

# LAND OF SEED AND BLOSSOM



**THE NINJA CRUSADE**  
*SECOND EDITION*



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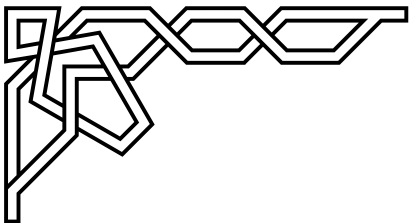

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# PROLOGUE

## A SECRET MEETING

Even as the sun was moving towards the western horizon and the day was winding down, the humidity was punishing. Even those in the group native to the Land of Seed and Blossom found the climate to be especially uncomfortable for late summer. Tomurai Norio of the Phantom Voices clan had been traveling for three days with a band of hired muscle disguised as peasant farmers and merchants on their way to the Land of the Five Blades. For eight months now he had been speaking with various members of the Izou clans through mutual contacts and brief notes scrawled and encoded on scraps of washi paper in an effort to garner support for his fellow ninja in the south to fight against their occupation.

After much coaxing, even more than his usual patience could bear, Norio had heard from a man by the name of Kunio of the Kumori clan who would take him up on his offer to meet face to face.

Norio had some knowledge about the Kumori ninja and their reputation as assassins. They were rumored to keep to themselves which made Kunio's acceptance all the more strange, but intriguing as well. Only a few of his contacts in the other Izou clans ever replied beyond cordial salutations and formalities, but Kunio kept an open dialogue which led to this eventual meeting.

Norio had considered asking a couple of his Blossom ninja brethren to come with him since he was uncertain what might occur along the way, but ultimately decided that traveling incognito was probably the best course of action. The less attention he drew to himself, the better. The Blossom ninja had their own problems to deal with, after all. While not nearly as divided as the Izou clans, they were living under Izou occupation, generally in hiding and were still debating the merits of a full uprising against the Izou forces.



## PROLOGUE - A SECRET MEETING

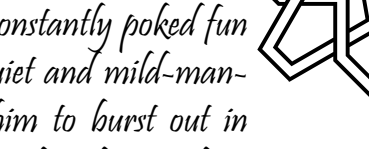
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The men he traveled with had all seen their share of combat before, with some even bearing the marks of their experience as rough scars or noticeable limps. Of course, with even the peasants in the occupied Land of Seed and Blossom being subject to regular harassment by Izou soldiers, scars and limps were frequent enough to not seem too uncommon. Norio knew that even though his men were rough around the edges, they would all be ready at the first sign of danger. At the end of their first day, the group had been attacked by bandits, but the disguised thugs had come to arms so quickly that the bandits fled before a fight even ensued.

Norio was also not to be taken for granted. Even though his frame was slender and he was only about five feet tall, the young man was still a trained ninja and a fierce combatant. As far as any of the men he hired knew, Norio was simply traveling to meet an old friend and wanted to ensure his safety as he made his way. The extra money he paid them was to ensure their discretion with this matter. He had worked with this group before so he knew them to be capable enough.

For three days, the group had been traveling on main roads and in plain sight. Their disguises had so far worked perfectly, and they were only hassled a few times by Izou soldiers extorting money from random wanderers. Norio had paid the soldiers in both cases. He had the money and there was no need to risk the lives of these men for a few coins.

One of the men, Mamoru, an older man with a shaggy salt and pepper beard and a jagged scar on the left side of his face that left a dead white eye, had been keeping Norio entertained with tales of his glorious actions in past battles - so far-fetched that even the ninja and his ability to use jutsu would have been laughed at

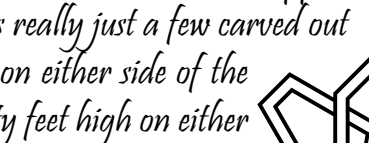


as a street magician. He constantly poked fun at Norio, a notoriously quiet and mild-mannered individual, to get him to burst out in traveling songs with him and to share in his rice wine that he claimed to make himself. Despite all the pesky annoyances, Norio genuinely liked Mamoru and tolerated his stories enough to satisfy what the ninja could only guess was the man's almost innate need to flood the air with his boisterous songs.

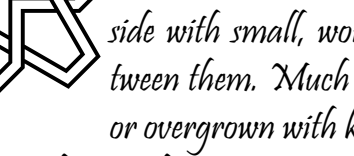
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It was getting close to the end of their third day of travel and Norio knew that they were closing on the meeting point. He had given Kunio a number of options and let him decide where they would meet. Dakugeto was chosen, the remains of an old burned out town on the northwest border of the Land of Seed and Blossom. Built into the rocky sides of a small canyon carved out by a small rivulet tributary of the Ouka River, the town was abandoned shortly after the Izou invasion. While many had tried to reclaim and populate the little village, it had been plagued for decades with rumors claiming that it was inhabited by the angry spirits of the dead. Norio, able to commune with the spirits of the dead, knew this to definitely not be the case and considered it hidden well enough.

As they entered Dakugeto from the southeast, following a small path along the babbling water, Norio could hear Mamoru ahead of him humming a drinking song that always gave away that he had been sipping mid-day. The other men, who were scattered around the path, both ahead and behind, had stopped at the front. Dakugeto was really just a few carved out caves in the soft limestone on either side of the stream, no more than thirty feet high on either



## PROLOGUE - A SECRET MEETING



side with small, worn stone steps weaving between them. Much of the stone was crumbling or overgrown with kudzu, making it difficult to make out what was a natural formation and what had been carved by the original occupants of the village generations ago.

"Some place to meet a friend," Mamoru chuckled a little bit as the words came out, "Couldn't you have just found a quiet table and a bottle of wine?"

Norio dismissed the comment with a smirk and continued to look for Kunio. The area wasn't very large, and he knew the Kumori clan reputation well enough to suspect they aren't fans of being out in the open. It was then that Norio noticed a few things out of the ordinary. Windows on the southern bank appeared to have the kudzu cut away and some of the crumbling steps had a few of the stones disturbed. In another area, some of the charred stone seemed to have been chipped away as though hit or scraped by a hard object.

The Phantom slowly turned towards Mamoru who had just come to the same realization. The other men in the party were sitting at the base of one of the stairways resting their feet or filling up some skins of water in the stream, and the rest were standing about the pile of their remaining supplies surveying the area.

Mamoru's humming continued even as he motioned to the five men close by the pile of gear. They immediately drew weapons and struck poses of those expecting an attack at any moment as they advanced to the left side of the cliff. The two men by the stream had dropped their water skins on the gravelly bank and were flanking the right, weapons drawn and at the ready.

Suddenly, a small clanking was heard coming from the central stairwell as a black sphere bounced twice and landed in the loose gravel at the feet of the men.

By the time the smoldering wick revealed what



it was, the bomb exploded with a thundering echo resounding through the small canyon. Even as Norio shielded his eyes from the flying debris he knew it was too late for three of his men. He hoped that the others would fare better, but immediately, they were none of his concern.

When the smoke cleared, Norio saw that he and Mamoru were still standing, while their other men were scrambling to their feet and searching for dropped weapons. Mamoru's face was already bloodied, his beard stained crimson with blood coming from a fresh gash on his forehead.

"Tomurai Norio!" A booming voice called out the name. "Tell your men to lay down their weapons if you value their lives."

Norio could feel the heat in his face as the thought that he may have been betrayed after all his hard work crossed his mind. Letters going to multiple clans for months, even if they were encoded, were always a liability, but just thinking that one would betray him made his blood boil. Was there no honor between thieves?

"Kunio?" Norio's normal whisper had been slightly raised, but also naturally amplified by the canyon walls. "Is that you?"

"Ha! No. I am Yamada Masanori, Engineer of the Izou Empire." The man was walking down the central stairway where Norio's men were previously standing. On either side he was flanked by four soldiers. Two more with firearms could be seen with their weapons leveled at the windows which had previously been cleared of vegetation. "You are clearly outnumbered and outmatched, so I strongly recommend that you heed my order. If you don't, I'll be forced to kill you and your men where you stand." Masanori pulled another bomb off of his belt and began rolling its wick between his fingers.

## PROLOGUE - A SECRET MEETING

Norio nodded to his men and glanced at Mamoru and nodded again. Reluctantly, the men began to drop their weapons and Masanori's soldiers approached with rope to bind them. The Engineer motioned for the soldiers in the windows to come down to cover the men.

"This is becoming a trend for your people, isn't it?" Masanori said, "You are hunted down like the filthy dogs you are, and killed like you deserve. I only regret that there aren't any people in this burned out hovel so I can make an example out of you." He moved closer to Norio as his gunmen exited the stairs. "I heard rumors of your little uprising. Believe me when I say you will lose."

"How did you know I would be here?" Norio asked.

"The Izou have knowledge far beyond your savage ability to comprehend. Our intelligence network spreads through every inch of the Empire, so not even a bird chirps that the Emperor doesn't know about." Masanori motioned for one of the gunmen to give him his firearm. He hefted the weapon and leveled it at Mamoru, "At least he can rest knowing that one more ninja and his allies were killed this day."

Norio dropped a weighted chain from his left sleeve and a tessen from his right. With catlike grace, he whipped the chain under the hand and forearm of Masanori, wrapping his hand tight with the firearm. He quickly jerked the chain causing the firearm to discharge harmlessly into the nearby stream. The bladed fan sliced across the engineer's midsection and shock crossed his face. At this, Mamoru picked up his staff and pressed a concealed switch causing a blade to spring from one end. In one fluid motion, he threw the staff into the chest of another soldier, knocking him to the ground with a thud.

Two soldiers from each group split off and charged the ninja. The manrikigusari caught the first in the

temple, collapsing part of his skull. As the second soldier tripped over his fallen comrade, Norio swung the weighted chain around his neck, stepped on his back, pulled sharply to the sound of a dull cracking. Mamoru had disarmed the third soldier and kept both him and the fourth at bay by the time Norio caught them both across the neck with his long, bladed fan, dropping them to their knees.

The other men had overpowered the Izou soldiers trying to restrain them and recovered their weapons. A cough behind them caused Norio to turn back to see a black clad figure standing over the body of Masanori pulling a kunai out of the Engineer's throat. "Sloppy," said the ninja.

"Kunio?" Norio whispered, "You have a lot to answer for. Your betrayal cost three of my men their lives."

"Betrayal?" Kunio said gruffly, "I didn't betray you. I just made sure Yamada Masanori knew where you would be. The differences are subtle, but evident, nonetheless. Masanori needed to die, and I needed to test the skill you offer as an ally. It could have been me walking into this trap."

Norio relaxed his pose and put his weapons away, motioning for the other men to do the same. "Fair enough," Norio stated, "I believe we have some business to discuss, and then I have some prayers to say."

"You say your prayers for now. Our business is concluded. You, Norio, did not pass my test." And with that Kumori Kunio disappeared into the shadows that surrounded.

He had been warned of the Izou's treachery, but Norio held to his optimistic nature above all other things. It appeared now, however, that the Land of Seed and Blossom would be left on its own, as always. His hope was lost that day.



# CHAPTER ONE: THE UPRISING

Exotic and dangerous, the Land of Seed and Blossom is very different from what any Izou ninja can claim to truly know. The Land fell to the Izou Empire four centuries ago, its government mocked and viewed as weak and cowardly, but its ninja are still feared for their mastery of nature and other paths of unusual and reviled magic. Blossom ninja are known to wield the power of life and death with their jutsu, able to destroy even the healthiest warrior with a single touch of the hand. These claims are far from exaggerated, but the Land of Seed and Blossom – more than anything – is a nation of peace. That is, until recently.


Stepping into this strange nation, one can see that Blossom ninja are not regarded in the revolting fashion Izou ninja have come to expect. They are instead embraced as part of the Land's culture and looked to for expertise and leadership. Some walk the streets without cover or need for disguise in parts of the land not ruled by occupying forces from the Izou. In recent years, however, the stranglehold on the Land of Seed and Blossom has tight-

ened more and more, placing Izou soldiers in almost every major village and making it hard for the ninja to operate as openly as they'd please. This has led to the idea of an uprising and general feelings of dissent from the Blossom people.

The Blossom clans are also not constantly at each other's throats in an eternal quest for more power, as is standard for the Izou. Instead, most work together with a sense of harmony, getting along as a family would – with all the implied dysfunction. The reason behind this is clear when one compares the roots of the two nations. The Izou Empire was carved on the flesh of politicians and clans that fought for centuries to attain influence and crush their enemies. Their ninja followed suit, each greedier than the next and ready to slice their brothers' throats if the opportunity presented itself. They existed in a land where one Emperor reigned supreme, making arbitrary decisions about the future of their nation with no explanation given to the people. They were ruled under an iron fist of fear and death belonging to a child king.







## CHAPTER ONE - THE UPRISING

The Blossom clans, on the other hand, were each born out of the necessity of its people, tipping the scale of life and death in their favor. The ninja have a direct hand in the government, and the course of the nation as a whole, and an important part of the culture. Blossom ninja are teachers and shamans, each revered for their ability to keep the nation spiritually balanced. To know the real story behind the nation, one must learn of the Seven Catastrophes that have shaped the clans and their people.

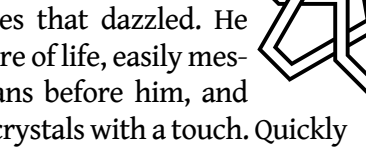
# THE SEVEN CATASTROPHES

The seven clans of the Land of Seed and Blossom have risen organically from the cries of the people over time, each crafted to suit a certain horrible event that struck like lightning. These events are known as the Seven Catastrophes, when the Immortals came from heaven to grant power to the nation's protectors, the ninja. Legends of the Catastrophes are passed down through the tradition of storytelling and have become a basis of the Land's central religion, Immortalism. This belief in greater beings is the cornerstone for life in the Land of Seed and Blossom. As is with most stories, exact dates are left open to interpretation of the listener or removed entirely. They always occur in the same order, however.

## INVENTION OF MAN (FIRST CATASTROPHE)

At the dawn of time, when humans crept from the sea on two legs, they lived as animals in the worst sense. They ripped each other apart, using the bones from their kills to murder another. No love, no remorse and no thought existed other than survival. Of course, some killed for fun and did so with great frequency, creating a perilous predator/prey relationship of power against fear. In its infancy, before it ever had a chance to flourish, humanity was in danger of destroying itself.

That is, until Lu Dongbin arrived in the Land, the first Immortal. Legends state that his skin was a deep crimson, and he had several arms wielding various



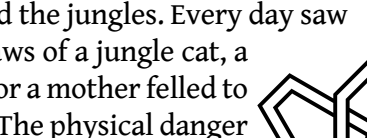
weapons and diamond eyes that dazzled. He displayed power over the fire of life, easily mesmerizing the simple humans before him, and turned mountains to pure crystals with a touch. Quickly regarded as a god, Lu Dongbin showed his worshippers a glimpse of the new world he hoped to build.

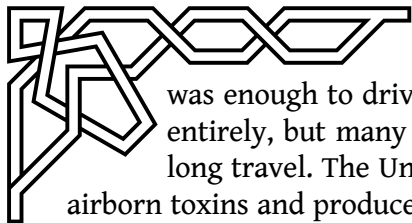
The Immortal's first act was to place a mystical jewel into each human's forehead, thus opening their third eye to the life-force of chi that surrounded them. It granted the gift of language and emotional stability, filling them with ideas of tradition and culture. Under the tutelage of the first Immortal, the Blossom people established territory, education and etiquette, taking their first steps to being truly civilized. Of course, there were those that refused to kneel to the foot of the Immortal, those that rejected the idea of civilization and peace. These barbarians ran to the west to become the founders of the Izou and Land of Five Blades and create a world of violence and conflict.

Lu Dongbin, once certain he taught the people of the Land of Seed and Blossom all the vital lessons he had to impart, left in search of other adventure. The Immortal did not leave his followers without a structure to fall back on, however. He imbued certain special worshippers with a small taste of his divine power, creating the first ninja to walk the earth, the Shouka Clan. The tradition of embedding a Birthstone into each newborn's forehead was born from this legend, a cultural mark that has survived to the current day. The ninja became known as the Crystal Bearers (pg. 24), bringing Lu Dongbin's blessings to everyone in the Land.

## PLAGUE OF TREES (SECOND CATASTROPHE)

As the people approached their lives with newfound confidence and decorum imparted to them by the first Immortal, new obstacles soon presented themselves. The land to the east called the Untamed Wilds, a nation of overgrown trees and wild animals, was fine when human beings were mere animals, but its reborn people needed food, shelter and protection from the deadly animals that stalked the jungles. Every day saw another child lost to the jaws of a jungle cat, a father dying of starvation or a mother felled to the claw of a hungry bear. The physical danger





## CHAPTER ONE - THE UPRISING

was enough to drive humanity from the land entirely, but many of them were too sick for long travel. The Untamed Wilds also released airborne toxins and produced food full of poisons that killed slowly over a matter of months.

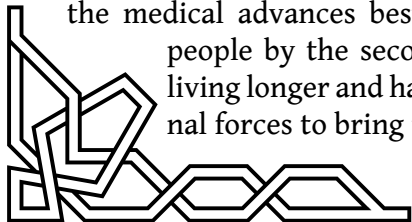
It was then that the second Immortal arrived, Iron Crutch Li. He first looked very similar to a regular human with darkened skin and walked with the help of an iron crutch, his obvious namesake. The Immortal hid among the people, pretending to be scared of the wild, as was the norm, and helping to care for the sick and wounded when he could. He was touched by the togetherness such horrible condition created for the Blossom people. When he finally revealed himself, however, Li had skin of bright green, a beard of long vines and hair of autumn leaves.

Iron Crutch Li went on to teach the people how to live as one with the earth, how to cultivate what was necessary from the jungle and carve away the rest. The people developed an understanding of nature and learned how to utilize agriculture in various ways. In essence, the second Immortal led to the creation of villages and cities, founding the Land of Seed and Blossom as a sovereign nation and not just a collection of random tribes.

The Immortal took on apprentices to his arts, teaching these new ninja the ways of potion creation and the pursuit of immortality itself. This new clan, called the Bamboo Alchemists (pg. 22), went on to cure the diseases of the Land of Seed and Blossom and begin a golden age of prosperity. Iron Crutch Li made sure to instruct the ninja that, of course, more immortals would eventually arrive whenever the people needed to be set upon the right course.

### CULLING OF THE LAMBS (THIRD CATASTROPHE)

Along with a feeling of peace and happiness over the Land of Seed and Blossom, came the cultural institutions of Caste and a boom for childbirth. Having a large family became the sign of wealth and social status, some having as many as twenty children. With the medical advances bestowed upon the Blossom people by the second Immortal, they began living longer and had little to no fear of external forces to bring them down. A real danger



of overpopulation and an imbalance with the earth had fallen upon them. That is when the third Immortal appeared in order to change the course of history.

Zhongli Quan, a man with skin of black oil and a skull painted upon his face appeared in the center of the Land with an explosion that shook the earth. His voice was deep and imposing as he delivered his message. Quan told the foolhardy people that they had wasted the bounty the Immortals gifted them. With that, he raised his fan made of fire and with one waved created a whirlwind that destroyed an entire city, killing everyone within.

The dreadful immortal wandered the land, striking down those that would take from his brothers and sisters in order to appear stronger. Honor couldn't be accomplished by draining the land of its resources with too many mouths to feed. Instead, the third Immortal called upon the institution of filial piety. The older a person was, and thus the more family that could propagate below them on the family tree, would earn them the respect of the people. However, each set of parents was restricted to two children at any given time, only able to birth more as their offspring became Family Bearers themselves. The oldest man and oldest woman were placed at the top of this hierarchy and expected to carry out the spiritual and governmental duties of leading the country. And with that, he was gone.

Zhongli Quan killed many people in the Land of Seed and Blossom, young and old alike, but he did not do it alone. The Immortal found a single man named Yakubyo that he trusted with the responsibility of carrying out this duty for him. The Kouhei clan was imparted the powers of disease in case another purge should ever be needed. Yakubyo's Pox (pg. 34) was founded from a gathering of the best warriors in the Land. The fear of their reprisal was enough to teach temperance with reproduction.

### CALMING OF THE DEAD (FOURTH CATASTROPHE)

Life returned to normal, but with a feeling of fear and regret that loomed in the air. The Blossom people buried many of their family members after the destruction brought by the third Immortal and the years after by the relentless aggression from Yakubyo's Pox. The ground began to overflow with the





dead, leaving the land with a smell of rot and pestilence. Perhaps draining life from the earth or from the jungle expanses around them, certain bodies began to walk the night, causing horror and hysteria in many parts of the land. The ninja went on a rampage to destroy the zombies, only to find their blades were only temporary solutions to a larger problem. This was not an enemy that the Crystal Bearers could negotiate with, that the Bamboo Alchemists could cure or that Yakubyo's Pox could outright destroy.

Soon did Zhang Guo ride into town backwards on his white mule, playing a lute with his magical fingers and a toothless grin. His physical appearance was just like any other, but he lacked pupils and spoke only in whispers. Legends say that he rode his mule through a field of the walking dead and was left unharmed and untouched by their cold hands. So it was that the fourth Immortal arrived to put into order what was broken with his song to calm the dead. He taught the Blossom people proper funeral rites beyond simply leaving the dead in the ground or having wild animals devour them.

With his mastery of necromancy, Zhang Guo played a wondrous song that placed the dead into an eternal sleep once more. He called for men and women willing to keep watch over the restless dead, thus creating the order of the Phantom Voices (pg. 28). These ninja learned the death rites put into place by the fourth Immortal and spread throughout the Land to perform proper funerals and dispose of the dead. This cleansed the death from the Land of Seed and Blossom and made the future look brighter for the people.

## POISONED BODIES (FIFTH CATASTROPHE)

Several decades went by and the Land was peaceful and serene, but it was also quite insular. The Blossom people began looking to the outside world, imagining the wonders that life in other nations had to offer. To ensure their people's safety, the Elders sent emissaries to learn from other cultures. At the same time, the Land of Seed and Blossom saw more outsiders crossing their borders to experience their

pleasures as well.

Somewhere in all of the travel came Fa, a young boy that had contracted a strange wasting disease, presumably from interaction with a foreigner. The Bamboo Alchemists were unable to heal this truly scary sickness, as it was too strong for their known magic or potions. The disease began spreading throughout the Land of Seed and Blossom, taking dozens, hundreds and then thousands to the afterlife. Without help, their people would have been doomed to suffer at the hand of this horrible plague to which they had no natural resistance.

