustling and the jingle of jewelry is coming



from the two tents, as another boy (Irei Goro) is going back and forth, emptying out one of the tents into a large chest. His words are quite different. “Get the hell up and help me! We need to get out of here!” and “We can beat ourselves up later.” A successful Simple (1) Holistics + Perception check reveals that the boys have cuts and bruises like they have been fighting.

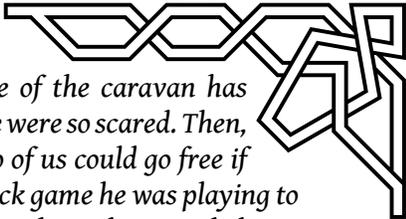
The characters can then decide how to approach the situation. They could just walk into the camp area and attempt to talk to the boys. In this scenario, the drunken boy continues to lie sobbing, while the other tries to make a break for it. Unless the characters surrounded the camp to stop him from escaping, the boy makes a break for it and the chaser must make an Extended Movement check requiring four successes. If the boy isn't caught after three checks, he successfully avoids capture. Ichatsuko No Kino is good for this, possessing the Tree Hopping jutsu and being in the middle of a forest.

The boys are no match for ninja and should be treated as Average Citizens if the characters decide to waltz into the camp and battle the boys. Isi is obviously useless in a fight, being a slobbering drunk. Goro knows a single jutsu learned from his nanny who was a Ronin, Flame Arrow (NC2E, pg. 106), but he can only use it once before he's out of ki.

With the boys subdued, the ninja can then begin their interrogation. Isi is worth little more than sobbing uncontrollably at the mention of the name Maya. A successful Moderate (2) Persuasion + Intimidation check, however, browbeats Goro into spilling the truth. He admits they had been stealing from the townspeople, but never expected them to call ninja over a few pieces of jewelry. If he's asked about Maya though, Goro's face grows dour and he becomes very serious.

“Maya? She's gone. We were traveling south, just taking a walk, when we found an iron caravan. It looked like there were some things we could steal from the Imperial caravan while the soldiers were out doing exercises. They caught us though and held the three of us for days... we were only let go a few hours ago.”

Isi continues to cry, “We shouldn't have done it.” If pressed as to where Maya is, he replies with:



“The man in charge of the caravan has scars all over his face. We were so scared. Then, he gave us a choice. Two of us could go free if one stayed behind — a sick game he was playing to see who'd turn on who. In the end, we traded Maya's life for our own. She's still there now, probably going through unspeakable tortures.”

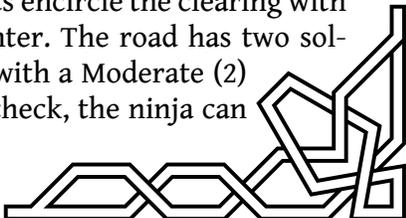
If the tents are checked with a Moderate (2) Perception + Survival check, the characters can tell that one tent is being inhabited by a male noble, most likely Goro. The other appears to have been shared with a male and a noble female, suggesting that Maya and Isi slept there together. Only if asked would Isi reveal that Maya was the love of his life. If the characters chastise the boys at all over their choice, having to face the reality of their decisions makes Isi take out a knife and stab his gut. This could take the adventure in a whole other direction, as the ninja either attempt to save the boy's life with jutsu or Holistics checks or they give the boy respect for taking the honorable way out.

Some ninja may then want to dispatch with the boys to cover their tracks. Some may want to leave them alone and hope they change their ways. The more political characters may want to return them (especially Irei Goro) to their parents in hopes of receiving a favor to be used at a later date. Returning them to the captain of the guard for their crimes is also an option. Others may simply leave the boys at the camp, not worth the trouble for a powerful ninja to bother with them.

SCENE 7: THE IRON CARAVAN

Irei Goro gives the characters information on where the caravan is currently stopped. There's no way they could forget where they left Maya. Goro pulls out a scroll and writes directions to where the caravan has made camp. Following the map requires only a Simple (1) Survival + Travel check. This brings the characters to a road that leads them to the caravan clearing.