When most believed a cure to be a lost cause, a woman descended from the heavens. The fifth Immortal, Lady He Xiang, was beautiful and fair-skinned, wearing flowing red phoenix robes and carrying a long lotus flower between her fingers. She demanded to be brought to the first carrier of what came to be known as the Fa Disease. She kissed the boy's Birthstone and infused his jewel with her magic, filling him with health and beaming energy. It was clear that her newfound magic was the key to breaking this sickness.

It was too big of a job for just one person, even a great Immortal, so Lady He Xiang chose certain women in the land to hone their purity, body and spirit to create a cure for the Fa Disease from their chi. Mastery of blood was her blessing, thus creating the Sisterhood of Blood (pg. 30). When she finished, she walked into the Ouka River and simply disappeared.

It was during this time that the Bamboo Herbalists split from the Bamboo Alchemists, leaving the Land of Seed and Blossom for what they saw as greener pastures. This occurrence would have severely weakened any other clan, but the exact number of Alchemists was always in question. None of their apparent power was truly lost.

## LOSS OF JOY (SIXTH CATASTROPHE)

Then came the day when the Izou Empire was no longer content to stay on their side of the border. Its power grew to such a level that it overflowed into any neighboring nation that couldn't put up a fight. War spread throughout the world, as the Empire attacked every nation almost simultaneously. The Blossom ninja stood strong against the

### SERPENTS

It is believed by many that the Slithering Gods, who then became the Recoiling Serpents, created the Fa Disease. There is little proof to back up these claims, but the close proximity of territory and the clan's unstoping quest for escalating power both point to these ninja as the culprits. To think that one clan at its peak almost destroyed a second nation after nearly conquering the first is truly a horrifying thought.

oncoming threat and were able to push the invading forces back more than once. The border was held by walls made of entwined wood and crystal that towered over the enemy, with warriors of plague, blood and death awaiting those that attempted to approach.

The people rejoiced, confident that their ninja would be able to protect them no matter what. For years, there was no sign of aggression and the Elders hoped that no further violence would be necessary. No one saw the joint attack of the Izou Army and battalions from the Land of Five Blades coming. The Blossom ninja's power was cut in half almost instantly and many of their important cities and monuments were reduced to ruin during the ensuing battles. The biggest loss to the people was the Seiseki Temples (pg. 37) where the Birthstone Imbuing ceremonies were once held en masse.

It wasn't long before the Elders of the Land of Seed and Blossom were forced to surrender for fear of losing their nation entirely. The Izou and Five Blades soldiers waltzed in, occupying several cities and sectioning off much of the land as their new settlements. With diminished power, the Blossom ninja could do nothing while their nation was stolen from them.

Lan Caihe, the sixth immortal, arrived in secret soon after, but not with the mission of calling the attention of their enemies. Helping the Blossom people was the first priority. Caihe was human in appearance, but asexual in nature, having no features that would mark the Immortal as male or female. The spirits of the people were down and it was the sixth Immortal who taught the most important lesson of

### ENEMY OF MY ENEMY

One would think that the Izou and Blossom ninja would easily become bedfellows in their assault on the Emperor's army. However, the Blossom people are just as proud as they are xenophobic. An Izou ninja is no different from an Izou soldier in the eyes of the Blossom ninja. The Uprising means cleansing the land of ANY outsiders that could corrupt them again.

Not only this, but the Lotus Coalition has taken note of the goings-on in the Land of Seed and Blossom and has been using it as a decoy to plot their own rebellion against the Ninja Crusade. The coalition has planted evidence of exaggerated Blossom numbers and assassinations, forcing the Emperor to send more troops into the Land of Seed and Blossom or risk losing it. In turn, many targets are then left open to surprise attack for the Lotus Coalition to take advantage.

This isn't to say that the Izou and Blossom ninja could never work together for a common goal, but it would take much patience to reach such terms on a nationwide scale. Otherwise, it is up to the individual's views on the world and their perspective of Izou ninja in general. Even the most peaceful of Blossom clans, the Sisterhood of Blood, has had to share a bloody border with the Izou for centuries. That kind of exposure can warp any ninja's worldview.

celebration of culture, despite one's failures or any amount of sadness they may feel.

The Splendid Chameleons (pg. 32) were born from Lan Caihe's teachings, with these ninja learning how to manipulate their bodies in a similar fashion... to the ultimate amusement of the Blossom people. The ninja began traveling the land, bringing happiness to those with no real reason to smile. The Izou Empire assumed they had broken the Blossom spirit, but they could not have been more wrong.

### WILD INFESTATION (SEVENTH CATASTROPHE)

Only 200 years ago, while the Blossom ninja continued to be held under the heel of two collective armies, the Seventh Catastrophe came from the smallest of enemies. A single species of bug, called the suu, encroached upon the Land from the Untamed Wilds. Several search parties were sent into the wilderness in search of potential nests to destroy, but none were ever found. The suu began eating away all of the vegetation and even crept into the storehouses of food stockpiles to devour those as well.

The nation was stricken with a terrible blight, where many died from hunger and others turned to horrible acts for just a taste of real food (usually kept locked away for Izou generals). The Emperor called back much of his army due to the lack of food, supplementing it instead with Five Blades warriors.

Han Xiang, the seventh Immortal, walked out of the Untamed Wilds, composed entirely of the vile insects that were the cause of the nation's state. He entrusted power over the suu to one particular family, being the first Immortal to choose a single bloodline to impart their gifts. The Immortal's sudden appearance was not to teach a lesson, however. Han Xiang's goal was to incite unrest in the Land of Seed of Blossom. The death, hunger and oppression needed to be driven out of the nation, but its people were too beaten to do it alone. This new weapon, control of the suu, would be the final gift bestowed upon the Blossom ninja. It is said that the seventh Immortal spread himself as suu amongst the members of the ninja in order to form what became the Grim Creepers (pg. 26). They were able to now begin the planning stages to a new world.

### THE UPRISING (EIGHTH CATASTROPHE?)

Change was slow, even with the newest clan added to the Land. The Izou Empire was still strong in their occupation and the Blossom people were forced to take it, as commanded by their esteemed Elders who wanted only peace. Both the male and female Elder had descended from the Crystals Bearers since the Izou's attacks and a constant stance

## THE CHOSEN

of non-violent resistance was struck. That is, until the fateful day when the eldest male, Ge Hong, died peacefully in his sleep.

A new male Elder needed to be selected. The search was exhaustive, but a chief of Yakubyo's Pox finally stepped forward to claim his place. Called only Sunzi, he went on to make proud speeches of an imminent uprising by the Blossom People. In his mind, this was a necessary step for their nation to continue any kind of sovereignty. The other Elder, Mei Chin, who preached only peace, constantly softened Sunzi's words and left him powerless to implement effective change. Within the next few years, however, Sunzi had poisoned many against this peace that had brought nothing but ruin, which led to Mei Chin's eventual assassination.

A new female Elder, Wang Anyi of the Splendid Chameleons, took her place as Sunzi's cohort. She was in complete agreement with the need to rebel against Izou tyranny imposed on their people. Together, they gave the word to the ninja to begin preparations to evict the Izou army from their Land of Seed and Blossom.

Coming to be known as the Blossom Uprising, the land is very much in a state of change. Much different from the Izou ninja who hide from an army that wants to destroy them, the Blossom ninja are waging a guerilla war against an occupying force. Surprise attacks, bombings and other tactics have been used thus far, but even the Izou army's scattered numbers have proven too difficult to defeat outright.

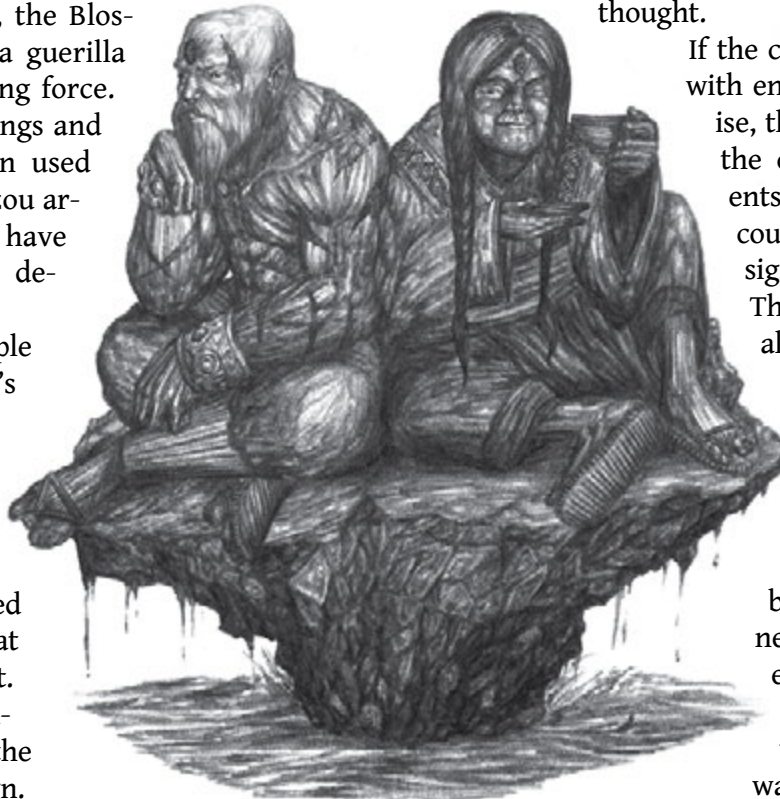
The Blossom people await the next Immortal's arrival to cement the Uprising as the right decision. Only the blessing of a divine being will be enough to cleanse the Land of Seed and Blossom of those that would harm or poison it.

The ninja continue to look to the heavens for a sign.

In many ways, Blossom ninja are born, not made. During the Birthstone Imbuing ceremony, performed by the Crystal Bearers, a faint shimmer can be seen within the jewel if the child is destined to be a ninja. The brighter the shimmer of one's Birthstone, the more powerful a ninja they are destined to become in their lifetime. The child is generally left to their parents, but is watched over as they make their way through life, usually by the Crystal Bearer that gave them their Birthstone. When they are of age, the now young adult is given an opportunity to join one of the seven clans of the Land of Seed and Blossom.

The Blossom people know that if a ninja comes to offer power, taking it is often the only option. If a ninja offers power to a husband, child or other loved one, letting them take it is an understood rule. Gifts imparted by the great Immortals are rare and should never be ignored. To refuse such a request is to gain the ire of that clan and be cursed. A Crystal Bearer may remove the shimmer itself, while a ninja from Yakubyo's Pox may slice the child in two without a second thought.

If the child's Birthstone shines with enough power and promise, the ninja can ask to hold the child for training. Parents, again, are strongly encouraged by tradition to resign to the ninja's request. The child is never lied to, always taught that they have been chosen by the Immortals and plucked from a normal life. When they reach maturity, they may seek out their birth parents and reconnect, secure in the knowledge that they received the very best preparation for the upcoming wars.





## CHAPTER ONE - THE UPRISING

From the moment that a ninja joins the clan, they are joining a powerful and expanding family. They leave their past behind, usually abandoning their birth surname for that of their new clan. Some take on new names entirely, fully engrossing themselves in their newfound lives. Of course, the further along a ninja goes in their studies, the more their lives will focus on the goings-on of their clan.

Like the Izou ninja, clans of the Land of Seed and Blossom follow a master/student type of relationship. A single teacher, however, is rarely known to take on more than three students at any one time, unlike Izou ninja with one sensei sometimes teaching entire villages. The reason for this is two-fold. First, students are treated as family first and ninja initiates second. They are given an equal amount of love, devotion and attention that the teacher would give their own child. Students are often housed in the teacher's home, performing tasks (i.e. cleaning, errands, village work) in exchange for their meals, shelter and training.

The second reason is that the number of ninja has declined overall since the arrival of the Izou Empire. A small number of students are often all that is available today, as some Blossom citizens are either killed or they buy into the mindset of the Izou Empire and start believing that their own culture is primitive. This creates a competitive nature between the clans to indoctrinate as many ninja in to their clans as possible.

## FAMILY

As a people, citizens of the Land of Seed and Blossom are very much part of a community. Before a child is taught their own name, they already understand their place within the fragile ecosystem that is Blossom society. This leads to most seeing themselves as part of a larger organism. Travelers from the Izou Empire often scoff at the Blossom peoples' lack of individuality, but this societal difference is important for making the two nations quite distinct. One nation was built on the backs of those it oppressed and killed, its citizens flourishing and tasting the eloquence that only a conqueror could enjoy. The other nation was built upon the bones of its own people, each generation suffering horrible catastrophes and

surviving them together.

Their fierce respect for their elders is spurred by their belief that family is the most important thing. Family, however, is more than just one's immediate blood relations. One's friends are an extended family, followed by their teachers, shop owners and everyone else that lives within their village. Beyond one's village is the province and then nation as a whole. Citizens believe themselves to be a vital piece in the puzzle that is the Land of Seed and Blossom.

This intense loyalty to family reflects itself as much stronger relations between even their most antagonistic clans. Despite their warring nature, Blossom ninja know that the clans exist to balance each other. Blood is still spilled, but seldom on a whim. Instead, the ninja consider themselves brothers and sisters in a larger family and are happy to squabble first and kill second.

## THE LONGEST LIVED

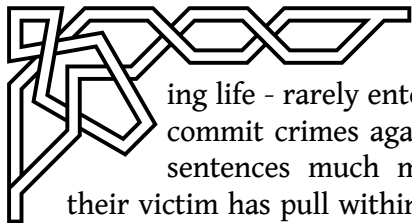
As a society that attempts to emulate the spirituality and wisdom of the great Immortals, the Blossom people have developed their own religion. This Immortalism encompasses the hearts and minds of almost every citizen, bringing them to shrines to pray to the seven Immortals whose names they know and for the arrival of the 8th (and some say final) Immortal to the Land of Seed and Blossom. These shrines are kept as sacred places within even the smallest village and stories have spread of wayward travelers that are slain for resting on the building for too long. It is a place of worship, not a post to be leaned upon, after all.

Belief in the Immortals is not just a matter of faith. The tradition of imbuing one's Birthstone mixes the spirit of the Immortals with the person's soul, thus extending their life span. Even the lowliest Blossom citizen lives well into thirteen decades before they die, about 30% longer than people from other lands. Again, this gift from the Immortals reaffirms the strength of their conviction.

With age comes knowledge and wisdom, which has led to a culture that revolves around respect for age. The idea of disrespecting an elder - someone who has lived a long and interest-



**CHAPTER ONE - THE UPRISING**



ing life - rarely enters one's mind. Those that commit crimes against the elderly find their sentences much more severe, especially if their victim has pull within that particular village or settlement. Immortalism is what eventually led to the tradition of the oldest man and woman ruling the Land of Seed and Blossom with their wisdom.

The Blossom ninja, because of the additional chi held within their Birthstones, can live to be about 160 years old before succumbing to death - the Bamboo Alchemists, of course, are able to live twice that amount of time due to their amazing clan gifts. This idea of Immortalism works to the ninja's advantage, as they are viewed as agents of the seven Immortals and revered as such. If a ninja needs a place to sleep, someone has a bed for them to rest their head. If a ninja needs a meal, there is usually a citizen glad to offer food. Of course, Blossom ninja must be careful not to take their citizenry for granted or else they risk turning people from the path of Immortalism and into the arms of the Izou Empire's false traditions.

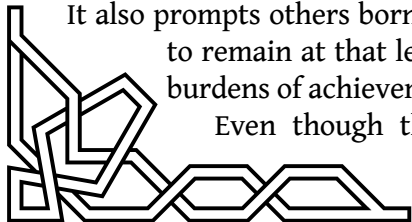
**BLOSSOM CASTES**

While the idea behind Class as a system of hierarchy exists in the Izou Empire, the Land of Seed and Blossom follows a much different social construct. Everyone is born equal in the eyes of the Immortals, with ninja only slightly ahead due to their natural gifts toward chi manipulation. It is up to the motivation of the individual citizen to determine where they fall in terms of their Caste, allowing them to rise or fall during the course of their life (instead of sticking to one Caste based on the circumstances of their birth).

If one's father was a famous hunter, for instance, they are expected to rise to that level at some point in their lives and even surpass it if at all possible. If one's mother was a village Chief, they often have pressure to follow in large footsteps. Falling short of the capabilities of one's predecessors can certainly bring shame onto family, friends and one's clan. This alone is enough to drive most to at least attempt achievement.

It also prompts others born to families of lower caste to remain at that level, as not to place undue burdens of achievement on their children.

Even though they are graced with the



blessing of the Immortals, Blossom ninja are still subject to the rules of Caste and tradition. They are slightly removed from society, which eliminates any dishonor to their birth families based on their actions, but ninja must still strive to better themselves or be seen as weak in the eyes of their clan. There are six Castes that the Land of Seed and Blossom recognizes.

**GATHERERS**

Every Blossom citizen starts out as a Gatherer and is usually a distinction held for children or those without any lofty goals. The role of a Gatherer is one of basic necessity, performing many of the common duties of farming, commerce and (as the name describes) gathering resources from the forests. One at this Caste level, however, is rarely left to their own devices. At the bottom of the totem pole, Gatherers haven't yet achieved the status of true adulthood. There are stories of adults that have never ascended past the Gatherer Caste, either due to being ill-motivated, crippled or possibly mentally deficient. There should be a strong reason why an adult, especially with such a long life to accomplish this smallest of feats, would remain a simple Gatherer.

Ninja of the Gatherer Caste are often simply children. Blossom clans are known for pushing their students to physical and mental excellence early on to avoid any of their ninja falling behind. If one cannot even reach beyond mediocrity, they will not make for a very good ninja. Yakubyo's Pox has been known to simply eliminate initiates that cannot complete these basic principles.

**FAMILY BEARERS**

As a Family Bearer, the citizen lifts the stigma of being a child and achieves the title of true adulthood. Following Blossom tradition, the Gatherer is set on a series of trials to prove one's responsibility, integrity, strength and ingenuity. The child prepares for their adulthood trials roughly at the age of 13. These tests can vary based on one's region, as Immortal legends find their way to influence the trials, but few villages deviate from the major points. For instance, trials in the territory of the Grim Creepers may require putting on a glove filled with deadly fire ants to see if their body can resist the poison, while a child in the territory of the Phantom Voices may be left to a spirit





## CHAPTER ONE - THE UPRISING

quest in the middle of the forest with only the dead to bring them home. If the child already belongs to a clan, these trials can be expected to be heightened to much higher levels of complexity.

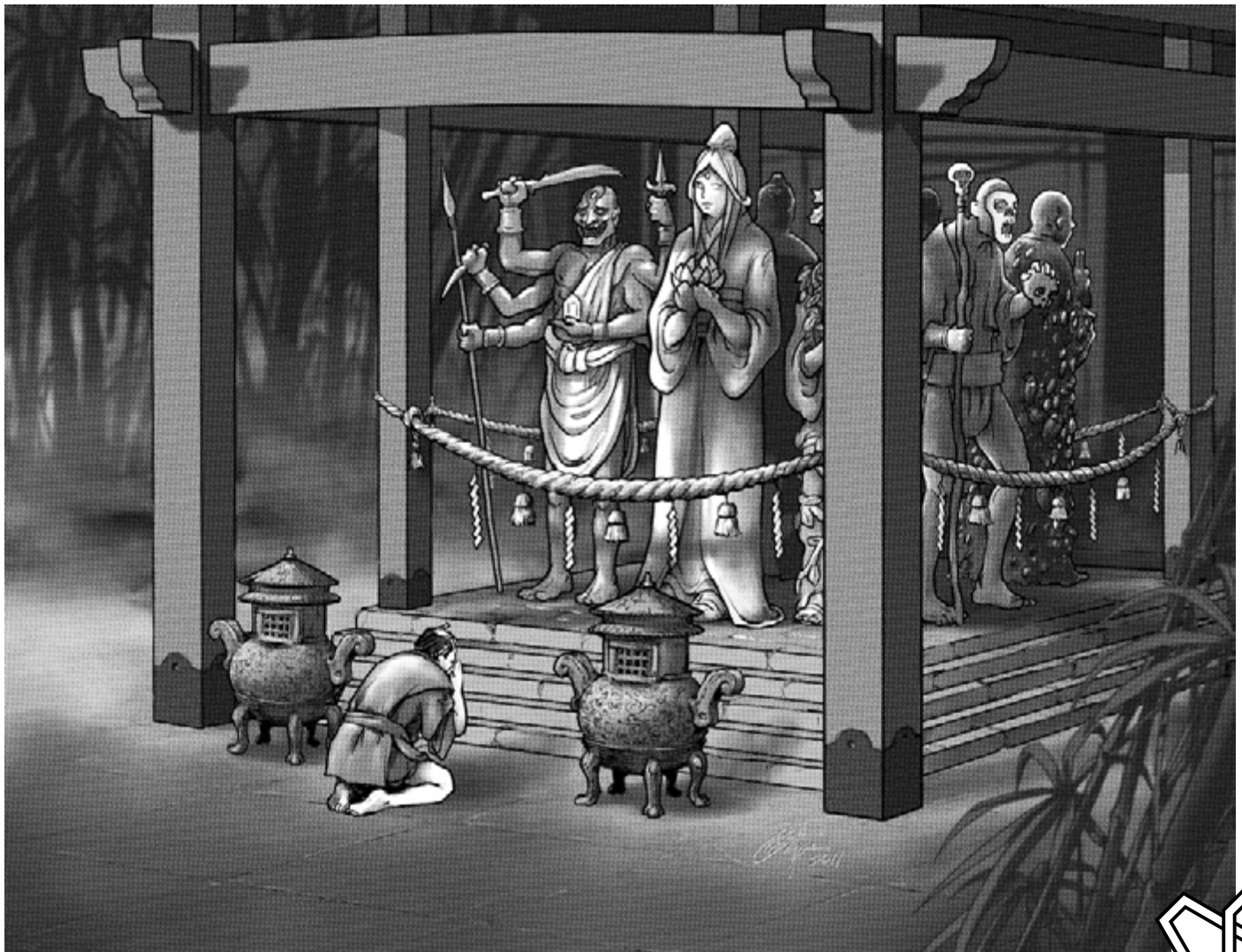
When their trials are completed, they are no longer children and can officially claim to be a Family Bearer. The new adult can now own property and operate without constant supervision. Only when one has reached this Caste are they permitted to choose a wife or husband and give birth to future generations. Once joined in ceremony, they are also given a small bit of land and some cattle with which to create their own home. While not mandatory, all citizens of family bearing age are encouraged to perform their duties accordingly.

It is important for the continuation of the clans that a ninja at least reach the Family Bearer Caste. Each holds within them a small piece of the Immortals and

to not pass on their gifts is to curse the world to darkness.

## HUNTERS

Some citizens of the Land of Seed and Blossom remain at the Family Bearer Caste, serving very much as a parallel to the Izou Commoner. However, some do not strive for complacency. The next level to aspire to is that of a Hunter, citizens entrusted with seeking more dangerous sources of meals for their villages. Picking up a spear and heading into the forest isn't enough to become a Hunter. Warriors train for years in order to get a shot to join a Hunter's league and venture out to try their hand at taking the life of other, highly threatening creatures. In many cases, one must prove triumphant over much larger prey than themselves and share it with the rest of their vil-





## CHAPTER ONE - THE UPRISING

lage in a huge celebration to attain this title. Hunters can be spotted by the trophy they keep from their very first kill, such as a horn carved from a boar tusk or a cougar's pelt.

Many believe that one is not a true warrior until they reach the Hunter Caste. The skills taught as a Hunter can heighten a ninja's already existing power, making them an even greater contributor to their clan. Ninja from Yakubyo's Pox are known for having large numbers of Hunters, being the land's best warriors.

### ADVENTURERS

Before a Blossom citizen is given approval to leave the land, they must be of the Adventurer Caste. At this level of achievement, they have surpassed general gathering skills and have already brought back several hunts worth of meat from the wild to their village. Having proven themselves, they can now go on a walkabout to see the Land of Seed and Blossom and beyond. Their Birthstone sparkles with a certain glint that tells others that their journey has no particular direction and the now Adventurer can simply wander the world.

Leaving the Land is a big deal for these entirely close-knit people. Stepping even one foot outside of the nation can be extremely exhilarating for some and downright dreadful for others. Not only are they alone in another land without their family and friends to rely on (unless they decided to travel together), but they now act as representatives of their homeland wherever they go.

While some choose to leave, there are an equal number of citizens that stay within the confines of their homeland. They travel to different provinces they may not have visited before and are given mostly uninhibited access to the Untamed Wilds (though sacrifices must be made to the Blossom ninja to hopefully acquire a guide through such dangerous terrain).

Ninja of this Caste are worldlier and harder to trick, as they've seen a lot more of the world than others. They often have much more tolerance for Izou ninja, as well, and are not as quick to spill blood over petty disagreements. Understanding the cultures of other people is an important skill learned by an Adventurer, after all.

### ADVISORS

Once a Blossom citizen has gained enough life experience and gathered a wealth of wisdom, they can begin their rise to the Advisor Caste. This Caste has the reputation of being the resting place of Adven-

turers after they have finished their walkabouts. Plenty of citizens, however, skip directly to the Advisor Caste - easy to do if one has lived a rich and eventful life already.

Advisors perform the crucial duty of offering counsel to the young. Some become generals that go on to lead wars or plan grand battle strategies to produce fewer casualties, while others become community leaders. It is their responsibility to ensure all the proper rituals and celebrations are observed, including the Birthstone tradition and the rites of passage that come with rising or falling in Caste.

This Caste is the highest achievable without being the oldest member of their community, but they are respected as much as Chiefs at times. With age comes wisdom and with wisdom comes authority in the Land of Seed and Blossom. Many ninja strive to achieve this level within their clans. Being an Advisor puts them in a position of power among their clan mates, but also allows them to support and protect their individual villages more securely.

### CHIEFS

Those that climb to the Chief Caste have lived a long time and have amassed a lot of power and control. The Chiefs of a village, town or city are the leaders and ruling class, answering only to the Blossom Elders. This power does not come without a price, as they can seldom live normal lives. Their people are constantly adoring and serving the Chiefs' family, creating a legacy that is passed down through the generations. This, again, puts pressure on the future generations to strive to the Chief level as well.

Chiefs often create loose alliances with their neighboring towns, but are not without their rivalries. As leaders, they must look to their Advisors to find the best course of action or ultimately lose their territory completely. They carry the world on their shoulders and have left their life of adventure and travel behind, trading it for a leadership role in the best nation in the world.

## IZOU INFLUENCES

The Izou Empire has stood for over 750 years, each generation passing control of its armies and faculties to the next. The current Emperor himself began as a child ruler and the Ninja Crusade that has taken over their land is a clear indication of the folly of trusting the young with such power. As they expanded their do-



## CHAPTER ONE - THE UPRISING

main, all of the surrounding nations were targets for the Izou, some fighting back and winning as the Land of Five Blades did and others walling themselves away as the Land of Exalted Flame chose.

In 326 IE, the Land of Seed and Blossom peacefully conceded to Izou occupation after a decade of all-out war at their border. Other nations often regard the Blossom people as cowards, but the mostly peaceful people of this kind nation have still yet to ever incite a war with other nations. They are the only nation in the world that can make this claim.

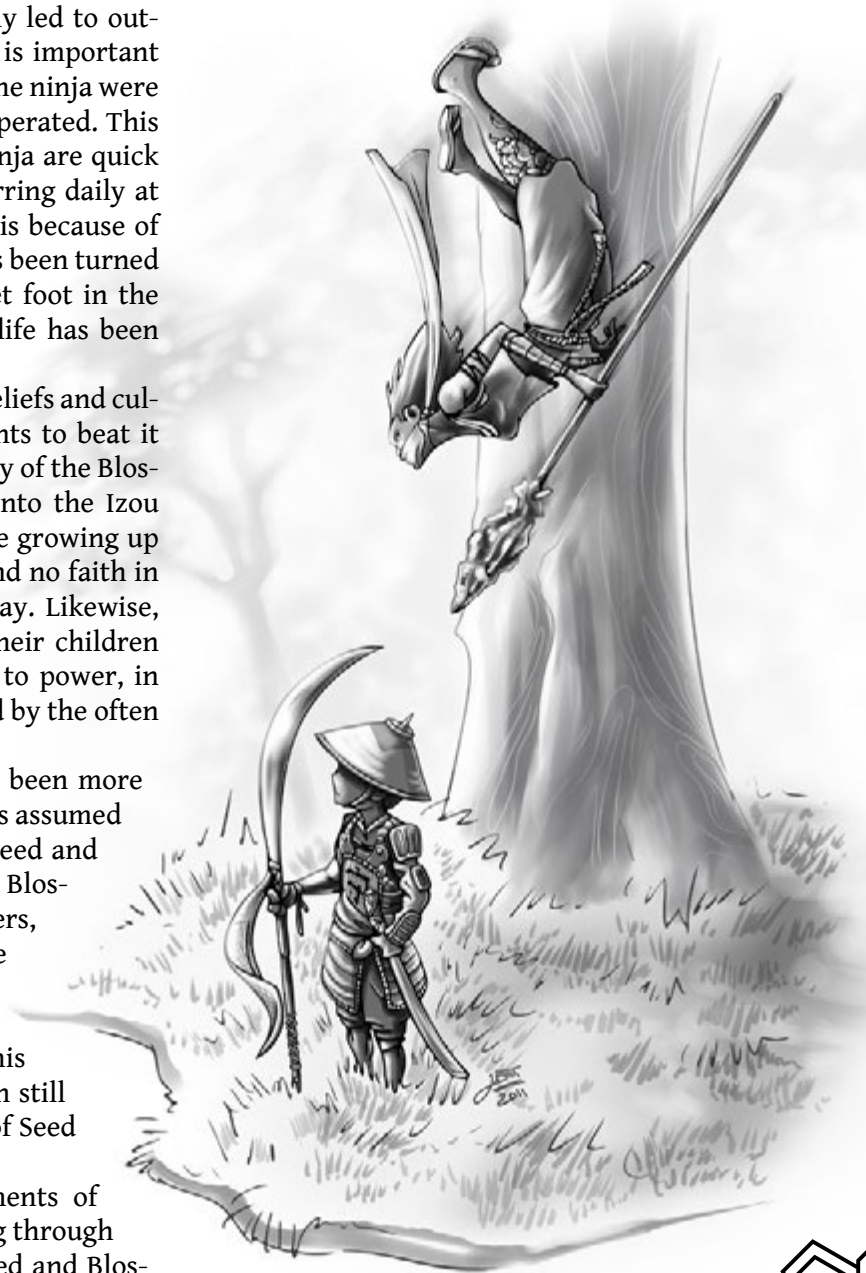
The Blossom and Izou ninja were completely at odds, causing many battles that eventually led to outright incarceration by the Izou armies. It is important to remember that there was a time when the ninja were an integral part of how the Izou Empire operated. This is yet another reason why the Blossom ninja are quick to turn a blind eye to the atrocities occurring daily at the hands of their neighboring nation. It is because of the Izou ninja that the Blossom culture has been turned on its ear. Since the day that the Izou set foot in the Land of Seed and Blossom, their way of life has been skewed.

The people have held strong to their beliefs and culture, despite an occupying force that wants to beat it out of them. Over the years, however, many of the Blossom people have become indoctrinated into the Izou belief system. More and more children are growing up with little to no respect for their elders and no faith in the Immortals to show the people the way. Likewise, some families have chosen not to have their children receive their Birthstone, their birthright to power, in hopes that the child will be better received by the often brutal Izou soldiers.

Even the leadership of the Elders has been more of a figurehead rulership, as the Emperor is assumed by many to be in control of the Land of Seed and Blossom for all "important" decisions. The Blossom people continue to look to their Elders, however, when their people need help the most. The Emperor apparently cares little about the general goings-on of the populace as long as it is kept in order by his armies and as long as the Izou Empire can still say that they have control over the Land of Seed and Blossom.

Most importantly, the recent sentiments of hostility toward ninja have begun bleeding through from the Izou Empire into the Land of Seed and Blossom. This is one among many reasons for the Uprising

and the creation of an alliance between the Blossom clans. The goal is to take their nation back, using the Ninja Crusade as a distraction. How it will all unfold is unknown and the Immortals have not shown their faces to guide the ninja to the correct choice. Each clan has their own agenda with the Uprising, but all are committed to ousting the Izou once and for all, even if that means turning from their peaceful ways.



Frantically and without a real thought, Masahura ran to the door holding the bowl, being just careful enough not to spill it as he reached the porch. Inside the blue decorative bowl was a mixture of blood expelled from his wife's most recent painful contraction and the freshest milk they had at their disposal. He placed the bowl down at his feet and stood on the porch, feeling scared and alone. If the Sister didn't show up and grant her blessing, their child would not make it.

Within minutes, a hooded woman carrying a lantern approached the small shack Masahura's family called home. He greeted the woman with a humble bow. "Are you a Sister?", he asked.

Removing her hood, she revealed her dazzling Birthstone of opal that sparkled with a shine that only a great ninja could possess. Her features were fine and her expression simple. She responded with a simple nod and a light smile, "Ketsueki Yui at your service. Why have you summoned me?"

A wave of relief fell over the man as she spoke - it was the answer to his prayers. "My w-wife is in labor and will die without your help!", he explained quickly. "Please come inside and I'll show you."

Yui followed Masahura as he showed her to the bedroom, though the cries of pain would have been easy to trace without his assistance. Even Yui was surprised by how much blood there was on the floor, much more than she had ever seen from a mere child-birth. It was obvious that this woman was a Fa carrier.

"Please, you must help them. They are all I have to live for," Masahura begged the Sister. "Can you do anything?"

After a few minutes of calm and quiet contemplation, Yui turned to Masahura with a heavy heart. "I can help, but it is not without a price. You said that she is all you live for? Would you also die for her?"

The thought had never crossed Masahura's mind before that day, but he quickly responded with a repeated nod for the sake of his child. "Yes, yes, I would give anything!" His wife yelled out in protest to what he planned to do, but the choice was already made.

"She has lost a lot of blood, and she and the child are sure to die without your sacrifice. Your child will thank you," Yui said as she placed her hand on Masahura's forehead and his blood drained from his body in an instant, leaving a pale corpse behind.

All of the blood in the room floated and swirled around the room, comingling and splashing as it entered the woman's body in an almost artistic display. After almost an hour of moving poisoned, diseased blood out and clean, purified blood in, the child was born without a hint of sickness.

Yui was both elated and saddened by her acts that day, but such is the burden of her duty. Upon leaving, she made sure to hang a crystal doll on the door and inscribe "Masahura" on the now empty bowl for the other clans to now perform their duties as well.



# CHAPTER TWO: BLOSSOM CLANS

Unlike the Izou ninja who are organized into awkward families, the Blossom ninja are regarded more as forces of nature. They represent the ideas of death, fertility and pestilence, in some instances taking on the role of demigods. To become a ninja is not simply to become part of a family, but to take a sacred oath to defend and look after the Land of Seed and Blossom. They believe themselves to be agents of Heaven, in spirit and act, and the Blossom people revere them, no matter how despicable or disturbing their purpose or appearance. The Immortals have gifted them with power, after all.

In almost any town and city, the people can visit their special temples to send prayers to the clan they seek aid from, which are heard and responded to as quickly as possible. Someone in fear of their child dying would call upon the Sisterhood of Blood to aid them, while a recent death in the family would beckon the Phantom Voices to assist.

There are very few clans outside of the seven that dominate the Land of Seed and Blossom. Lesser clans that have sprouted up in the land are often disregarded

as a power not sanctioned by the Immortals. Without heavenly approval, a ninja is just a ninja and not deserving of the Blossom peoples' reverence. Some move on to other lands to seek power elsewhere, while at times the existing clans simply absorb them, as tradition dictates. The seven Blossom clans are:

- Bamboo Alchemists (pg. 22)
- Crystal Bearers (pg. 24)
- Grim Creepers (pg. 26)
- Phantom Voices (pg. 28)
- Sisterhood of Blood (pg. 30)
- Splendid Chameleons (pg. 32)
- Yakubyo's Pox (pg. 34)

# BAMBOO ALCHEMISTS

- ✦ **Other Names:** Ika Clan, Alchemists, Shamans
- ✦ **Stereotypes:** Healers, Prejudiced, Isolationist
- ✦ **Fighting Styles:** Frog, Wildcat
- ✦ **Favored Jutsu:** Way of Caring Hands (NC2E, pg. 119)
- ✦ **Skills:** Athletics +1, Crafts +1, Holistics +1, Marksman +1
- ✦ **Ki Balance:** +1 Yin

## HISTORY

The Ika Clan was the second in the Land of Seed and Blossom, created not long after the Crystal Bearers. They sprang from a time when the tribes were at war and untold sickness invaded from the Untamed Wilds; the people needed healers on a daily basis. Even with their people at each other's throats, the Ika Clan became shamans to all and took no sides in the wars. They perfected their healing jutsu, their potion making and their empathy toward others. Then an event occurred that no one saw coming - the clan split in two.

As the Izou Empire came to conquer and occupy, rival camps within the Ika Clan took different outlooks on how to handle the situation. Some among the clan looked to the Izou Army, seeing a chance to expand their expertise and find brand new ingredients for their potions and healing magic. The other half of the Ika saw the Untamed Wilds as their birthright to explore, having no interest in seeking new treasures in the stolen lands of the Izou Empire. A rift began between the two groups, leading half of the clan to leave in order to join the Izou Empire. They became known as the Bamboo Herbalists.

Those Ika who stayed behind held strong to Blossom tradition, but also became increasingly hostile and distrusting of anything or anyone that did not hail from the Land of Seed and Blossom. Instead of developing a penchant for thrill-seeking, they took the name Bamboo Alchemists and grew to be

reclusive.

The Uprising now calls them from hiding to aid their fellow ninja in taking back their nation. Like the Bamboo Herbalists, they too have honed their bodies in an attempt to prolong life... but their recipe is quite different. Utilizing the power of their Birthstones, their unique magic gives them greater insight by following the ways of Immortalism. Their healing expertise is the key to winning this war and pushing the Izou back.

## LIFESTYLE

The Bamboo Alchemists hold their primary territory in southeast Hougo Range, but also keep small numbers spread throughout the land. They employ any jutsu they have in their possession, as well as a few stolen from other clans, to protect their territories. A trespasser may have to avoid quicksand pits, explosive traps, illusionary pathways and magnetic shifts all at once. Citizens in their territories are often healthier than in other areas, healed in the night by guardian angels who wish their charges not see them. They are still the shamans of the land, after all. In times of extreme (or unique) sicknesses, citizens can summon the Bamboo Alchemists by burying a mixture of bodily fluids from the afflicted in the ground.

Their days and nights are spent primarily in hiding, existing as hermits in order to become one with the Immortals. Days of meditation and ingestion of mystical potions make them stronger and more resilient, their bodies becoming lighter and more flexible. Battle skills are also heightened, but they learn to use combat mostly in self-defense. Young alchemists begin by ingesting a mixture of rare metals to prepare their bodies for the poisonous herbs that will increase their lifespan. When they can stay in meditation for one full week through the pain of starvation, thirst and poison coursing through their veins, the ninja is ready to be a full member.



## CHAPTER TWO - BLOSSOM CLANS

Alchemists have an interesting relationship with the Herbalists of Izou. They share common roots, but their trees have grown in completely different directions. While the Herbalists look kindly on their cousins, the Alchemists believe that the Herbalists are deserters and traitors to the Land of Seed and Blossom. In the times of the Uprising, this has instigated a few shadow wars between the two clans with the Alchemists killing on sight.

### AGENDAS

The Ika Clan is in a mixed position with their decision to help with the Uprising. Their motivations to shove the Izou Occupation out of their country are their belief that the soldiers taint the very land. However, they have been at odds with several of the other clans, most commonly Yakubyo's Pox... their diametrically opposed clan. The clans of disease and health have been at each other's throats for centuries, so it is not in their nature to willingly follow the Pox into battle and work with them. The Alchemists await the arrival of the next Immortal as a sign that they are making the right decision. Until then, they reluctantly abide by the Elders' commands.

### CLAN GIFT AND TRIGGER

◆ **Gift - Bending Reeds:** Ika from the Bamboo Alchemists have infused their body with Yin to increase their lifespan and make them much more flexible. Initiates are chosen at birth and raised within the clan, as there are few who can survive the rituals later on in life. The ninja ages one year from every two that pass after puberty due to a constant ingestion of special potions. This also provides +1 Initiative, +1 Athletics for flexibility and they lose the necessity of breathing.

◆ **Trigger - Xenophobia:** Once they lived in every village of every province, but now the Alchemists have isolated themselves. They are

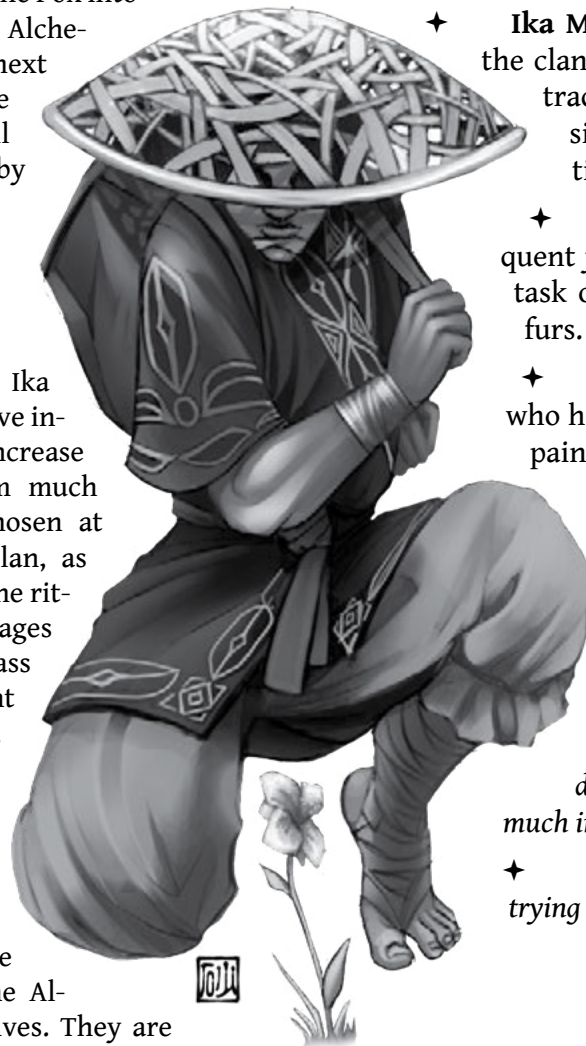
fearful of foreign people, unusual objects or ideas that differ from their own, often turning violent in response. Gain 1 Karma when their aversion to those people and things not of the Land of Seed and Blossom becomes a major hindrance.

### CONTACTS

- ◆ **Oki Seishiro (Survival)** - Seishiro is the man to visit for rare herbs or alchemical ingredients, though he always asks for something in return.
- ◆ **Oye Utemaro (Discipline)** - This monk stands on one leg atop the ruins of his once great village, and won't be moved until the Izou are removed from his land.
- ◆ **No Nanami (Intimidation)** - A striking mind, she has learned the laws of the Izou people and uses it to help the Uprising where she can.
- ◆ **Ika Meiji (Persuade)** - A member of the clan often sent to the Izou lands to trade with the Herbalists. A concession the Elders make out of practicality?
- ◆ **Kanda Ruka (Travel)** - Frequent journeys to other villages is the task of a trader. She deals mostly in furs.
- ◆ **Ando Io (Crafts)** - A warrior who has become famous for her many paintings created from the blood of Izou soldiers she has defeated.

### BONDS

- ◆ *Choose one ninja who is always trying to get you to do crazy dares and stunts.*
- ◆ *Choose one ninja who doesn't seem to want to do very much in your eyes.*
- ◆ *Choose one ninja who is always trying to get you to make potions for them.*



# Crystal Bearers

- ✦ **Other Names:** Shouka Clan, Keepers, Jewelers
- ✦ **Stereotypes:** Traditional, Wise, Stuck Up
- ✦ **Fighting Styles:** Rhino, Snake
- ✦ **Favored Jutsu:** Way of Shards (pg. 76)
- ✦ **Skills:** Crafts +1, Intuition +1, Might +1, Perception +1
- ✦ **Ki Balance:** +1 Yang or +1 Yin

## HISTORY

If one clan embodies what it means to be a citizen of the Land of Seed and Blossom, it is the Crystal Bearers. They were the first clan born to the nation, acting as priests of the now-ruined Seiseki Temples (pg. 37). There was a time when every parent of the land sought them out, hoping for their child to undergo the Birthstone Imbuing ceremony. This blessed ritual, taught to them by the first Immortal, not only creates a connection between the child and the Land of Seed and Blossom, but with every other citizen of the land as well. The Crystal Bearers were protectors of the nation and of its children, making them the most trusted and beloved of any ninja clan.