Four iron caravan carts encircle the clearing with a large bonfire in the center. The road has two soldiers on either side and, with a Moderate (2) Perception + Knowledge check, the ninja can





guess that there are likely another five soldiers in the forests on guard. Each of the caravan wagons also has two soldiers on guard and there are lights on inside each of them, revealing movement.

There are a lot of soldiers to deal with, and even the most powerful group of ninja needs to know where to direct their resources. Many of the characters have options for finding out where the girl is within the camp.

- ✦ **Tsuki Kurayami:** Again, the ninja from the Pack of the Black Moon can use his jutsu to smell where the girl is being kept.
- ✦ **Ishikawa Ryota:** Using the Skilled Strings and Spider's Scry jutsu together, means Ryota can send his imbued strings into each wagon to listen to what is going on inside of each.
- ✦ **Hebi Ine:** With the use of Danger Sense, Ine can tell where the next moment of action is likely to occur.
- ✦ **Sakamoto Tadao:** As a member of the Wardens of Equilibrium, he knows how to enhance his vision to see through walls with his Penetrating Senses jutsu.

Once the characters know the girl's location, they can devise a plan to rescue her.

Some characters are much better at a stealthy attack, while others specialize in frontal assaults.

- ✦ **Kumori Kunio:** Kunio has the tools to move around the camps unnoticed for the most part, making him valuable if the group wants to launch a surprise attack.
- ✦ **Sumi Rika:** She has the power to explode with shuriken and hit everything within the camp. She can be key to winning a frontal assault.
- ✦ **Odoriko Minori:** Great at ranged attacks, he makes for great support in either a stealthy or frontal attack. If he saves the girl, he can also Tiger's Leap her to safety.
- ✦ **Chuushin Naomi:** The Will of Iron love to test their blades against an enemy, and she'd be behind a frontal attack as a distraction for others to sneak the girl out.

Unfortunately for the ninja, this is not just a simple caravan. The leader of this band of soldiers is none other than, Bugu Keikan the Executioner. This powerful warrior leaves the trailer in a hurry, his sinister smile making it clear that he is quite insane and enjoys pain and battle. Looking inside the trailer through the door, the characters will see Maya lying

EXECUTIONER STATS

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.
- ✦ **Weapon Training:** Any weapon in an Executioner's hands becomes deadlier. Deals +3 damage (instead of +2).

on the ground tied up with torn clothes and scars on any of her exposed skin.

The Executioner grabs a sword from a nearby soldier and leaps into battle with the ninja. If he starts to lose the battle, Keikan is quick to make his way to the trailer to kill Maya. The characters should, obviously, try not to allow this to happen.

The characters can attempt to tear down the entire camp and take out every soldier - or - they could just as easily grab the girl and run. Keikan kept the girl out of boredom and just like the cat who loses a toy, he'll move on to his next plaything when she's gone. He bored of Isi and Goro quickly enough after all. No, Keikan will simply watch as the ninja retreat and laugh, knowing he'll likely cross paths with them again.

SCALING THE FINAL BATTLE

The GM should balance the final battle to best fit the group of players. Soldiers in the first wave of the assault can be treated as weaker enemies, going down after any successful attack. A second wave, however, should use stronger foes. A single Executioner and a few foot soldiers should be more than enough to keep a group of 2 to 3 ninja occupied. If the group is composed of 4 or 5 ninja instead, however, there should be two Executioners and possibly more guard squads.

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

SCENE 8: CONCLUSION

Now that Maya is safe and sound, the repercussions of these events can be far-reaching. The ninja are given their payment for the Lotus Coalition from the nobleman and they are free to go, but the following are some of the ramifications of this adventure.

- ✦ **Neitaki Maya:** The girl is weak and timid now, unlike her previous brash attitude. She begs the characters not to tell her father of her disgrace at the hands of the Executioner, her kidnapping or that she was a thief. Keeping this information a secret may help the girl, but may also leave the nobleman without vital data to protect himself from courtly accusations or to possibly launch a campaign against soldiers working outside the law. She also asks the characters not to tell her father of her affair with Ganjou Isi, who is a simple commoner.
- ✦ **Neitaki Sai:** The nobleman is extremely happy when his daughter is returned. If told of any of her thievery or her kidnapping, she is likely to be sent to a monastery. He is aggressive in the courts and can use this information against the Izou army to further the anti-Crusade cause, but it will mean Maya's life will essentially be ruined, every moment completely con-

trolled by her overbearing father from now on.

- ✦ **Irei Goro:** Unless the boy was held against his will or forced to go to the caravan with the ninja, he is nowhere to be found when the ninja return. It turns out that locking your family in the basement and stealing all of their treasures to barter away, disgraces one in the eyes of society. The Irei family may one day contact the characters to find him... but that's a story for another day.
- ✦ **Ganjou Isi:** The boy is left in the forest by his friend, Goro, and he passes out. If no one goes back to find him or take him to a safe place, he is eaten by wolves... too drunk to fight back. If he is saved, he never speaks to Maya again, never able to forgive himself for his choice to leave her behind.

EXPERIENCE

| | |
|----|----------------------------------|
| +1 | Get into town without a fight. |
| +1 | Console a distraught father. |
| +1 | Follow any one of the side leads |
| +1 | Isi and Goro aren't killed |
| +1 | Save Maya |



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

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 - Snake'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

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

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:** +1 Stealth 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: He becomes less visible. -2 Perception to those trying to see him.

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

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 their 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 2, 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: Steals 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)

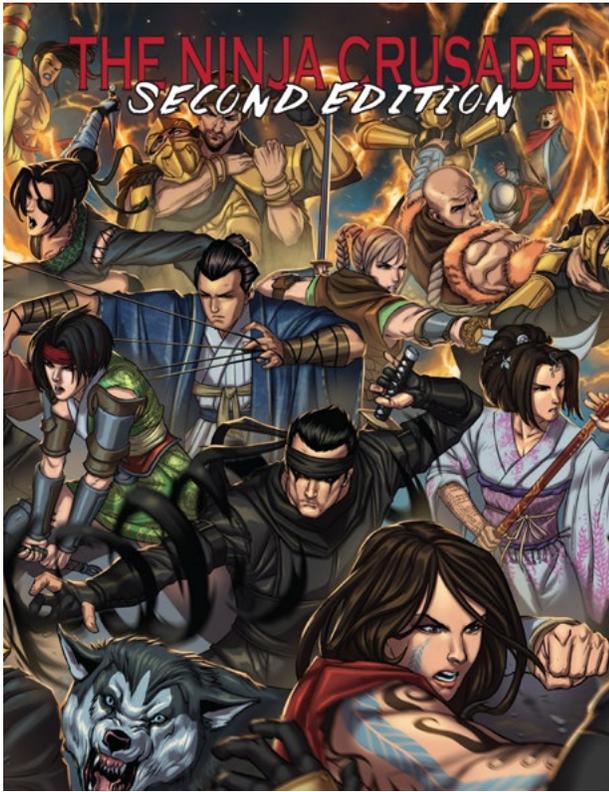
After the Recoiling Serpents killed his wife and daughter and their unsuccessful attempt to kill him as well, Kurayami burned with righteous fury and wished nothing more than to mete out vengeance on the Serpents. With the ongoing war with the Empire, however, and the need to strengthen and support the 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.