When the Izou Army set their sights on their nation, the Crystal Bearers were the first line of defense. They used their mastery of Crystal and the elements to fight back the Izou forces, but were ultimately unsuccessful in their strategies. Village after village fell to the invaders, who discovered that the Jewelers were fortified within the Seiseki Temples. After the Izou had destroyed their foundation, the remaining Crystal Bearers were spread thin. Though they continue to perform Birthstone Imbuing ceremonies, they are the most hunted of the ninja in the Land of Seed and Blossom. The Izou know that if they allow them to reassemble in large numbers,

the Blossom people may rise up. Little do they know.

Many of the citizens believe that the Crystal Bearers are the leaders of the Uprising, but it couldn't be farther from the truth. Unlike other clans, the Shouka are scattered into smaller collectives and were unable to gather the others under their banner without support from the Elders, who believed the Izou would crush them if their numbers grew too large. The Seiseki Ruins are their only refuge, but is under the watchful gaze of the Izou army at almost all times. The Crystal Bearers now serve as advisors to Yakubyo's Pox and hope their assistance will produce a prosperous outcome.



## LIFESTYLE

The existence of a Crystal Bearer is wrought with perpetual hiding and running for one's life. Even though they call one of the largest provinces their home, the Shouka travel in small groups generally, collecting in diminutive hidden villages.

Their isolated domains are known for sprouting crystal trees or fruits, letting a trespasser know they may need to turn back.

Most of these areas are around the Ruins of Seiseki, but the Izou Army has been instructed to kill any Jeweler on sight since the Ninja Crusade began.

Tradition states that citizens may call Crystal Bearers from their hiding hanging a doll made of crystal entwined with their child's hair on their door. The Birthstone Imbuing ceremony is their most common service, but they are also known for providing counsel or performing marriages.

Crystal Bearers practice secret and deadly arts of bending crystals to their will – yet another reason why they are hunted. This requires long hours of attuning to the world around them in order to master ki. Initiates must have a Birthstone and a strong sense of tradition. The size of the Shouka clan is finally growing once again, each small group gaining new



## CHAPTER TWO - BLOSSOM CLANS

members as true patriots are called to the banner of the most beloved clan.

### AGENDAS

The Uprising has given the Crystal Bearers a second chance. They currently serve as advisors, but they hope to once again be at the forefront of Blossom society when all is said and done. To do that, the Shouka not only need to regain their former power, but they'll need to knock the Pox from their pedestal. When the Uprising is over, hopefully due to some momentous blow to the Izou by the Crystal Bearers, there will likely be another Catastrophe in the form of an all-out ninja war and even more bloodshed—unfortunately, since the Pox are not ones to back down without a fight. There is no other choice but to prepare to one day face their current allies on the field of battle.

### CLAN GIFT AND TRIGGER

◆ **Gift - Elemental Muse:** The Shouka clan has a stronger connection to the universal elements due to their bond to the Immortals and the power of their Birthstone (Diamond for Earth, Onyx for Metal, Emerald for Wood, Opal for Water and Ruby for Fire). To reflect this connection, the ninja picks one Basic Elemental Jutsu connected to their Birthstone during character creation for free. Their status among ninja also reduces all penalties from the Embarrassed Condition by 1.

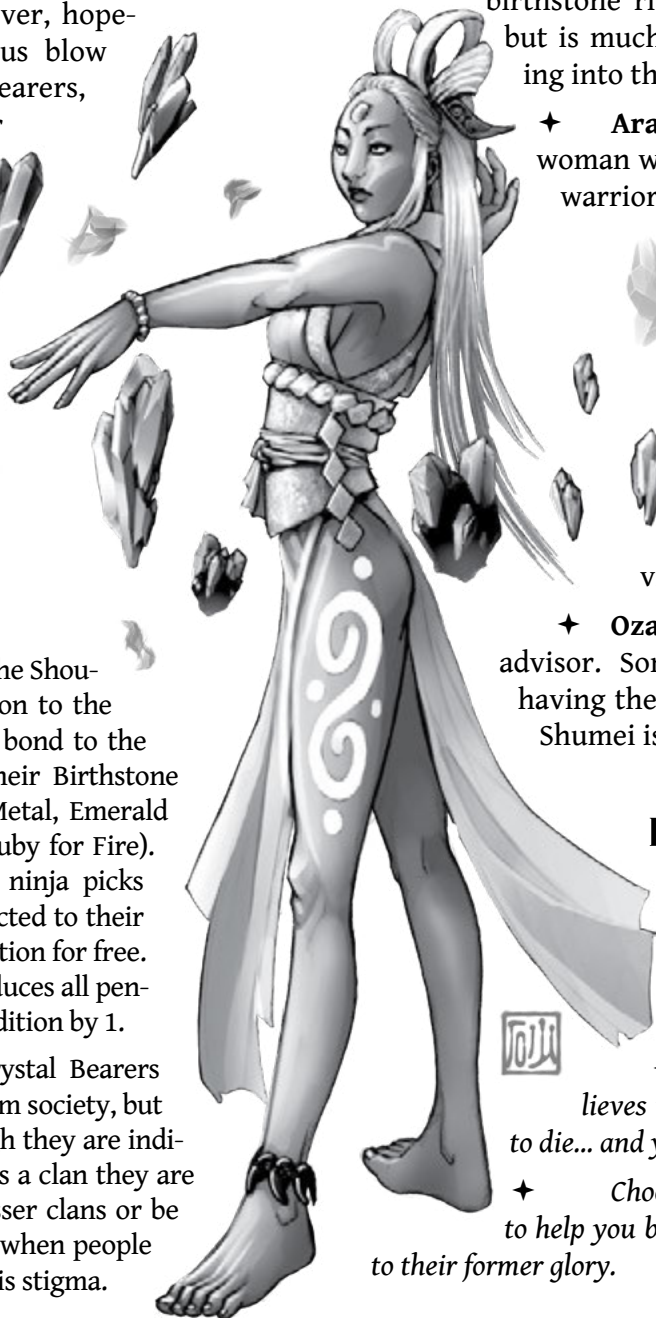
◆ **Trigger - Scattered:** Crystal Bearers used to be at the center of Blossom society, but are now fragmented. Even though they are individually revered, many believe as a clan they are doomed to split into a dozen lesser clans or be reduced to Ronin. Gain 1 Karma when people ignore your sage words due to this stigma.

### CONTACTS

- ◆ **Oishi Toshie (Empathy)** - A midwife for many of the newest generation of ninja, she is known and loved as Mother Toshie by most in the land.
- ◆ **Mukai Fuuko (Crafts)** - She has devoted her life to cutting gems for the Crystal Bearers to use in their rituals.
- ◆ **Shouka Yasuo (Perception)** - He enacts the birthstone rituals like any of his clan, but is much more fascinated by looking into the souls of others he meets.
- ◆ **Arata Ano (Might)** - A barren woman who offered her body to the warriors of the Uprising. They put a sword in her hand instead and proved her true worth.
- ◆ **Murai Michinaga (Holistics)** - A master of healing potions, his expertise often allows for warriors on the front line to survive their battles.
- ◆ **Ozaki Shumei (Speed)** - An advisor. Sometimes half the plan is having the chief hear your plan first. Shumei is great at this tactic.

### BONDS

- ◆ *Choose one ninja who you want to protect from harm, because it seems like the right thing to do.*
- ◆ *Choose one ninja who believes the Immortals have left them to die... and you disagree.*
- ◆ *Choose one ninja who has agreed to help you bring the Crystal Bearers back to their former glory.*



# Grim Creepers

- ✦ **Other Names:** Warawara Clan, Creepers, Bugs
- ✦ **Stereotypes:** Obsessive, Wild, Frightening
- ✦ **Fighting Styles:** Mantis, Spider
- ✦ **Favored Jutsu:** Way of the Hive Body (pg. 72)
- ✦ **Skills:** Fighting +1, Intimidation +1, Stealth +1, Survival +1
- ✦ **Ki Balance:** +1 Yang

## HISTORY

The past of the youngest clan of the Land of Seed and Blossom began with a plague of insects that invaded from the Untamed Wilds two hundred years ago. It started with a few small bugs that entered by burrowing into animal stomachs, laid their eggs and then ate them out from the inside. Then, in larger numbers, the insects devoured miles of crops that left the people starved and emaciated.

It was the Warawara Clan that rose to the occasion to stop it, chosen by the seventh Immortal, Han Xiang. They used their unique jutsu to lure and capture the insects. Already under Izou rule, they were forced to destroy most of the insects, but the clan kept a small number of them alive for their own purposes. Clan leaders spent years cultivating and breeding the bugs, called suu, into creatures that could be useful. The insects were filled with ki and then allowed to enter and live within the ninja's bodies, living primarily off of their blood but without devouring their internal organs or causing ill effects. This deformed the ninja's bodies, infesting their demeanor, speech and every movement with disgusting insect-like creepiness. Their appearance easily gave them away to the Izou soldiers, who continued to turn the Blossom people against their ninja, leading to the expulsion of many

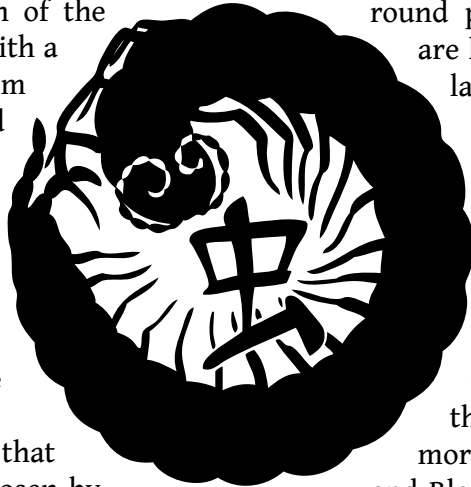
from their own villages.

Some ask why any clan takes this route to power. The answer is clear: the Warawara Clan was full of rebels and insurgents to the Izou Empire, and they bred the suu as a new weapon. Their role within the Uprising is usually as spies and assassins, as they have proven that their small friends can detect and kill from long distances.

## LIFESTYLE

Today, the Creepers lurk in the forests that surround places with large populations, but are known for keeping their hidden villages in underground tunnels. Their domain can be detected usually by the distinct lack of other insect life in the area. The suu are entirely territorial, as are the Warawara, and instantly devour other insects that come within range. The Grim Creepers are a clan that has no previous worship from its people, as they were created by the seventh Immortal simply to free the Land of Seed and Blossom from the clutches of the Izou Empire. However, people are known to leave any bug they see alone in Creeper territory. One never knows if it is random or part of a ninja's colony.

They are the newest clan to the nation, born from an obsession with insects and a hatred of the Izou occupation. As such, their initiates are brought up in a culture of rebellion and implanted with a queen suu upon birth (roughly every third child dies in the process). Young ninja of this clan begin by learning in-depth information about the suu and other insects, assisting with their breeding, feeding and ensuring their continuation. When their martial art skill and hatred for the Izou is honed, the Creeper is gifted with their own colony of suu that is implanted into their prepared bodies.



## CHAPTER TWO - BLOSSOM CLANS

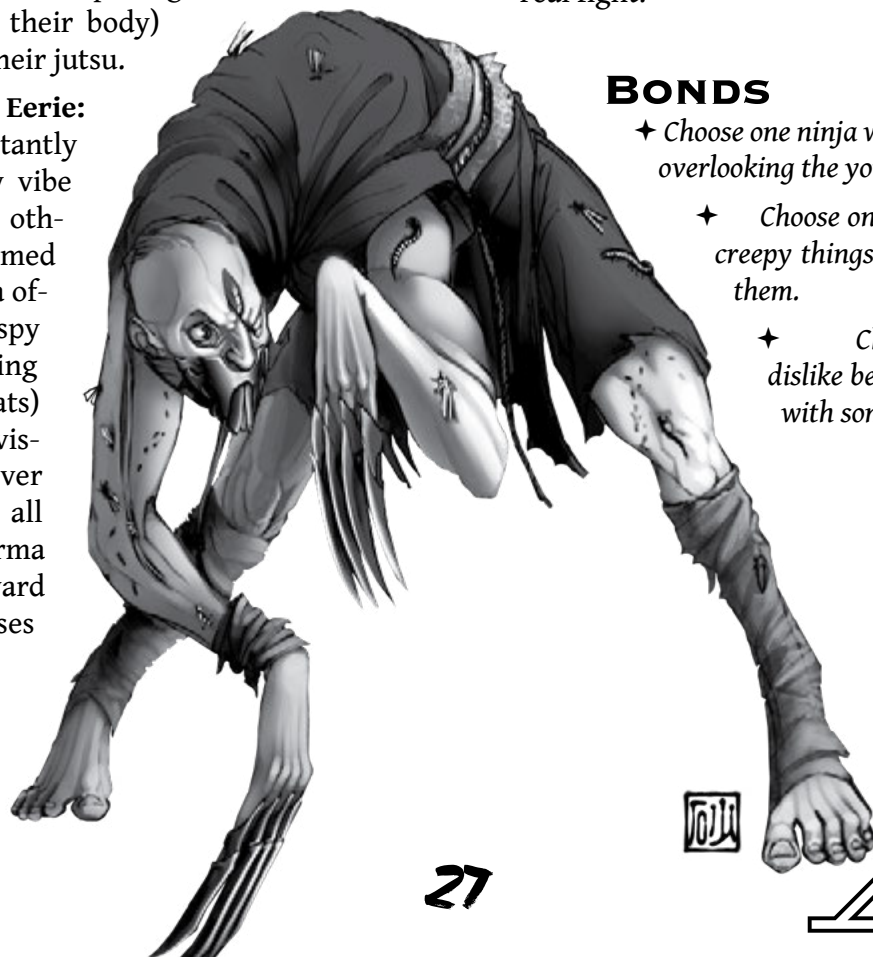
### AGENDAS

The Warawara have spent the last two centuries developing their combat skills and specialized jutsu, just waiting for the day when they can wreak vengeance on the Izou for their unjust occupation. However, the clan was not able to secure backing from the other clans (mostly due to how new their clan is) until the Elders called for the Uprising. They serve the alliance of ninja willingly, but certainly have their eye toward expansion after the Uprising is complete. They wish one day to be beloved by the people like the other clans and see this recent conflict as a way to prove themselves.

### CLAN GIFT AND TRIGGER

◆ **Gift - Personal Infestation:** Creepers store thousands of small insects called suu inside themselves, flowing through their body like blood. This protects them from certain outside influences, reducing Poisoned or Diseased Conditions by 1, and also makes their bodies lighter, granting a +4 Movement bonus. They can release bugs from any orifice (or create instant openings anywhere else on their body) in order to enact their jutsu.

◆ **Trigger - Eerie:** Their presence instantly gives off a creepy vibe that can put off others. Accurately named Creepers, the ninja often speak with raspy voices (from having bugs in their throats) and have insects visibly crawling over their bodies at all times. Gain 1 Karma when their outward appearance causes issues.



### CONTACTS

- ◆ **Iseri Noriyuki (Fortitude)** - Once a well-respected Hunter, he now suffers from extreme drug addiction to keep him going.
- ◆ **Kawahara En (Intimidation)** - An Executioner from the Izou who has taken a liking to the Creepers. He'll kill other Blossom ninja quickly, but is at ease around the Creepers.
- ◆ **Hokama Chiho (Perception)** - A lookout for the Uprising who speaks with an interesting dialect. Common belief is that his family secretly hails from the Land of Exalted Flame.
- ◆ **Handa Shihi (Travel)** - A guide who ventures into Creeper's lands quite often. For some reason, the suu will not attack him.
- ◆ **Warawara Kijuro (Knowledge)** - A bug expert, he is always looking for a new species of suu, hoping to expand the capabilities of their jutsu.
- ◆ **Seto Harumi (Fighting)** - A strong Hunter, he fights not for food, but for the entertainment of his village. No one knows what he'd do during a real fight.

### BONDS

- ◆ *Choose one ninja who you respect for their overlooking the youth of your clan.*
- ◆ *Choose one ninja who doesn't like creepy things, so you play pranks on them.*
- ◆ *Choose one ninja who you dislike because they are obsessed with something.*

# Phantom Voices

- ✦ **Other Names:** Tomurai Clan, Guides, Phantoms
- ✦ **Stereotypes:** Guarded, Wallflowers, Spooky
- ✦ **Fighting Styles:** Crane, Dragon
- ✦ **Favored Jutsu:** Way of Denied Repose (pg. 70)
- ✦ **Skills:** Discipline +1, Empathy +1, Knowledge +1, Speed +1
- ✦ **Ki Balance:** +1 Yin

Untouchables and corpse-handlers. Phantoms from all around were either completely ignored or violently driven away, leaving them to be called on only by the still-faithful.

During the Uprising, they have returned to their old communities, helping to rid the land of the Izou occupation. Turning their jutsu of death into tools of destruction has given their ninja the upper hand.

## HISTORY

Life and death are two sides of the same coin, just like yin and yang. Other clans appropriately handle aspects of life, but the Phantom Voices are primarily drawn to death. Tribes of the southern lands were the first to subscribe to the idea of an afterlife and the creation of specific customs followed the arrival of the fourth Immortal, Zhang Guo. The fear of ending up in a hell dimension or as a member of the walking dead instead of heaven became the norm; the people started looking for someone to lead them to a better spiritual existence.

The Tomurai clan was formed to fill this role. They became keepers of Blossom traditions surrounding the handling of corpses and funeral proceedings to ensure a safe trip to heaven. Their clan developed the ability to communicate with the dead to a limited degree, further adding credence to their position and giving them the moniker of Phantom Voices. Their numbers grew to the point that one or two Phantoms could be found in every village throughout the Land of Seed and Blossom.

Then the Izou Empire attacked and occupied their nation. They brought not only their mighty soldiers, but also their ideas of the

## LIFESTYLE

The Phantom Voices, in many cases, exist outside the idea of actual territory. They live in their own hidden villages where they take care of their own, but have little need to lord over others. Some feel that it is still their place to interact with the Blossom people during times of mourning, while others are still angered about their traditions being so easily discarded in the wake of the Izou arrival. Visitors to Phantom domains may find secluded graveyards, used as illusionary camouflage.

Their training style is quite different from other clans', consisting of weeks of meditation at a time and ingestion of dead flesh to solidify their link with those who have passed. The rituals involved further mix their minds with that of spirits until they are able to hear dead whispers on the wind. After becoming full members, the Guides maintain large libraries of Blossom history, laws and maps of charted areas within the Untamed Wilds.

Phantoms can be called upon when someone dies by leaving a decorative bowl with the deceased's name on one's doorstep. Saving the soul of a sinner often means stripping them to the bone, grinding them to dust and spreading them over consecrated land. Those of purer spirit can be simply buried with



## CHAPTER TWO - BLOSSOM CLANS

the correct feng shui and prayer to allow them safe passage to heaven.

Frequent rivalries have sprung up between the residing Phantom Voices and the Izou Living Chronicle. Their imperialistic mindset makes the Chronicles believe they are entitled to the ancient scriptures, an idea that the two groups have spilled blood over.

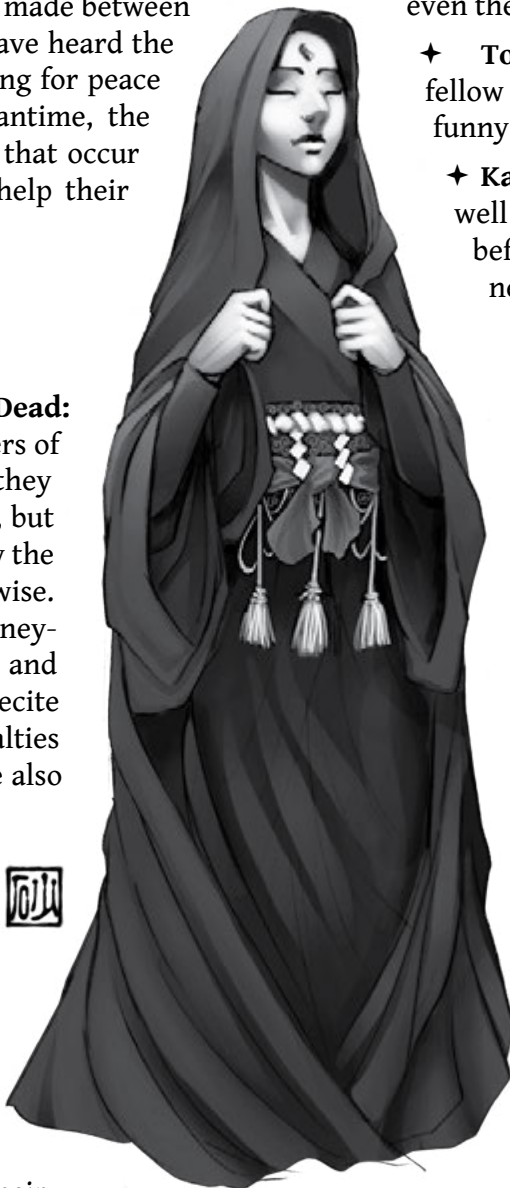
### AGENDAS

With the other clans up in arms over the Uprising, the Phantom Voices have attempted to be the voice of reason... without much of a result. They preach that the Izou Ninja are not the enemy and hope that a truce can one day be made between the two countries' ninja. They have heard the screams of the dead and an aching for peace from the ancestors. In the meantime, the Guides keep track of the events that occur and keep themselves ready to help their fellow ninja into heaven.

### CLAN GIFT AND TRIGGER

◆ **Gift - Keepers of the Dead:** The Phantom Voices are defenders of Blossom tradition. Not only do they learn much of the land's secrets, but the dead whisper to them nightly the great knowledge needed to be wise. They gain +1 Travel when journeying through the Land of Seed and Blossom and +1 Knowledge to recite passages from history. Any penalties from the Confused Condition are also reduced by 1, as they are secure in their knowledge.

◆ **Trigger - Silence:** The Tomurai are taught from a young age that to speak too loudly is to talk over and ignore the voices of the dead. Because of this, they rarely talk and speak barely above a whisper when they do. Gain 1 Karma when the perception of their



silence as overly contemplative or judgmental makes others uneasy.

### CONTACTS

- ◆ **Morioka Asako (Crafts)** - A wagon maker with a wide grin and a big hammer... a friend to most who meet her.
- ◆ **Nakatomi Reizo (Discipline)** - A fearless Adventurer who is always there to lead the way when venturing into new lands.
- ◆ **Sugita Yoichi (Empathy)** - An advisor in a nearby village, he is known for his ability to read even the most apathetic person.
- ◆ **Tomurai Katsuhito (Perform)** - A fellow Phantom Voice, a master of making funny faces in place of speaking.
- ◆ **Kano Michi (Marksman)** - A farmer well known for killing any predators before they take the herd her village needs so much.
- ◆ **Kuroda Sachi (Intuition)** - A known gambler, the people who bet against him often end up dead.

### BONDS

- ◆ Choose one ninja who has some sort of problem and they need your help to get through it.
- ◆ Choose one ninja who is good at picking up your non-verbal cues.
- ◆ Choose one ninja who is impatient and never asks you for your often slow counsel.

# Sisterhood of Blood

- ✦ **Other Names:** Ketsueki Clan, Sisters, Bleeders
- ✦ **Stereotypes:** Protectors, Understanding, Judgmental
- ✦ **Fighting Styles:** Eagle, Horse
- ✦ **Favored Jutsu:** Way of Vital Currents (pg. 81)
- ✦ **Skills:** Empathy +1, Fortitude +1, Persuade +1, Travel +1
- ✦ **Ki Balance:** +1 Yang

## HISTORY

The Blossom people have always been stricken with strange sicknesses, birth defects and deformations. There was one particular affliction centuries ago, however, that was much worse than anything before, resulting in thousands of stillbirths throughout the nation. Children who were born developed severe mental disorders and some even without limbs. That is when the fifth Immortal arrived in the Land of Seed and Blossom. The Ketsueki clan came together from all the women with the purest of hearts in an attempt to cure the disease and calm the people.

Through the use of special alchemy and ki manipulation, the clan learned the fundamental lessons of controlling their own blood... including the flushing out of any impurities that could affect childbirth. They discovered the Blossom people, either from prolonged exposure to the Untamed Wilds or some strange attack from Yakubyo's Pox, had acquired a blood sickness (most prevalent in people who lived to the east). They traveled the land as kind medicine women, bringing the next generation back to their full potential. The Ketsueki clan assembled into the Sisterhood of Blood, accepting other women into training in order to protect their land

and its people from anything that might affect its fertility further.

Some people still carry this most dangerous of blood sicknesses, called the Fa Disease, which keeps their clan around. This was discovered as the years passed under Izou Occupation. With the Sisters pushed out of some villages, more and more problems with fertility have begun popping up. The Uprising isn't just freedom for themselves and the people they care for, but for the unborn to be brought healthily into a land without corruption. The Sisterhood has the most altruistic view on the coming war of any of the clans.



## LIFESTYLE

Members of the Sisterhood blend into their villages almost seamlessly. Being close to the people is the best way for them to aid their land. In addition to working with new mothers to cleanse their children of any blood diseases, Sisters also provide counsel for ways to live a more prosperous life.

They speak with young lovers to ensure they have a strong relationship and advise families on ways to stay together, even in these times of Izou oppression.

Sisterhood domain is dangerous territory, as they are altruistic but fiercely protective. Mystic traps can be found all over that instantly drain the blood from any intruders. Trespassers should turn back the moment they notice too many dead, bloodless animals. They can be summoned to aid any Blossom citizen by splashing a mixture of blood and milk on one's door.

Their training includes plenty of research into controlling their own streams of power. After attuning to their own blood flow, Sisters turn to understanding the blood around them, including thinned blood of animals, sap that courses through trees and rivers that enrich the land. The Sisters consider

## CHAPTER TWO - BLOSSOM CLANS

themselves guardians of all these things and strive toward a peaceful existence, despite the devastating power behind their jutsu.

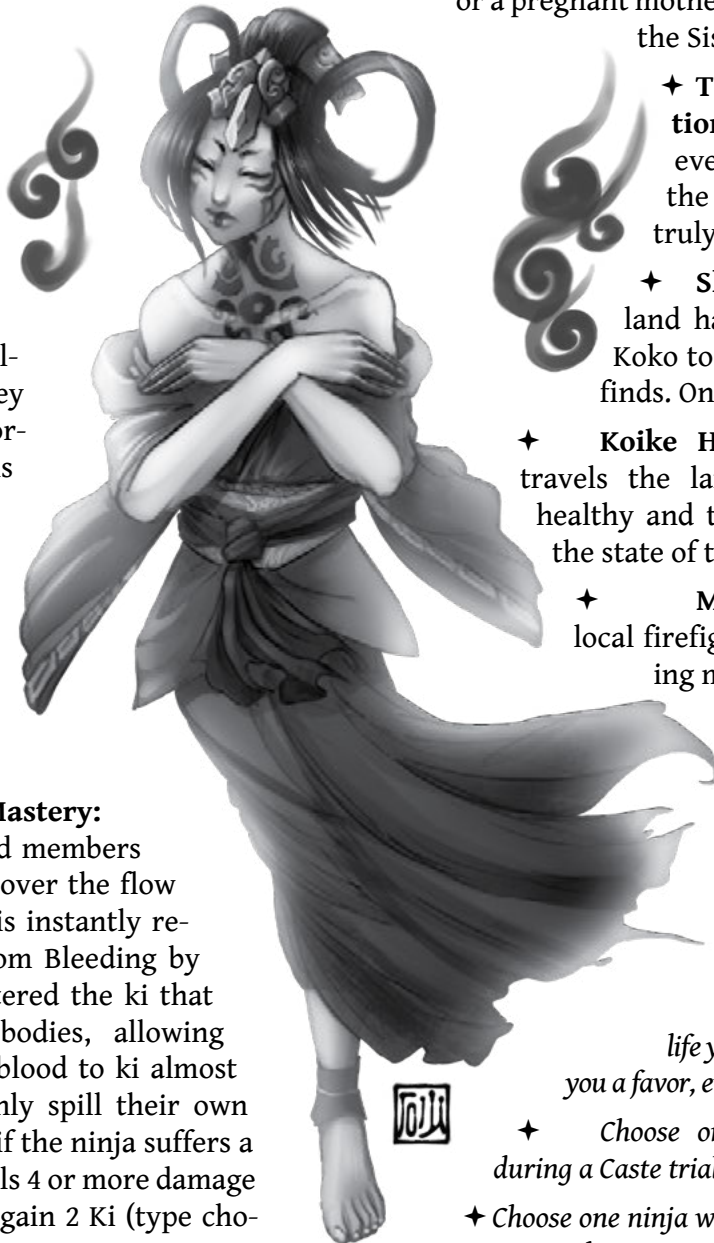
### AGENDAS

The Sisterhood of Blood keeps to the back of the Uprising forces. Not only because they are experts on archery and ranged combat, but also because they are not completely behind the brutality against the occupying Izou forces. They have stressed these opinions to the Elders themselves, but their words have fallen on deaf ears, as the Elders are uninterested in talks of further peaceful resistance. The Sisters are fully on the side of the Land of Seed and Blossom and back the Elders' decision, but they have also instituted border-crossing expeditions in search of Izou ninja who can help end this conflict peacefully.

### CLAN GIFT AND TRIGGER

#### ◆ Gift - Blood Mastery:

The Sisterhood of Blood members have complete control over the flow of their own blood. This instantly reduces any penalties from Bleeding by 1. They have also mastered the ki that flows through their bodies, allowing them to convert their blood to ki almost directly. While they only spill their own blood when necessary, if the ninja suffers a physical attack that deals 4 or more damage at once, they instantly gain 2 Ki (type chosen by the player).



**Trigger - Peaceful Instinct:** The Sisterhood, despite their powerful jutsu, lean heavily toward peaceful solutions to problems. Other clans regard them as “all talk” with their belief that even the Izou Occupation could be solved through diplomacy. Gain 1 Karma when they choose pacifism when action is needed.

### CONTACTS

◆ **Ketsueki Take (Holistics)** - When a child is sick or a pregnant mother fears complications, Take is the Sister they come to.

◆ **Takata Kyuwa (Intimidation)** - A young chief, leading an even younger village. He is on the lookout for an Advisor he can truly trust.

◆ **Shiraki Koko (Crafts)** - As the land has been ravaged, it is up to Koko to restore lost works of art she finds. Only she can!

◆ **Koike Haruka (Knowledge)** - She travels the land, keeping record of the healthy and the sick, so the Elders know the state of the Blossom people.

◆ **Masaki Motoyasu (Might)** - A local firefighter, he is known for carrying more water than anyone else.

◆ **Oki Benjiro (Fighting)** - A tall, strong man who offers protection when traveling between lands. One can never be too careful.

### BONDS

◆ Choose one ninja whose life you saved once. They feel they owe you a favor, even though you didn't ask for one.

◆ Choose one ninja who was your rival during a Caste trial.

◆ Choose one ninja who you have exchanged secrets with. Now, each of you has leverage over the other.

# Splendid Chameleons

- ✦ **Other Names:** Idou Clan, Chameleons, Shifters
- ✦ **Stereotypes:** Boisterous, Artistic, Deformed
- ✦ **Fighting Styles:** Bear, Sloth
- ✦ **Favored Jutsu:** Way of Molded Bones (pg. 74)
- ✦ **Skills:** Deception +1, Fortitude +1, Intimidation +1, Perform +1
- ✦ **Ki Balance:** +1 Yang

## HISTORY

The Blossom people have always been filled with a love of vibrant artistic expression. In the early days, the Idou were the best sculptors of their time, effortlessly bending metal, wood or earth to their whim. They were heralded as the finest artists of every medium known to the Land of Seed and Blossom. That is, until they created a new focus.

Their wisest alchemists took the lessons of the sixth Immortal and began experimenting on their own bodies, testing the effects of ki on their skin. These ninja ingested the earth's minerals, the soil rich in spirit, and spread mixtures of moss and sap on their skin to cure their pores and make them flexible; they also inhaled smoke from burned wood of sacred trees from the Untamed Wilds. It was the final swallowing of an alchemical concoction of gold and jade that sealed their mystical efforts, giving them complete control over every facet of their bodies.

Chameleons popped up all over the nation as performers and artists, made most famous by their twisted and distinctly-shaped bodies. This became the image other nations had of the Blossom people, which led to stories of a land filled with freaks and body-defilers. On the contrary, though, the changing of one's body was regarded as art

in the Land of Seed and Blossom, not an abomination.

As the Izou Army occupied their lands, symbols popped up all over the place, statues the Chameleons created in defiance of their oppressors. The soldiers' first order of business was to oust the Chameleons and their symbols of so much unease for the Izou. Soldiers tore down many of their beautiful works and branded them as eyesores on the land. The Blossom villages were stripped of the vibrant colors and differing body types they became accustomed to, creating a dark hole in their lives that they may never recover from.

With the Uprising in full swing, the Chameleons have returned to their old tricks. Their approach is much less aggressive than those of the other clans, usually involving pulling pranks and participating in surprise attacks. The Idou Clan considers itself more a gathering of artists than warriors, but they've been pulled into the battle despite any protests.

## LIFESTYLE

To enter a hidden village of the Splendid Chameleons is to step into a mysterious wonderland. They cultivate the most beautiful animals, shape their forests into strange configurations and mold their metal structures into iron masterpieces. The Chameleons themselves wear their hair in a hundred different styles on heads that are often purposefully misshapen and strange. Their facial features are pierced and limbs are often longer than normal. Chameleons are also known for their celebratory orgies where the ninja switch genders constantly throughout. These ninja, summoned by hanging bushels of red berries over one's door, are called upon during times of celebration, as they are known for making a party even better.

Initiates to the Idou Clan spend years learning an





## CHAPTER TWO - BLOSSOM CLANS

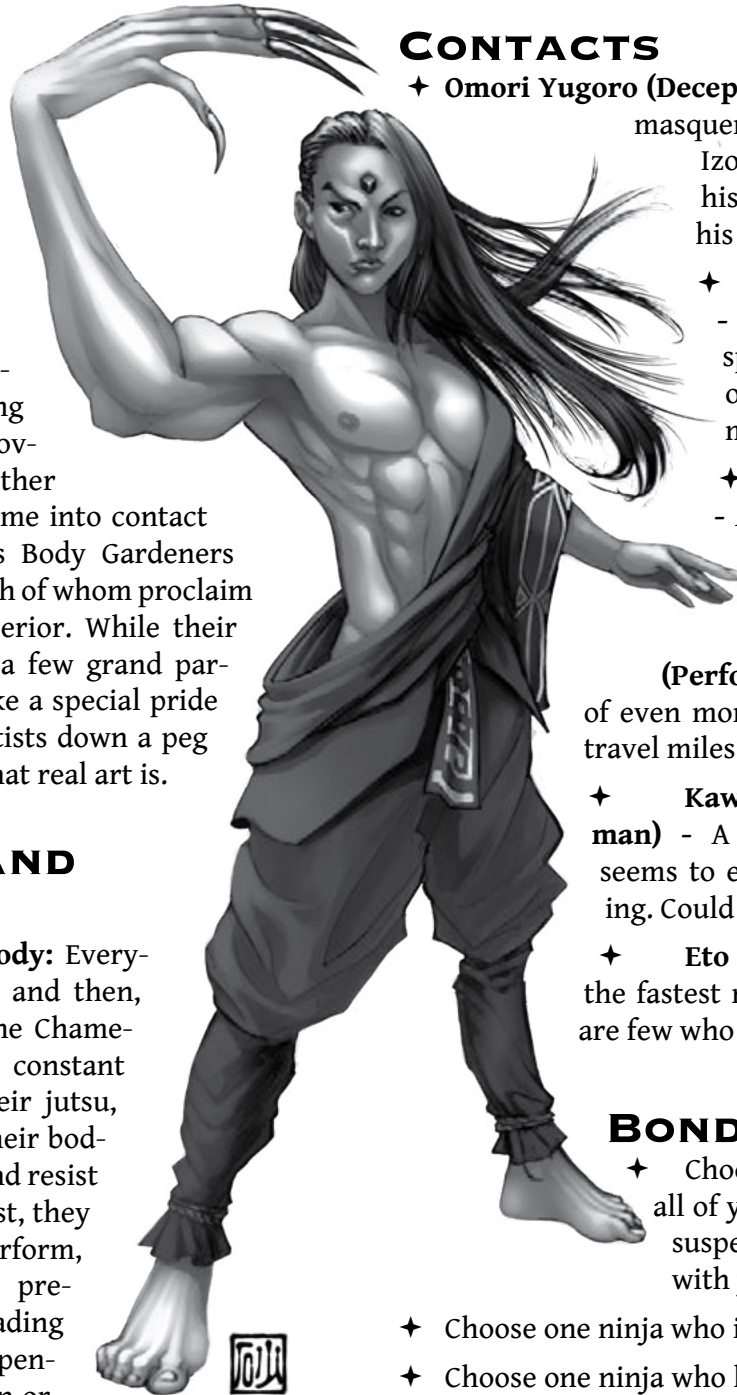
appreciation for art first, with body and environmental manipulation coming second. An initiate is usually born into the clan, having their body prepared and altered after reaching three years of age. Receiving the ritual later on in life incurs a week-long, excruciatingly painful process involving the ingestion of potentially lethal potions (that most die from).

### AGENDAS

The Uprising has swept over the Land of Seed and Blossom, and that includes the Splendid Chameleons. They have begun using their abilities to infiltrate Izou forces, taking the guise of soldiers or government officials to further the cause. They have come into contact with both the Virtuous Body Gardeners and Blazing Dancers, both of whom proclaim their artistry to be superior. While their run-ins have produced a few grand parties, the Chameleons take a special pride in knocking the Izou artists down a peg or two when they see what real art is.

### CLAN GIFT AND TRIGGER

◆ **Gift - Shifting Body:** Everyone needs a smile now and then, and this is the job of the Chameleons. Through almost constant training, and use of their jutsu, the Idou have trained their bodies to perform this job and resist harm in the process. First, they gain +1 Crafts or +1 Perform, depending upon their preferred method of spreading joy, but they also lower penalties from either Broken or Injured Conditions by 1.



◆ **Trigger - Overzealous:** Even though they are ninja, secretive and hidden as such a lifestyle is, they are often boisterous and loud in comparison to other clans. Gain 1 Karma when they just can't help themselves but to be the center of attention, and it causes problems.

### CONTACTS

◆ **Omori Yugoro (Deception)** - A Blossom spy who masquerades as a member of the Izou, even having removed his Birthstone for the good of his nation.

◆ **Fukuda Ton (Crafts)**  
- Traveling the land and spreading his own brand of sake is only one of Ton's many talents.

◆ **Idou Sen (Persuade)**  
- A wonderful pickup artist, there is no man or woman who can deny her.

◆ **Nakao Rii (Perform)** - A beautiful spinner of even more intriguing tales, people travel miles to hear her speak.

◆ **Kawamoto Gekko (Marksman)** - A young Izou soldier who seems to empathize with the Uprising. Could he be turned?

◆ **Eto Romi (Athletics)** - One of the fastest runners in the land, there are few who can match her ability.

### BONDS

◆ Choose one ninja who shuns all of your advances, though you suspect they are secretly in love with you anyway.

◆ Choose one ninja who isn't one for frivolity.

◆ Choose one ninja who has become a close friend through family ties.

# Yakubyo's Pox

- ✦ **Other Names:** Kouhei Clan, Pox, Sick Men
- ✦ **Stereotypes:** Experimental, Reckless, Blood-thirsty
- ✦ **Fighting Styles:** Spider, Tiger
- ✦ **Favored Jutsu:** Way of Unending Blight (pg. 78)
- ✦ **Skills:** Athletics +1, Fighting +1, Holistics +1, Survival +1
- ✦ **Ki Balance:** +1 Yin

They became Yakubyo's Pox, forever known as the ninja that called the people back from becoming what the Izou Empire is today. Centuries after Yakubyo's death, the Sick Men continue to lurk in the darkness, ready to cull the herd and help shape the future of the Land of Seed and Blossom. In the current climate of tameness and complacency, Yakubyo's Pox is the driving force behind the Uprising. They are fully backing the Elders' plans to rid the land of the Izou Empire's influence once and for all.

## HISTORY

Yakubyo's Pox comes from a time when the Land of Seed and Blossom was all too plentiful. There was a surplus of food and drink, and the people were fertile to the point of having six to seven children per family. As time passed, the people became too fat to move, too lazy to till the land and too engrossed in themselves to care for others in their communities. The generation that followed was overpopulated and lacked the food to sustain their numbers.

It was the male Elder at the time, Yakubyo, who was called by the third Immortal to gather a powerful group of warriors together. He was an older man, just one year shy of being Elder himself, and was sick with cancerous growths on his neck. However, he learned to use these to his advantage, crafting special jutsu that gave him power over sicknesses.

The clan was made up of men who hadn't given into the excesses of life, and they trained for decades to one day make the people realize their decline. They unlocked their ki, mixed with their intense love of battle, and rained death and disease onto the people. Swarms of locusts were brought in to eat the crops, victims were infected with unique and excruciating diseases and cursed rain burned any who survived those other blights.



## LIFESTYLE

Like other clans, Yakubyo's Pox has receded from regular life. They live in hidden villages in the ickiest regions of the nation, filled with bogs of stench and every kind of illness that one could think of. A traveler in their land must consider their every step, watching for scrapes from poisonous plants or bites from disease-carrying bugs. Citizens to their land usually develop immunities from birth to the deadly sicknesses, or they would surely have no people. Ninja of the Pox can be called by a Blossom citizen who ingests rat's blood and speaks their prayers into a campfire to be carried to the clan by the pestilence wind.

The Kouhei clan trains all day, every day. They count on tribute from their wards to supply food, so they need little in the way of agricultural skills. They are true warriors, fighting alongside their brothers in a constant effort to better hone their talents and let off steam. When not testing blade to flesh, Sick Men are developing new and interesting illnesses. Prisoners of war are their first choice for test subjects, but they are not above kidnapping to fill the quota, accepting certain casualties during times of war. Some ninja even self-experiment, becoming walking cesspools of disease with peeling skin, weathered features and corpse-like appearances.

## CHAPTER TWO - BLOSSOM CLANS

Tradition mandates that no woman is to learn the ways of Yakubyo. It was first taught to his sons and has passed down through the male line of succession ever since. Women who have attempted became diseased and died a slow death, no matter how prepared they believed themselves to be.

### AGENDAS

Yakubyo's Pox is a clan that is straightforward in its goals. Kill Izou soldiers, kill any Izou ninja and kill anyone else that gets in their way. The Ninja Crusade is nothing to them but an excuse for refugees to flee to the Land of Seed and Blossom only to meet a ready blade. The Uprising is their main focus, as their leaders take cues directly from the Elders. They fight on the front line.

### CLAN GIFT AND TRIGGER

◆ **Gift - Ready for Battle:** Their numbers are strong and they attack on a whim, so their intense training grants them great resistance in battle. To even strive to become a novice among the Sick Men, a ninja must battle 100 warriors and kill 100 beasts. This trains them well. They gain +1 Health, immunity to the Diseased Condition and a +1 bonus when using a chosen weapon type (Sharp, Quick, etc.).