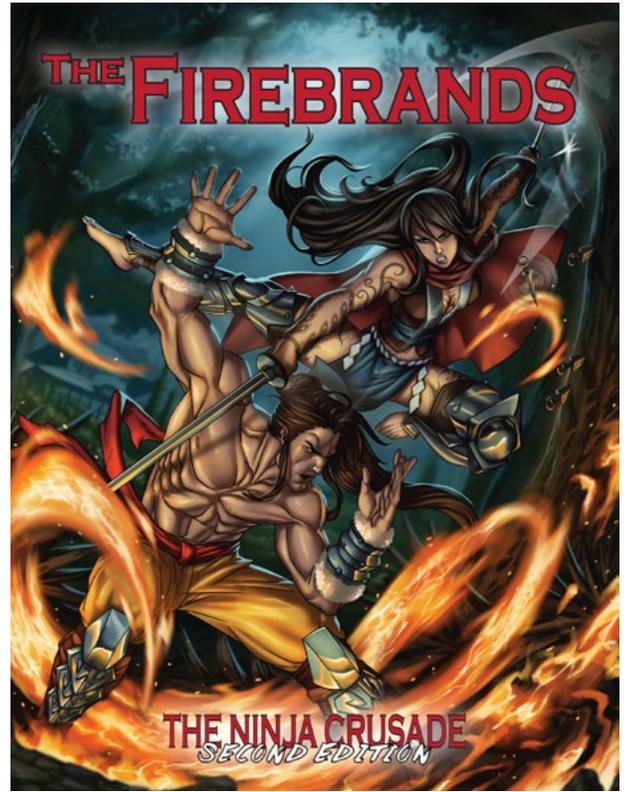


SKILLS

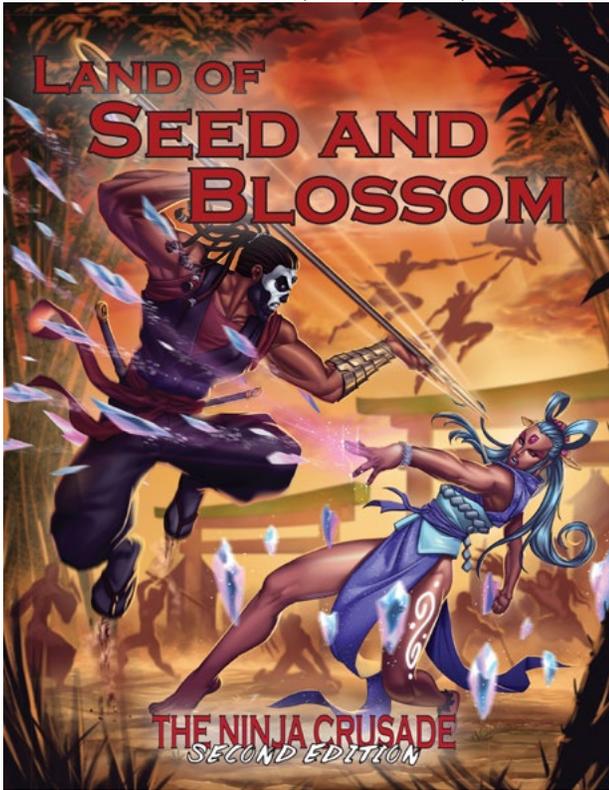
Athletics 4, Crafts 1, Deception 1, Discipline 0, Empathy 2, Fighting 4, Fortitude 3, Holistics 0, Intimidation 1, Intuition 2, Knowledge 0, Marksman 0, Might 3 (Grappling), Perception 1, Perform 1, Persuade 0, Speed 2, Stealth 2, Survival 2, Travel 1



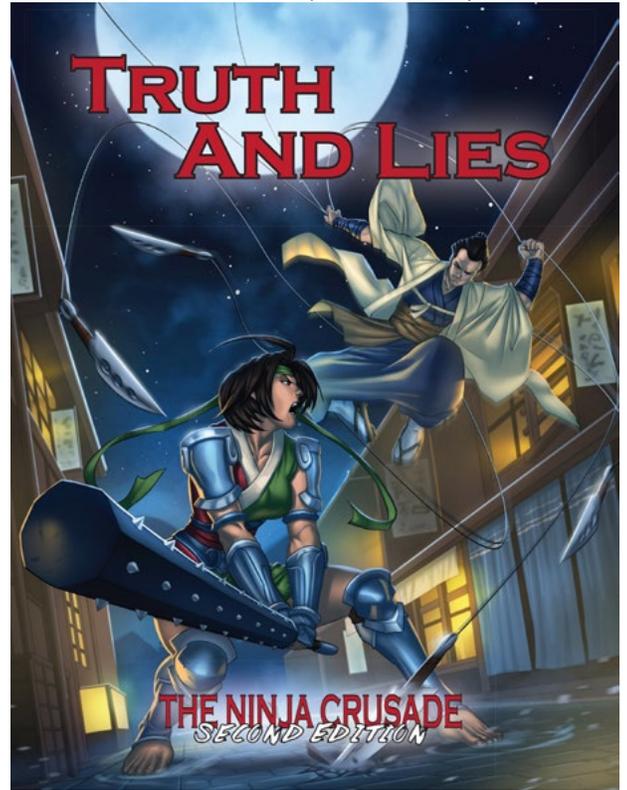
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