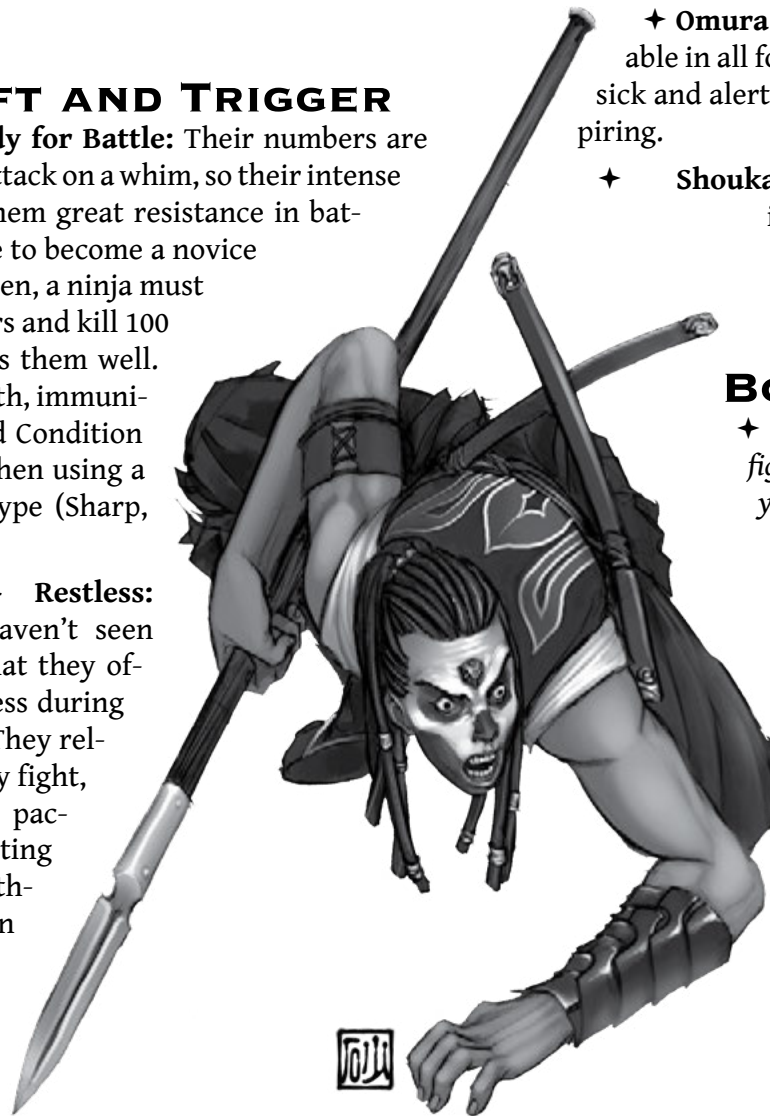
◆ **Trigger - Restless:** The Sick Men haven't seen war in so long that they often become restless during their downtime. They relish any battle they fight, but can be seen pacing or even sweating when there is nothing to do. Gain 1 Karma when they give in to this urge at the worst of times.

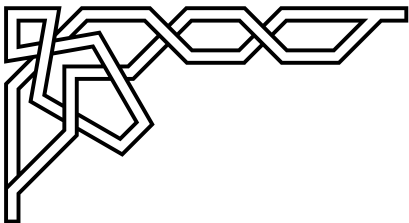
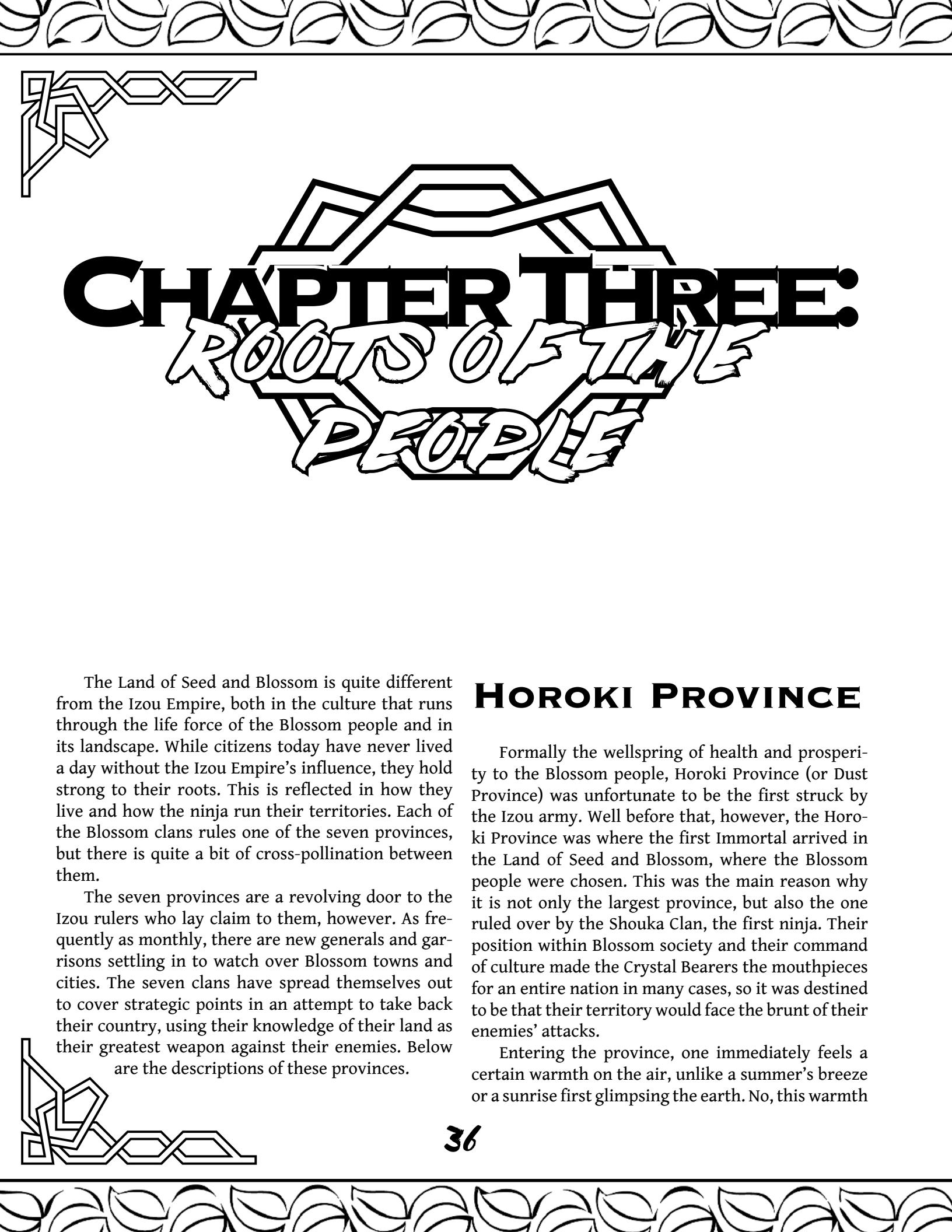
### CONTACTS

- ◆ **Kouhei Toyokuni (Stealth)** - A great hunter within the Pox, there is no creature he can't hunt... bringing him much glory.
- ◆ **Nagako Sadako (Perception)** - She is an expert in potion making, even able to take a taste and recall all the ingredients used.
- ◆ **Namiki Kenzaburo (Crafts)** - He is a tattoo artist, versed in the traditional markings of each Caste and often sought for his attention to detail.
- ◆ **Kurogane Kuniko (Survival)** - A wonderful animal breeder, she focuses on using her animals as therapy for young ninja who have seen more than their fair share of bloodshed.
- ◆ **Omura Izo (Holistics)** - Knowledgeable in all forms of disease, he tends to the sick and alerts the Pox when someone is expiring.
- ◆ **Shouka Yuma (Intuition)** - A prominent Crystal Bearer, she is in charge of naming all children born in the region.

### BONDS

- ◆ *Choose one ninja who you want to fight one day... of course, to prove you are better.*
- ◆ *Choose one ninja who finds sicknesses as fascinating as you do.*
- ◆ *Choose one ninja who has seen you fail at an important task, but keeps it a secret... for now.*





# CHAPTER THREE:

## ROOTS OF THE PEOPLE

The Land of Seed and Blossom is quite different from the Izou Empire, both in the culture that runs through the life force of the Blossom people and in its landscape. While citizens today have never lived a day without the Izou Empire's influence, they hold strong to their roots. This is reflected in how they live and how the ninja run their territories. Each of the Blossom clans rules one of the seven provinces, but there is quite a bit of cross-pollination between them.

The seven provinces are a revolving door to the Izou rulers who lay claim to them, however. As frequently as monthly, there are new generals and garrisons settling in to watch over Blossom towns and cities. The seven clans have spread themselves out to cover strategic points in an attempt to take back their country, using their knowledge of their land as their greatest weapon against their enemies. Below are the descriptions of these provinces.

### HOROKI PROVINCE

Formally the wellspring of health and prosperity to the Blossom people, Horoki Province (or Dust Province) was unfortunate to be the first struck by the Izou army. Well before that, however, the Horoki Province was where the first Immortal arrived in the Land of Seed and Blossom, where the Blossom people were chosen. This was the main reason why it is not only the largest province, but also the one ruled over by the Shouka Clan, the first ninja. Their position within Blossom society and their command of culture made the Crystal Bearers the mouthpieces for an entire nation in many cases, so it was destined to be that their territory would face the brunt of their enemies' attacks.

Entering the province, one immediately feels a certain warmth on the air, unlike a summer's breeze or a sunrise first glimpsing the earth. No, this warmth

### LU DONGBIN'S PATH

The belief that the first Immortal set foot in the Horoki Province isn't a simple matter of faith. The metaphorical footprints of the being known as Lu Dongbin are reflected in the culture seen every day in the Land of Seed and Blossom. However, the quite literal footprints can also be clearly seen near the Seiseki Ruins. Once a Blossom citizen - one that possesses a Birthstone - has been proven worthy by the Shouka, they can be led to the place where the first Immortal stood before the first humans. It is an honor bestowed to very few, especially today.

Once both feet are firmly in place, the citizen's Birthstone flashes and dazzles, and they can see a very clear path before them, the first path that Lu Dongbin ever walked. It stretches for three miles before fading away and is said to be a soul-enriching experience - as walking in the footsteps of one's god should be.

causes sweat to bead upon one's brow in an almost unnatural way. This is but the first echo of a territory that is utterly broken and without hope. Despite the Shouka clan's negotiation skills, the peace accomplished for the land was not without its losses.

Many of the natural resources have been stripped of the land, several of the native species have been wiped out or migrated to other regions and the people of the Horoki Province are some of the poorest in the Land of Seed and Blossom. Constant war has left the land mostly barren, but still livable for those willing to put in the work. The journey between villages is often difficult for those less prepared.

The other side of the coin reveals that, under this cover of depression and sadness, these same people are the most loyal to the Blossom ninja and to the Uprising's ultimate goal. Within even the smallest villages still stand shrines to the Immortals, usually hidden from the Izou armies that frequently pass through on their way to more hostile terrain. The villagers smile to their oppressors, as the Crystal Bearers advise, waiting for the moment when they can aid

their ninja in reclaiming the Land.

The Crystal Bearers show themselves when necessary, but prefer to stay hidden from the invaders' gaze for fear of their true purpose being found out and halted by soldiers. The people, however, know just how to call upon one of the Shouka clan if they need to, not only by using the old rites of hanging dolls made of crystal, but also with a simple request to the Shouka representative that lives secretly in almost every village and town. Though subdued, the Shouka's connection to their people, whom they protect from any atrocities, is the strongest of any clan. This is primarily due to an intense cultural need to fulfill the duties given to them by the Immortals, which the citizens follow in kind.

Trespassers into the Shouka clan's hidden territory will find a number of other unnatural occurrences. Foliage and unfortunate travelers or enemies frozen within cocoons of crystal are there to warn anyone approaching that they play a dangerous game with their lives. While the Crystal Bearers are not as quick to reach for their blade as the Pox, their small numbers must remain extra vigilant, lest their territory be taken from them by more aggressive clans. Most find it much easier and safer to summon the Crystal Bearers to them for aid, rather than to seek the ninja out personally.

The Splendid Chameleons to the east cause little disturbance to the Horoki Province. They are primarily concerned with their own matters, unlike the Sisterhood of Blood to the south. The Shouka clan is unhappy with the Sisterhood's insistence on showing their ideals down the people's throats. Of course, both clans are trained in expert negotiation tactics, making their meetings a lot less violent than one might imagine between ninja.

### SEISEKI RUINS

Known once as the Temples of Seiseki (Birthstones), this cultural landmark supported a cities worth of shrines to the Immortals. The city stood as a place of worship that the Blossom people could be proud of, a beacon of light that the Immortals were sure to see from Heaven. It expanded hundreds of miles and housed thousands of people who lived harmoniously under the gaze of the



Shouka. Every Family Bearer who was blessed with offspring would make their venerated pilgrimage to the Temples of Seiseki for their children to take part in the Birthstone Imbuing ceremonies. Some had the rite performed by their local Crystal Bearer, but it was always said that Seiseki intensified the energies and further filled the children with the Immortal's love and light.

Learning how important the site was to the Land of Seed and Blossom made it an important place to defend as the Izou Empire attempted to expand its nation, as well as an obvious target to subjugate the Blossom people. While the Blossom ninja put up quite the fight, it wasn't long until the Temples of Seiseki fell to weeks of bombardment from the Izou's iron cannons and ninja that murdered Blossom citizens in the dead of night. What was once a mighty town of holy relics and beauty was reduced to a small town of saddened Shouka surrounded

by miles and miles of the Izou's cruelty composed of rubble and crushed dreams.

Traveling to the Seiseki Ruins is still a large part of the Blossom culture, but doing so is not met with the same purity and happiness as it once did. Now, it has become more of an obligation on the part of the "responsible" Blossom parent, some of which have decided to skip the ceremony at the suggestion of their Izou governors. Every year, the Crystal Bearers have seen fewer and fewer people willing to make the trek for the appropriate blessings, which has led to less that want to join their clan as a result. Instead of waiting, however, the Crystal Bearers have begun reaching out to their people once more, attempting to make themselves a presence of forward mobility, instead of archaic reminders of times of loss.



## CHAPTER THREE - ROOTS OF THE PEOPLE

### SHOJO NO ME

One of the few still prosperous towns within the Horoki Province, despite the general state of the area, is none other than Shojo No Me (Virgin's Eye), which rests within the cradle of the beautiful Shitashii Lake (Intimate) and Shin'yuu River (Closeness). These two bodies of water spell out the magnificence of the town before one even enters its borders. Local history says that it was once a town full of rejected citizens from other areas, home to numerous criminals and family betrayers. That is, until a beautiful virgin entered the town whose gaze would set a man's heart ablaze. Some suspect that she was an avatar of the fifth Immortal due to the power she held over any man she encountered.

Every man attempted to court her, bringing tribute to her in whatever way they could, but she would not take anything stolen or soiled as gifts. This turned the town around, pushing the unhealthy element out and bringing in more money and tourism than ever before. Her eye was such that it could instantly tell the man's intent for her hand with a look. The power within her eyes became too much for some of the women that resided within the town, however, leading to several attacks on her life that were, of course, thwarted by her many handsome beaux.

One evening, after rejecting yet another chief, king from the Land of Exalted Flame or whoever else did not meet her standards, the young girl, now nameless to history, was murdered by her handmaiden. Worse yet, her revered eyes were plucked from her head and thrown into the well in the center of town. While a sad ending for the girl, her death proved fortuitous for the town as a whole.

Today, Shojo No Me is still bustling with excitement. It is believed that the town's water supply was enchanted with the virgin's energy and hundreds of Adventurers make this their first stop as they wander the country. A single sip is said to seemingly reverse the aging process by several years, reducing the signs of wrinkles and scars. In a society where age is respected more than youth, not every Blossom citizen is keen on partaking in such a potion for anything other than curiosity. However, those from other lands eventually find their way to Shojo No Me to see if the rumors are true.



### JISHIN FORT

It is true that the Izou Empire has several garrisons throughout the Land of Seed and Blossom, but none is as large as the Jishin Fort. The destruction brought to the nation created by the quake beneath the invading army's boots gave the fort its name. Jishin Fort stands as a tower of iron and steel in the middle of barren deserts from which it steals its power. From a distance, the spiraling towers are a symbol of oppression to the Blossom people and triumph for the Izou. The Emperor has poured vast resources into the fort, using it as an embassy for nobles who travel to the Land of Seed and Blossom and as a training center for soldiers to become accustomed to life in a new land. Though their cultural education facilities are only partially accurate, it is enough to provide a general impression of the Blossom people and their customs. In some ways, it is where the Izou soldiers learn their first lessons in obstructing these customs and spreading their own ideals in a way that is most understandable to the savages that reside in the land.

Around the Jishin Fort are several oil refineries, weapon manufacturing plants and factories. The fort's ecosystem is completely self-sustaining, producing its own food and weapons. The worse offense against the Blossom people is the fort's Birthstone removal service. This process is obviously detested by the Shouka clan, which works hard to stay true to the Land of Seed and Blossom's cultural roots. Removal isn't given lightly, but is an unfortunate consequence for any criminals or enemies to the occupying Izou forces. Its fortifications have held back several attacks and infiltration attempts from the Crystal Bearers who want to tear this fort down. Their small numbers and the overriding focus on the Uprising has put their assaults on the Jishin Fort far down on their list of objectives, but is becoming more of a possibility with each passing day.

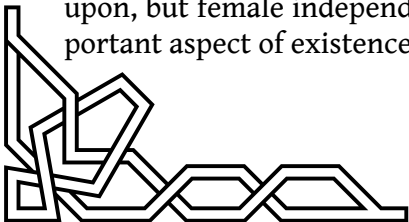


## KOKUSO CHITAI PROVINCE

The territory of the Sisterhood of Blood is known as the Kokuso Chitai Province (Breadbasket Province). Many rivers flow through their domain and the Sisterhood believes they help keep their land fertile and free of infection and corruption. The province has sparse jungles and rainforests with large swaths of grassland, and almost every citizen is a farmer, fisherman or hunter. Most trade is done by barter, though some sell for Izou coin as well. Kokuso Chitai villages tend to stick around the rivers, but some make their lives in a very vibrant collection of settlements on the coastline behind the trees.

The Sisterhood tries to encourage the people in its care not to settle along the border of Yakubyo's Pox territory. They live to bring life into the world and cleanse the blood of disease, serving the exact opposite purpose in the Land as the Pox. The Sisterhood respects their place in the balance of all things and gives the Pox due respect, but they avoid the Pox whenever they can. The Sisterhood often acts as an intermediary between the Crystal Bearers and Yakubyo's Pox when tensions flare between the two clans. Their constant meddling has led to a lot of quiet resentment, but the Sisterhood of Blood has a lot to lose if war breaks out between the clans. They realize the danger of the Izou Empire, but want to take a more subtle path, one of calculated non-violence. The Sisterhood believes the Pox are too rash and not thinking of the damage a full scale uprising could cause.

A well-respected clan, the Blossom people always regard the Sisterhood of Blood as an omen of good tidings. The discovery that the Fa Disease has not been permanently destroyed was further proof to the people that the Sisterhood is necessary in the Land of Seed and Blossom. They help guide the lives of the citizens and give good advice to capture the love of the people. Women are a dominant influence in the Sisterhood territory. Not that men are looked down upon, but female independence is fostered as an important aspect of existence.



## CHAPTER THREE - ROOTS OF THE PEOPLE

### XIANGUQUI

This grand city is believed to be built on the site where the fifth Immortal, Lady He Xiang, first arrived. It is situated along the Ja fork of the Ouka River and houses about 20,000 people. It's a large outdoor market, a central point where the farmers and fishermen in the territory can come to peddle their wares. Xiangquui is a place where one can get just about anything they want, either from the farmer's market or the city's busy red light district, which sports men and women equally. The city also touts its own Adventurers Guild where those of the Adventurer Caste can congregate to trade information or rumors. The locals call this sector Discovery Road, where the most inns and taverns can be found. Rites of passage necessary to reach the Adventurer Caste can be undertaken here and hundreds travel to Xiangquui to put their skills to the test.

Outside of the market district is the residence of the Council of Three, the heads of the Ketsueki clan. While small in number, they have great power within the Kokuso Chitai Province. Every decision made is for the prosperous future of every Blossom citizen, from what imports to offer in the market to who will become the next chief of any village. They pull all the strings. The Council of Three also works hard to keep Xiangquui as beautiful as the Immortal it is named after. Due to their efforts, most families are self-sufficient and there are very few poor within the city.

Within Xiangquui is also the Neutral Crossing refuge, where the Crystal Bearers and Sisterhood regularly meet. Good relations between these clans are important, since their duties often correlate with each other concerning the birth of children. Some believe that a child's first sight should be a ninja from the Shouka or Ketsueki clan - even before their own mother or father. Neutral Crossing also acts as a trading post where the two clans can trade medicine and information. It is rumored that they are making plans to advance their own version of the Uprising, though these are only unfounded rumors murmured on the streets.

### MORI HOGOSHA

Mori Hogosha, or Forest Guardian, is situated in the west region of the Kokuso Chitai Province, far away from the life giving rivers and built on the boundary of



### THE LOST ISLAND

Since the beginning of recorded history, the Land of Five Blades and Land of Seed and Blossom have been at war. Their battle was never over resources, glory or any treasure known to mankind. The two countries have continued their constant conflict for access to the Lost Island. What lies on the island itself is a mystery, however. Despite its close proximity to the Blossom coast, neither nation has yet to land on its beaches. Magical barriers protect the shore and random rocks form to destroy the bottoms of any ships sent to investigate. No one knows what truly lies on Lost Island, however, but neither nation wants the other to find out before they do.

The Blossom people believe that the Lost Island is the home of the Immortals themselves. Today, more than ever, when the people need guidance, contacting the Immortals is of the utmost importance. If the ninja can somehow speak with their creators, the fate of the Uprising could be divined and the people could be saved.

the grand rain forest surrounding the grasslands. Life is difficult yet sufficient in this village of a thousand people. This settlement is still lightly traveled since the more direct route to it becomes a flooded swamp during the rainy season, making the village only easily accessible for half of the year. The Sisterhood's mastery of water keeps the damage minimal and ensures the floods have their maximum benefit as well. The Two Dragons Bridge was built as a combination bridge/dam to create a route to Forest Guardian while also balancing the natural weather cycles.

When the rainy season subsides, the time for hunting and gathering begins. The jungle has many treasures wrapped in unique dangers. All sorts of animals make their home in the jungles and the jungle itself has many ways to harm you. Not surprisingly, the village contains a large number of people of the Hunter and Adventurer class. For half the year the town gets very few visitors at all, so it's pretty quiet.

The first week after the Two Dragons Bridge opens is marked by a celebration and fair. The fair of the harvest's blessing is held in a clearing outside of the town and is a quaint affair for those looking to buy decorative items or trade for food. More martial items can be found if you know the right names to drop. Weapons, armor and equipment are needed items out in the jungle, even more so with the close proximity to Izou.

The loss of the land to the Izou Empire for peace is something deeply felt by the Land of Seed and Blossom, but even more so by the people of Mori Hogo-sha. In the end, it was a necessary sacrifice to end the war and strife. The Blossom people refer to the Oak Leaf Province as Treeside. Originally, this once differentiated where the jungle gave way to the forest. Now it refers to the literal border between the Izou Empire and the Land of Seed and Blossom.

In addition to the loss associated with the region, the Blossom ninja have the wayward Bamboo Herbalists - rejects from the more proper Bamboo Alchemists - pushing back any efforts to reclaim the province. The Sisterhood hopes the Uprising will change this soon.

### IRIAI

The Kokuso Chitai Province's coastline also has its fair share of population. The settlement of Iriai (Sunset) is mostly a fishing town, but it is known for the sunsets of its namesake and the art collection of Koukon, a Sister who has gained a reputation as the greatest artist in the Land of Seed and Blossom. Some of her most known pieces use blood in their creation - not human blood, of course, but blends of animal blood with other dyes to create exciting paintings. These two important elements of beauty have created a community that regards itself as a tourist town. It also lends itself to a laid back attitude among the residents, definitely not what you would call a town that is quick to anger. The Uprising is an afterthought, even as the Pox assembles restlessly to the South to constantly remind them.

A collection of artists, Adventurers and Advisors decided that it would give them more inspiration if they lived closer to Koukon. Soon small shops catering to these people cropped up around the area, followed by culinary artists experimenting with

the palate. What has grown is a sort of creative commune worthy of the Splendid Chameleons' respect. If you can stand the air of pretentiousness in the district, you can find some unique items for sale and gaze upon beautiful works of art.

There is also the queen herself, Koukon. In reality, she has become a prisoner to her artistic urges. When she isn't spending weeks at a time slaving over her own pieces, Koukon keeps an eye out for interesting works of art and gives advice to other artists she sees talent in. As a member of the Sisterhood of Blood, she still attends births and administers the ritual to clean the blood of the newborn. Koukon made her name doing paintings about life and especially the female form, always depicting women as strong and sexual beings.

Iriai survives off of the bounty of the Hantai sea, always busy with fishermen plying their trade. A few docks are privately owned by families and certain Adventurers, but most are designated public docks and kept in decent condition by all involved. There are also boats that connect to Pox territory if one is so inclined, but none ever travel to the Lost Island – that is not the Sisters' fight.

## HANEI PROVINCE

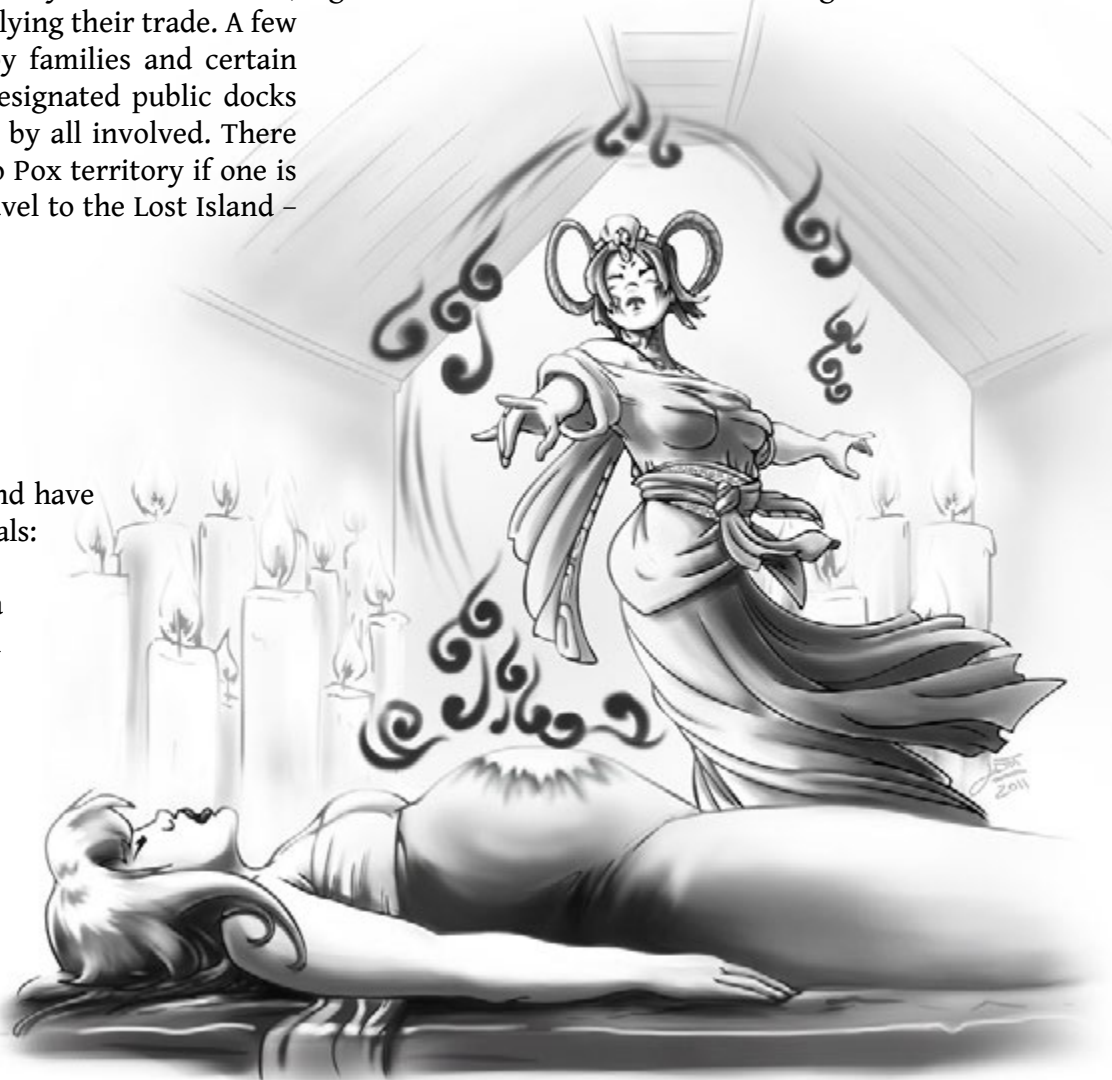
The Pox came to power and have moved to advance two goals: control the Blossom people's population and find a way to explore the Lost Island which stares across from them. Yakubyo's Pox have recently added a third goal to this list, destroy the Izou Empire. Ever since their creation and being tasked with the mandate to bring down death and disease to the land if needed, Yakubyo's Pox has eaten and breathed violence. Their clan brought order to

### CHAPTER THREE - ROOTS OF THE PEOPLE

the Blossom people and now they would save the Land with the same lust for destruction.

Yakubyo's Pox is the spear tip of the Blossom people, ready to do the vile things that must be done to keep the balance. Their territory mirrors their hard line philosophy towards life and duty, with their citizens likened to hard steel and considered to be the best warriors of the land. Even before the Izou and the Uprising, the Pox were honing their skills against the Land of Five Blades. The fight for control over the mysterious Lost Island and the many border wars with their natural enemy have made sure that the Pox are battle tested and formidable enemies.

Unlike the grasslands and jungles to the north, the Hanei Province (Prosperity Province) is covered with lush rainforests that are especially hot and dangerous. The Yuuki River flows through the middle



### THE CAPITAL WATCHMEN

When Zhongli Quan instituted the Elder system in the Land, he left no direction on how to go about doing it. One of the issues was the safety of the Elders. The Pox wanted total control of protecting the Elders in their territory, but eventually compromised and the Capital Watchmen were born. Starting out as seven ninja, one from each clan, the Capital Watchmen have expanded to a force of 105 Ninja tasked with assisting with the defense of the Capital Tower and ensuring the Elders' hidden location is never discovered by hostile forces.

They are broken up into 15 cells of seven Ninja each. Named after a river or color, most have specific tasks they are in charge of. They used to be under the direct control of the Elders and answered only to them. Now only one cell, Cell Black, is by the Elders side. Cell Xuè serves as troubleshooters and are tasked with handling the dirty work that is sometimes necessary to protect the Elders and their location, including assassination and/or spying. Cell Red is tasked with maintaining good health in Yuuki and is made up mostly of Bamboo Alchemist, Sisterhood of Blood and Crystal Bearer ninja.

of the territory and is also the location of the capital of the Land of Seed and Blossom, named after it's mighty river. It is fitting that Yuuki means "Courage", as it takes a tremendous amount of it to live near this powerful river.

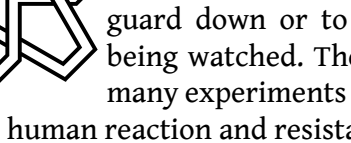
In fact, it seems that most of the natural environment of the Pox territory is built to foster the clan's survival of the fittest philosophy - further illustrating that Yakubyo's Pox and the Sisterhood of Blood are complete opposites. The Pox are all men, and the Sisterhood are all women. The Pox are warriors and police the Blossom people, while the Sisterhood is filled with diplomats and councilors. They stand on opposite sides of the spectrum in philosophy and deed, yet the two clans respect each other's place

openly, no matter how much they revile one another in secret. This mutual respect is part of what separates the Izou Ninja from the Blossom Ninja.

The Izou instituted a mandate that requires men living in Pox territory to serve in the Citizens Militia for five years after their 18th birthday. The Izou Empire believes that the Blossom "savages" should police themselves and founded the militia shortly after the peace treaty centuries ago. If someone were to refuse or if they cannot pass through physical training, there is a good chance that they will be killed. Militia members are released from service at specific intervals, thus making sure the training sessions are on a consistent schedule. The Izou thought it best to leave the Pox in charge of the Militia with not much Izou interference, but this will eventually serve as a mistake. Distinguished members of the Citizen Militia are given land and a gracious separation pay by the Izou to gain the people's loyalty. Yakubyo's Pox operates in a state of constant military alertness, always ready for the next attack. In reality, many believe the Uprising and the subverting of the Citizen Militia is an excuse to kill and practice their special type of biological warfare on the Izou Empire. They don't just want to run the Empire out of the Land of Seed and Blossom; they want to commit genocide upon all of the Izou people.

Women of the Hanei Province are taught first to maintain the home and provide for their families, they are also taught the power needed to defend their homes, most becoming proficient in several styles of martial arts. Women are not looked down upon in Pox lands, but they may never serve as ninja. That honor is only given to exceptionally ruthless men. Not surprisingly though, some women from the Pox territory eventually leave to live under Sisterhood rule.

The population of Yakubyo's Pox territory is mostly rural, made up of small villages that serve in the Citizen's Militia. The Pox have very few cities in their territory, with the exception of Yuuki. This makes civilized areas few and far between and plenty of hostile jungle to make up for the lack of people. All roads eventually lead to Yuuki even though the most well-traveled roads are still dangerous journeys. Hungry predators stalk the edges of the trails, waiting for someone to let their



guard down or to take a horse that is not being watched. The Pox are rumored to run many experiments involving diseases and the human reaction and resistance to them.

The number of children a couple can have is also restricted, and violation of the rule results in the death or removal of the child. Couples should never go over the maximum of two children, unless they are willing to pay the consequences.

## **YUUKI**

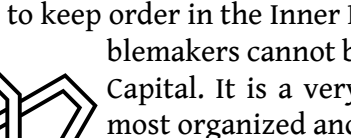
The city of Yuuki is very unique. It is the capital of the Land of Seed and Blossom, as well as the Elders' former residence. Today, it is where a slew of Advisors make up the population of the walled compound on the hill. The main focus of the Pox and the Capital Watchmen is to protect the Capital Tower and make sure that the Inner Ring stays ordered and clear of undesirables.

### **THE CAPITAL TOWER**

The dark and foreboding towers of the large complex called the Capital Tower cast a menacing shadow over Yuuki. The Capital Building was the first building constructed and everything flows from it. Its angular architecture with hard lines and sharp corners is surrounded by a 15 foot iron fence, connected by a large gate. Those who can see the flow of chi in the tower say that it seems twisted and sickly. The Elders lived here along with the Capital Watchmen and a large gathering of servants and some Pox Ninja before they were moved for their safety. Most of the administrative staff lives in the Inner Ring and travel daily to the Capital for their duties.

### **THE INNER RING**

The Inner Ring is the area immediately outside the Capital Tower. It was once made up of workers mostly, but has turned into a middle class area full of all sorts of affluent Blossom citizens. Many administrators from the Capital Tower live here, so it has a large share of the Advisor class. The Pox make sure to keep order in the Inner Ring as derelicts and troublemakers cannot be allowed to surround the Capital. It is a very quiet district and is the most organized and protected area.



## **CHAPTER THREE - ROOTS OF THE PEOPLE**

One of the more famous landmarks in the Inner Ring, a larger building that hovers over the buildings around, is the Kai Shik Theater and Tavern. It is owned by Kai Shik, a well-known Splendid Chameleon who uses his jutsu, along with his troupe of actors, artists and singers, to bring joy to the masses of the Inner Ring. It is a very popular place and most nights are a full house. There is always some sort of performance or concert going on and the smart ninja knows that the Kai Shik is a great place to gain intel or spy on an enemy - especially the several Izou platoons that frequent the theater. Kai Shik himself regularly relays information to various parties for a price, but is keen on steering clear of any direct involvement.

### **THE OUTER RING**

Surrounding the Inner Ring is a patchwork urban nightmare that extends for miles on both sides of the river. The citizens of the Outer Ring serve as a defensive buffer that bogs down enemies with urban warfare, yet another line of protection for the Capitol Tower. It is the closest thing to a sprawl that can be found in the Land of Seed and Blossom, stretching in a haphazard fashion in all directions. Roads are rarely straight, residences are built with no order and it is not unusual to find a business in the middle of a group of huts or houses. There is no planning, no thoughts of zoning.

The Outer Ring is as dangerous as it is chaotic. Anything can be found for barter or the new fad of Izou money, and people often disappear without a trace, only to be bought and sold in secret slave markets. The Citizens Militia patrols the streets and provides law enforcement, but there are simply not enough of them. Many neighborhoods have their own police force in response, making justice in one area of the Outer Ring completely different than in another.

East of the Capital Tower in the Outer Ring is designated as a military training ground for the Pox. Here the Pox and members of the Citizens Militia practice military maneuvers, especially amphibious assault training. It is not unusual to see bodies being taken from the training field, as the experience is truly intense. This area is off-limits to non-military personnel.



## WESTERN AND SOUTHERN COAST

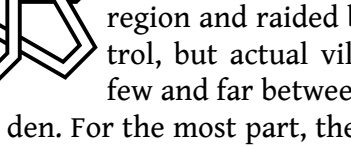
The Pox keeps a strong presence near the coast with heavily populated hidden villages. Their collective is rumored to be a secret prison where undesirables are taken to be part of weird and merciless experiments. The rest of the southern coast is small homesteads and villages of Militia trained citizens. The Pox territory has the greatest concentration of Citizens Militia members, though the force is spread all through the Blossom territories.

The Western coast is made up almost the same. The peninsula is called Zhongli Quan's Reach and is the home to a small village and a lighthouse. The lighthouse functions as an outpost for the Citizens Militia to watch for ships from the Izou Empire or Land of Five Blades. The location of the village on a high cliff gives the outpost an excellent view of the sea. One can even see the Lost Island without a spy glass. The Western coast is speckled with many settlements made up of reserve Citizens Militia families that provide a coastal defense line for the Pox territory, which they defend proudly.

## SHINDE SHIZUKANA PROVINCE

Generations ago the Tomurai clan claimed the southern-most tip of the Land of Seed and Blossom for their own. Whereas once they were found in almost every village and town across the country leading days of mourning, they have gone into seclusion since the Izou occupation and can primarily be found in their claimed territory or a few hidden villages throughout the Land. The territory and its villages are filled with small cemeteries and ritual graveyards where the Phantom Voices carry out funeral rites and assist the dead in passing into the afterlife, free of the pain or guilt that ties them to this plane.

The Shinde Shizukana (or Quiet Dead) Province is primarily rich, arable farmland and coastal lowlands, making the territory of the Phantom Voices one of the most favorable for farming and agriculture. Small farms are spread throughout the

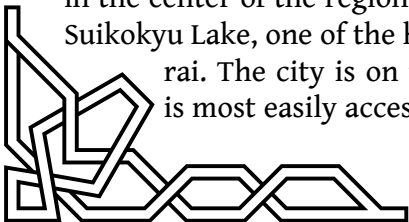


region and raided by the occasional Izou patrol, but actual villages of the Tomurai are few and far between and extremely well hidden. For the most part, the only symbol of Guide activity is found in the occasional cemetery where the astute eye can see signs of recent activity.

Tomurai communities throughout the Shinde Shizukana Province are an odd combination of graveyard and village. Intricate headstones and statuary are interspersed between houses, shops, storehouses and stables which often makes for an odd scene to those not familiar with the territory. Those scholars, historians and common folk familiar with the fourth Catastrophe are initially wary of this set up for fear of the walking dead, yet those who know of Tomurai rituals and practices are wholly at ease. Each of these headstones is a burial site of one of the "Pure Ones" who needn't be fully purified by the rituals taught by the fourth Immortal.

The bodies of these pure souls are seen as good luck charms and can be used by those with a discerning eye to find places of importance in Phantom Voices villages, since those places will generally have more of these headstones or shrines nearby. Conversely, those who were seen as exceedingly pure are sometimes seen as having more luck, so only a few bodies are needed to impart the benefits, a strategy often used by the leaders of the Tomurai Clan when organizing the placement of headstones to confuse would-be attackers. Any benefit imparted is merely psychological even though many believe a supernatural element is involved. Tomurai ninja are intimately familiar with the practice and find it much easier to relax and meditate in areas with these plots. Some even believe that the calm of the nearby dead can be called upon during heated debates and discussions, such as when discussing clan rivalries, the occupation or business dealings.

### TENGOKU NO JUNDO



The main city of the Shinde Shizukana Province is Tengoko no Jundo (Heavenly Purity). It is located in the center of the region and in close proximity to Suikokyu Lake, one of the holiest sites for the Tomurai. The city is on the shore of the lake and is most easily accessible by boat. These natu-

### FUNERAL AND BURIAL RITES

The Phantom Voices are frequently summoned by ninja of other clans and townsfolk throughout the Land of Seed and Blossom to purify the dead for preparation for the afterlife. Depending on the burdens carried by the dead person, the rituals can take various forms. When a person dies in Tomurai territory and the family or loved ones want to enlist the aid of a Phantom, a decorative bowl with the name of the deceased is placed on the doorstep of the house. In the night, the ninja will come to the house to perform initial rites which usually involve listening for the whispers of the recently deceased to ensure no foul play was involved, and then the body is transported to the nearest graveyard for preparation.

Ritually purifying the dead can be a long and difficult process, and it is a task not undertaken lightly. The ninja are constantly haunted by the whispers of the dead, and all too often carry their pain as their own until the spirit is sent on. Generally, the more sinful the person, the more labor intensive their purification is. Murderers, thieves and those who willingly caused pain and suffering or disregarded the teachings of the Immortals are usually skinned to the bone with their flesh fed to wild wolves, while their bones are ground to dust and spread over consecrated land. Those who are less corrupted, but still carry a burden at the time of their death can be purified with poured water and peach tree oil and then cremated. The purest of the dead are usually buried with proper feng shui in the Phantom Voices hidden villages throughout the country, but occasionally they are preserved and transported to the cities in the south or Tengoko No Jundo itself for use in special shrines.

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ral barriers have left the city fairly well secluded and defended for generations even during the Izou invasion, a fact that the Tomurai superstitiously attribute to the countless pure souls vigilantly keeping watch over their city.

Tengoku no Jundo takes the appearance of other villages to the extreme and appears to be a sprawling graveyard spreading through the valleys, over any hills and down to the bank of the lake. It still has the appearance of a city with buildings, roads, temples and homes throughout, but each structure is surrounded by numerous headstones representing buried Pure Ones. Some are built into or carved out of cliff faces around the city and overlooking the lakeside. Even rocky outcroppings out on the lake are covered in headstones, alerting travelers on the still waters to their proximity to the city. Most of the time, the city is covered in a thin veil of mist given off from the lake even during the heat of the day, but it gets significantly thicker during dawn and dusk and carries on through most nights.

The city offers many amenities to those weary travelers, merchants and ninja allied with the clan, but access is restricted to those who are not. The narrow roads to the city are secretly observed and the lake, which is usually a fairly active fishing location, is also patrolled by a few disguised ninja in fishing boats. Most unwanted visitors are diverted through careful manipulation of conversations or jutsu, and are only attacked if they seem to pose a valid threat to the city or the safety of its occupants.

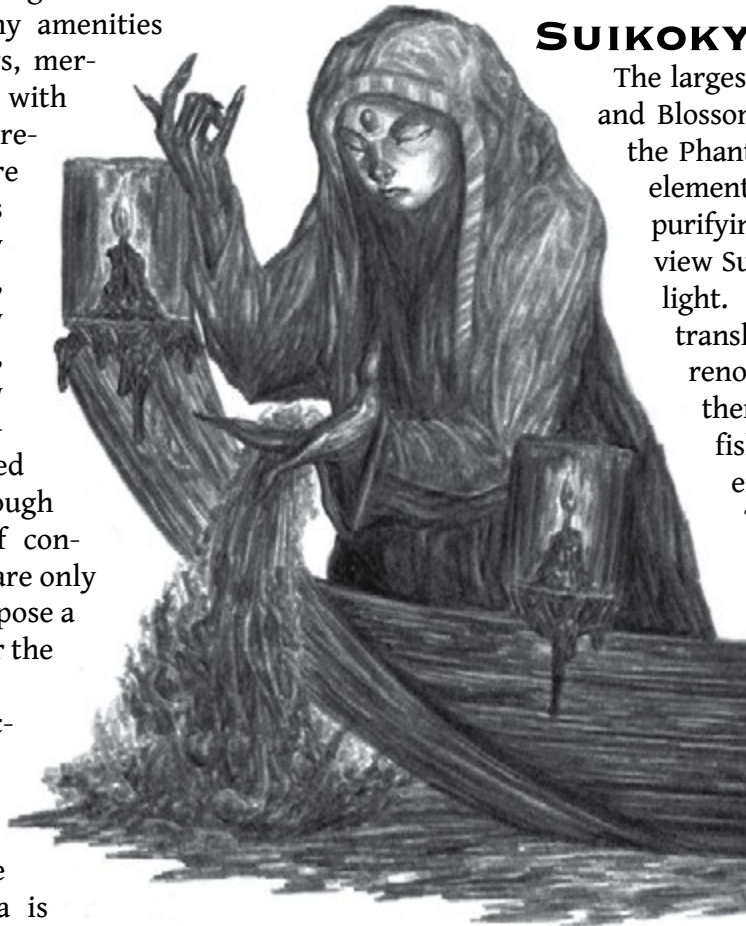
Among the most active locations within the city is the Temple of Passage where almost every Phantom Voice ninja trains. Each ninja is expected to spend at least two

seasons at the temple learning the sacred Rites of Burial. The master usually accompanies their pupil to the temple and will stay during this time to oversee the student's progression on this path, directing them in additional courses of study over and above their daily duties. This is one of the most pivotal times in the life of a Tomurai ninja.

Tengoku No Jundo is viewed as the seat of all purity in the south, a fact that remains important to the leaders of the Tomurai Clan. Rarely are outsiders let into the city to tarnish it with whatever negative emotions they might be carrying. Most treaties are negotiated in neutral territory or one of the smaller villages scattered throughout the province or in another region entirely, if at all possible. Once an agreement has been reached and it is evident that all parties involved are pleased with the outcome, an invitation may be extended to Tengoku No Jundo for the official signing of the agreement and additional festivities.

## SUIKOKYU LAKE

The largest lake in the Land of Seed and Blossom comprises the heart of the Phantom Voices territory. The element of water, full of yin, is a purifying essence, and the people view Suikokyu Lake in that same light. The lake, whose name translates to Bated Breath, is renowned for its fishing and there are a number of small fishing villages on the western and northern shores. There are always boats on the lake casting nets, hauling in catches or transporting various goods to other shoreline villages. It is almost always covered in a natural fog which is ordinarily impassibly thick at night, leaving navigation of the treacherous



## AUDIENCE WITH THE ELDERS

The Land of Seed and Blossom is led by the oldest of their ilk, following the teachings of Immortalism that puts the wisest Blossom citizen above all others. Few have ever gone to the Elder Caves that lie at the heart, the very center, of the land. Its entrances are heavily concealed in a location given only to Chiefs who have earned the right to that knowledge. In modern times, when the people have begun looking to the Izou to answers instead of the leaders that have earned their place through experience and birthright, few disturb the Elders unless it is a changing of the guard or a matter of national importance.

The doors to the entrance have many rituals to keep out intruders, backed up by the Capital Watchmen at the guard. However, if one has been invited or has an approved audience, they can simply walk through the doors at the Elders' will. Entering their home, one sees a vast open cavern with very little decoration. The sound of their footsteps as they approach echoes off the walls, making it impossible to sneak.

In the center of the Elder cavern is the Pool of Seeing. The Elders can see any activity occurring in the Land of Seed and Blossom from here and are privy to every new birth and know how many of them undergo the Birthstone Imbuing ceremony. The pool also allows them to keep tabs on each death, making it easy to know who the oldest living citizen is... for they are the ones who are next to lead the nation.

### Current Elders

- ✦ **Sunzi:** This hardened man of 152 years is a long-time retired ninja of Yakubyo's Pox. Sunzi has participated in every aspect of war, learning all the intricacies of combat strategies. His skin tells the story of a harrowing with tattoos and scars that words could never do justice. Sunzi's love for his country is unmatched only by his hatred of the Izou. Destruction of the oppressors that the Land of Seed and Blossom has tolerated for too long is soon coming and it will be at his hand. Over the span of his long life, Sunzi has become a master of the Way of Unending Blight and many earth jutsu.
- ✦ **Wang Anyi:** At 154 years old, Anyi's ascent to an Elder was long coming. She served as a Chief of her village since she was 25 and has never faltered in her love for her nation. Often representing the softer side of the Elders, Anyi is a woman wise far beyond her years. However, unlike her less-aggressive predecessor, she comes from a clan born from the suffering caused by the hand of the Izou – the Splendid Chameleon. She is a master of the Way of Molded Bodies, knowing many techniques long forgotten to younger ninja.

waters to seasoned fishermen and sailors.

Suikokyu Lake has had its name as long as anyone can remember, but tales tell that the lake is the start of the "Breathing of the Soul," a practice that is said to purify even the most vile of people. The Phantom Voices do not see this as a time of mourning, but rather the beginning of a wonderful and exciting process. When the Phantom Voices spread ashes in the lake, the souls are considered to remain there until they are pure enough to continue on their way. This is likened to someone holding their breath in anticipation.

The waters of Suikokyu Lake are unusually calm for a lake of its size, a fact that many of the resident fishermen credit for

their bounteous catches. That's not to say that there aren't storms or strong winds that occasionally stir the waters, but the water itself always seems to flow smoothly and calmly, even when buffeting against rocky shores. The Phantom Voices view Suikokyu Lake as the holiest natural site in their territory, and the second holiest site overall, second only to Tengoku No Jundo itself. Usually at night and under the thickness of the ever-present mist, the Tomurai ninja can be found, under lantern light spreading the ground remains of the most violent and sinful dead delivered by other ninja throughout the country. The waters of Suikokyu Lake are naturally consecrated and can carry even the most corrupt souls to heaven.





## CHAPTER THREE - ROOTS OF THE PEOPLE

### KOKINA KOKI RIVER

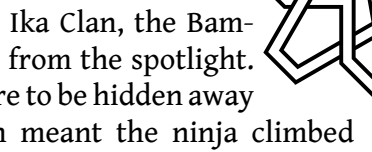
The waters of Suikokyu Lake feed the Kokina Koki River which runs south through to the Hantai Sea. The river, whose name means “Exalted Exhalation”, winds through the foothills of the Hougo mountain range and contains dozens of picturesque waterfalls where occasionally a master and his pupil may be caught training, or an artist might be found capturing the image through his brushstrokes.

There is a Phantom Voice temple at each of the three largest falls, each one constructed on an island in the middle of the river. These temples are places of extreme isolation and meditation, and serve as places of prayer for the souls traveling to heaven from the sacred headwaters of the river. None of the islands have a dock, so approaching from the north by way of the river is already a dangerous endeavor. A rope bridge is only extended to those who need assistance and are in the company of a Tomurai Ninja or trusted allies. The temples are usually occupied by no more than a dozen people, usually there only to meditate and pray, but can house about a dozen more for short periods of time.

Kokina Koki flows into the southern part of the Hantai Sea through the Ascension Delta. The fertile area contains some of the more productive farms in the region, but the food produced there rarely feeds anyone outside a few days journey from the delta, due to the secluded location and difficulty transporting the food great distances.

### MIDORI PROVINCE

The Midori Province (or Green Province) is home to the Bamboo Alchemists, but defies its name for the majority of the region. Much of the south is covered by the Hougo Range, but reaches up into the surrounding forests at its base. It wasn't long after the Izou Empire took hold of the Land of Seed and Blossom that the Ika Clan was split into two factions. One half deserted their homeland and ran to what they thought was an Empire that would embrace the ninja with open arms. The Bamboo Herbalists were then used as weapons to take over the very land they once called home.

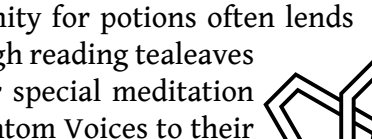


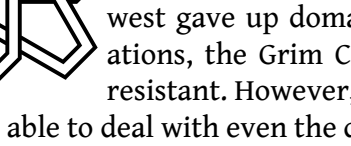
The other half of the Ika Clan, the Bamboo Alchemists retreated from the spotlight. Their healing abilities were to be hidden away in the mountains, which meant the ninja climbed the dangerous cliffs and became hermits. In times of stress, they are known to leave their enclaves to heal the sick or respond to those that still believe in the old ways. The Alchemists can sense the sickness in the land with every breath they take or touch of the earth at their feet. No matter how high they reach toward heaven, they cannot escape the death and diseases of the world.

They took over the Hougo Range, so named for the defenses that it created to shield the Ika from anything outside of themselves. Approaching the mountains, travelers can instantly see the jagged and deadly peaks. The climb is steep, its ridges are fragile and it requires an expertise in mountain climbing or the powers of a ninja to reach the top safely. Deep caves can be found in random spots as one ascends, which are just as dangerous as the mountainside itself. These are often the hiding places for the Ika Clan, where every step is met with the possibility of contracting some mysterious disease or becoming lost in the deep series of tunnels filled with stalactites and stalagmites.

Few people of the Midori Province live in the Hougo Range. Those that do reside in small collectives on safe areas, given fruitful bounties of crops by the Ika that lord over them. The loyal people never fall ill and only ever die of natural causes, thanks to their silent benefactors. Some believe that their water supply is pumped with herbs from the Ika. Who knows the consequences that would erupt if the mountain people ever rejected their protectors? The Hougo residents are the only ones that know the safe paths to travel between the small number of villages, but they rarely ever leave the mountain – the people having taken the lead of the xenophobic Ika.

The Midori border has expanded in recent years, as the Ika have begun positioning themselves to finally leave their nests at the mountaintops. This strategy appeared out of character to the other clans, but the Bamboo Alchemists' affinity for potions often lends itself to divination through reading tealeaves or epiphanies from their special meditation locations. While the Phantom Voices to their





west gave up domain after amicable negotiations, the Grim Creepers were much more resistant. However, the younger clan was unable to deal with even the diminished strength of the veteran Bamboo Alchemists.

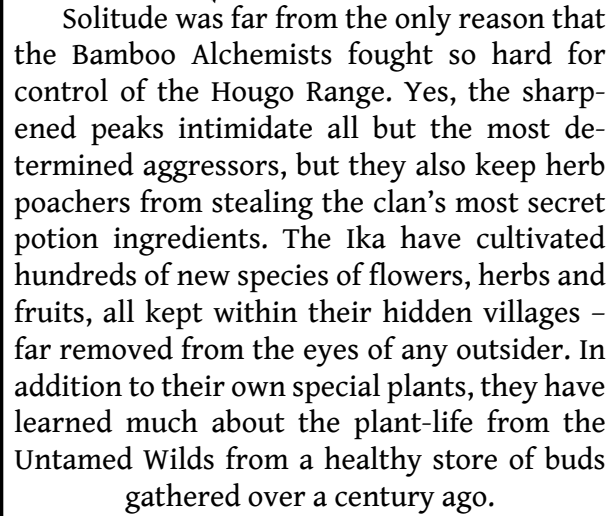
## CHINMOKU NO DANGAI

Within the Hougo Range is a place of pure mystery, called Chinmoku No Dangai (or the Cliffs of Silence). It was here that a rogue Oni was killed by the fourth Immortal, Zhang Guo, after a battle that raged on for days. As the monster's blood finally spilled, it is believed to have drained the cliff of everything. The very edge of the cliff has a 100 foot area where no plant can grow and the air is motionless, regardless of the mountain breezes everywhere else. Small wilderness animals die an hour after touching the soiled ground and even the dead that once walked the earth avoided the area. No chi flows through the cliff, making it a dead zone.

Despite the stigma attached to such a site, the Ika Clan has found an important use for it. In times when they feared attackers, Chinmoku No Dangai was where they gathered to avoid being detected, as the dead zone rendered sensory jutsu useless. As fewer and fewer visitors climbed the Hougo Range to meet with the Ika, the ninja have taken to using the secluded spot for intense meditation rituals. Some clans use meditation to build a greater connection to the universe and the chi that flows around them. The Bamboo Herbalists, however, have found mediation within a state of nothingness to allow for more soul searching.

Under normal circumstances, clan members can simply request access to the spot up to three at a time. Some students, however, are sent to Chinmoku No Dangai as a punishment, usually if they are showing too much of a reliance on their jutsu for everyday tasks. The Phantom Voices, through many talks between the clan Chiefs, may also request permission to visit the Cliffs of Silence. It was decided long ago that the fourth Immortal was more than capable of cleaning up this stain on the universe. Leaving it untouched after his demon battle may mean that there are still secrets for his protégés, the Phantom Voices, to unlock.

## RARE HERBS



Solitude was far from the only reason that the Bamboo Alchemists fought so hard for control of the Hougo Range. Yes, the sharpened peaks intimidate all but the most determined aggressors, but they also keep herb poachers from stealing the clan's most secret potion ingredients. The Ika have cultivated hundreds of new species of flowers, herbs and fruits, all kept within their hidden villages – far removed from the eyes of any outsider. In addition to their own special plants, they have learned much about the plant-life from the Untamed Wilds from a healthy store of buds gathered over a century ago.

## JUJIHOKA

Otherwise known as Crossfire Point, Jujihoka is a town that represents how even the peaceful clans of the Land of Seed and Blossom are just like any other ninja – at war with each other. It is not a large town, but stands at the epicenter of a bitter rivalry between four of the seven major clans. Jujihoka sits atop a vital source of a single kind of flower, the Akasuta or Red Star. This flower's medicinal properties have been known to cure any illness, poison or other life threatening element, but it only grows within this single town.

The existence of the Akasuta creates a tension between the clans that are so close to such a great power. The Bamboo Alchemists' interest in such a flower is obvious to any ninja, and they quickly took control over this town once the flower's abilities were revealed. However, Jujihoka was stolen from Grim Creeper territory, making the two clans quite opposed. The Ika have taken great strides in repairing relations with the Warawara clan, but blades are continually unsheathed on a regular basis over possession of the town.

The Splendid Chameleons contend that the town should be theirs, due to the beauty that the flower brings to the world. They care more about the townspeople than the flower itself, seeing how they constantly fear for their lives with each new ninja bat-



tle that takes place all around them. The residents have a strong moral fiber, keeping them from using the Akasuta for just anyone who asks, but they will be forced to submit if they do not have a defender. There is a reason why it is called Crossfire Point. The Ido clan wants ownership of Jujihoka for little more than to keep it from other clans that care a lot less.

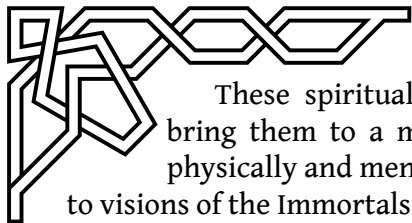
The Akasuta's properties have not gone unnoticed by Yakubyo's Pox either. Control of a plant that can cure any disease could be a great boon or a horrible blight on the Kouhei clan. In the hands of another clan, it could render useless many of their specialized jutsu, which depend on their enemies being sickened. However, if they possessed the Akasuta, the Pox could possibly find a way to cure the only disease they have been unable to affect, the Fa Disease. This, of course, would render the Sisterhood of Blood useless in their eyes.

The Sisterhood of Blood and Crystal Bearers have

too much to deal with, being on the border with the Izou, to worry about a single town. If the battle continues for too much longer, however, they may not have a choice but to intervene. The Phantom Voices, though they are so close to this confrontation, have avoided becoming entangled thus far.

### JIKUYUU MONASTERY

The Midori Province is not only home to the Bamboo Alchemists, but also another powerful group of warriors - the Jikuyuu Monks. These usually peaceful Immortalists have removed themselves from the outside world of social pressure to continually rise in Caste and live a much simpler existence. Jikuyuu Monks take several oaths, including abstaining from sex, drinking and outright violence. Martial training for self-defense is the corner stone of their lives, however, making them forever ready in case of attacks against the compound.



These spiritual actions are rumored to bring them to a more spiritual place, both physically and mentally, gaining them access to visions of the Immortals. The monastery has existed since the second Immortal set the Blossom people on their correct path and has predicted each new Immortal's arrival since.

Even the ninja do not know how to read portents like the monks of the Hougo Range, a national secret kept from the Izou. The Jikuyuu Monks are the most devout followers of Immortalism in the entirety of the Land of Seed and Blossom. To lose them would be akin to losing the nation's arm or leg. The Ika Clan, whose territory the monastery resides within, have cloaked them with several illusory jutsu to keep anyone from finding them unless they know exactly where to look. This includes other clans, just in case any of them ever defected to the Izou as the Herbalists did long ago.

## TOGUCHI PROVINCE

The Warawara clan, being the youngest clan in the Land, has only had a limited amount of time to carve out their territorial niche. Located north of the territory of the Bamboo Alchemists and south of the territory of the Splendid Chameleons, the Warawara have laid claim to an area consisting of rocky plains, grassland and densely packed tangles of forests, called the Toguchi Province (or Doorway Province). Most of the Warawara territory was unclaimed by the other clans primarily because of the inhospitable and dreary terrain that didn't lend itself to conventional farming.

After they had a defined territory, the Warawara slowly expanded south towards the Ouka River to take advantage of the water source for irrigation. For years, this was a sore spot when discussing diplomatic relations with the Bamboo Alchemists, which often led to heated arguments and occasional fighting when cooler heads could not prevail.

Their borders are mostly stable and established, and the Warawara have no interest in expanding beyond them, with the exception of regaining Jujihoka (pg. 50) from the Bamboo Alchemists. The Creepers see the village as right-

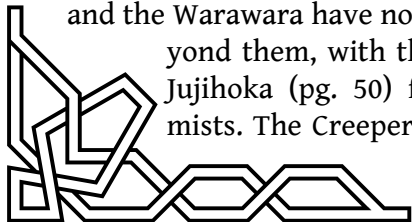
## CHAPTER THREE - ROOTS OF THE PEOPLE

fully theirs, and their ultimate goal is to bring the village back under their control. The Izou occupation and the threat it represents currently make inter-clan conflicts and disputes a minor priority. Whether or not those tensions are renewed sometime in the future is up in the air, but one can be certain that the topic has been discussed among the clan's elders.

Forests around Toguchi villages are dense and unkempt. The territory of the Creepers appears to have been left to grow completely wild. Wooded areas seem to encroach on areas that at one time could have supported large farming communities, and there are massive sprawls of rocky land and grasses that appear to be simply waiting for a farmer to plant seed. The territory has a large number of roads that merge and flow eastward, a constant reminder of the flow of travelers to the Untamed Wilds. In fact, roads from every territory in the Land of Seed and Blossom point toward Toguchi Province, seen as the doorway to the secrets of the Untamed Wilds. While pathways are constantly patrolled by the Izou, they are regularly in use by everyday folk, monitored by the Creepers to make sure their hospitality is not taken advantage of.

**DAKUPASU**

Between many of the closest villages in Warawara clan territory are the Dakupasus, or Dark Paths. The Dakupasus are underground roadways made of the interconnected remnants of old lava tubes, caves and subterranean rivers. The Grim Creepers have molded and modified these paths to be legitimate roads wide enough for a small cart or three people side by side. They use the Dakupasus to move their ninja and goods quickly from place to place while protecting them from hazards, delays due to weather and the watchful eye of the Izou. This is not to say that the Dark Paths do not have dangers of their own. Dakupasus often run nearby a few sheer, seemingly bottomless chasms, or underground rivers and lakes so a Warawara guide is almost always necessary for the safety of the travelers.



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While still fertile in principle, the biggest problem in regards to the vegetation is the extreme territorial nature of the suu insects that attack and devour any other insects in their areas. This dangerously limits the amount of pollination that can take place between flowering plants and crops in the area. Crops planted in the ground should thrive in theory, but only a few reach maturity, except for certain areas along the Ouka river where cherry trees, the rivers namesake, always thrived. Large groves of these trees line the river for much of its length providing a food source and one of the most visually stunning sights when the cherry blossoms are in full bloom. Forested areas are less affected since many trees pollinate without insects, and they tend to grow unfettered in large copses where the clan hides or builds entrances to their sprawling underground city networks.

### CITY NETWORKS

Once a fairly populous farming region, the Warawara's region is one of the most sparsely populated countries in the Land of Seed and Blossom, second only to that of the Pox. There are a few traditional towns and villages, but not nearly as many as one might suspect, primarily because the land simply cannot support a large population. These towns do not have a large agricultural base for exports, relying instead on manufactured goods, cherry wine (highly

regarded by connoisseurs) and precious metals and stones from Warawara excavations as the foundation for their economy. This has allowed the region to prosper financially even without traditional food-based communities.

About 200 years ago, after the suu started manipulating their bodies, the Warawara were hunted down and either killed or banished from towns and villages because their odd appearance betrayed them as potentially dangerous combatants. In these areas, the Warawara established a number of small, concealed outposts to keep an eye on the Izou invaders.

Their hidden villages are constructed as small burrows in which they hide away from the prying eyes of those Izou still trying to hunt them. The entrances are always concealed, either under rocks, vines, brambles or another terrain feature, and are generally off the beaten path. A person must be particularly unlucky to accidentally stumble upon a Warawara outpost, and even more so if it happens to be occupied at the time. Each of their outposts has a large central cavern with three to four separate rooms or areas connected by narrow passages approximately five to ten feet long used for storage, sleeping areas, holding prisoners or occasionally personal quarters for a visiting Chief. While their hidden villages are kept underground, normal building practices are used throughout the rest of the Toguchi Province.

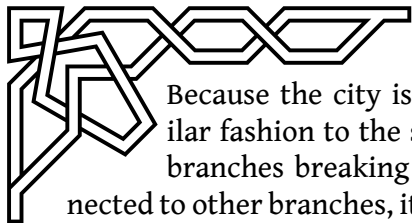
### CREEPER TRAPS

The Warawara clan frequently uses a variety of traps against the Izou or for entry points into the Untamed Wilds to prevent trespassers. All types of traps are used, but some of the most frequently used traps are pit traps, animal traps and punji sticks. Pit traps are a simple concealed pit that is approximately ten to fifteen feet deep with extremely smooth sides to prevent escape. An animal trap is a pit trap with a large beast at the bottom, usually a bear, large cat, crocodile or pack of wolves. Punji sticks are sharpened spears of bamboo usually located at the bottom of a pit trap to impale unsuspecting victims.

### YOKOSO KAGUSHI

The largest city to which the Warawara clan lays claim is Yokoso Kagushi, the Hidden Welcome. It is by far the most audacious building project undertaken in the Land of Seed and Blossom and could never have been completed if the leaders of the Warawara clan did not coordinate efforts with the Splendid Chameleons. The Idou families that assisted in the construction did so in exchange for strengthened clan relations and safe passage in Warawara territory. This agreement was instrumental in bringing the Grim Creepers onboard with protecting the Untamed Wilds to the east.

Yokoso Kagushi is located centrally in the Grim Creepers territory and is connected to four other towns by Dakupasu, making it the largest and most active city network in the region.



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Because the city is organized in a very similar fashion to the smaller towns, with many branches breaking off of hubs that are connected to other branches, it can be confusing to those not used to the cave network. Many of the entrances and pathways into the city itself are concealed and most foot traffic actually enters the Dakupasu many miles away from the city itself if one doesn't know where they are going.

The clan leadership, merchant quarter and a large amount of civilian housing is located in a massive cavern 400 yards long. Structures are built (rather than the simple cave-like domiciles found in most Warawara towns) throughout the cavern and up onto the walls with a number of ramps leading to those higher up. Half of the cavern has a freshwater underground lake which acts as the main water source for the city and has dormitory style housing along its banks. The design of this chamber provides a proper flow of yin and yang, as the water represents the positive chi, and the bustling city center represents the negative chi.

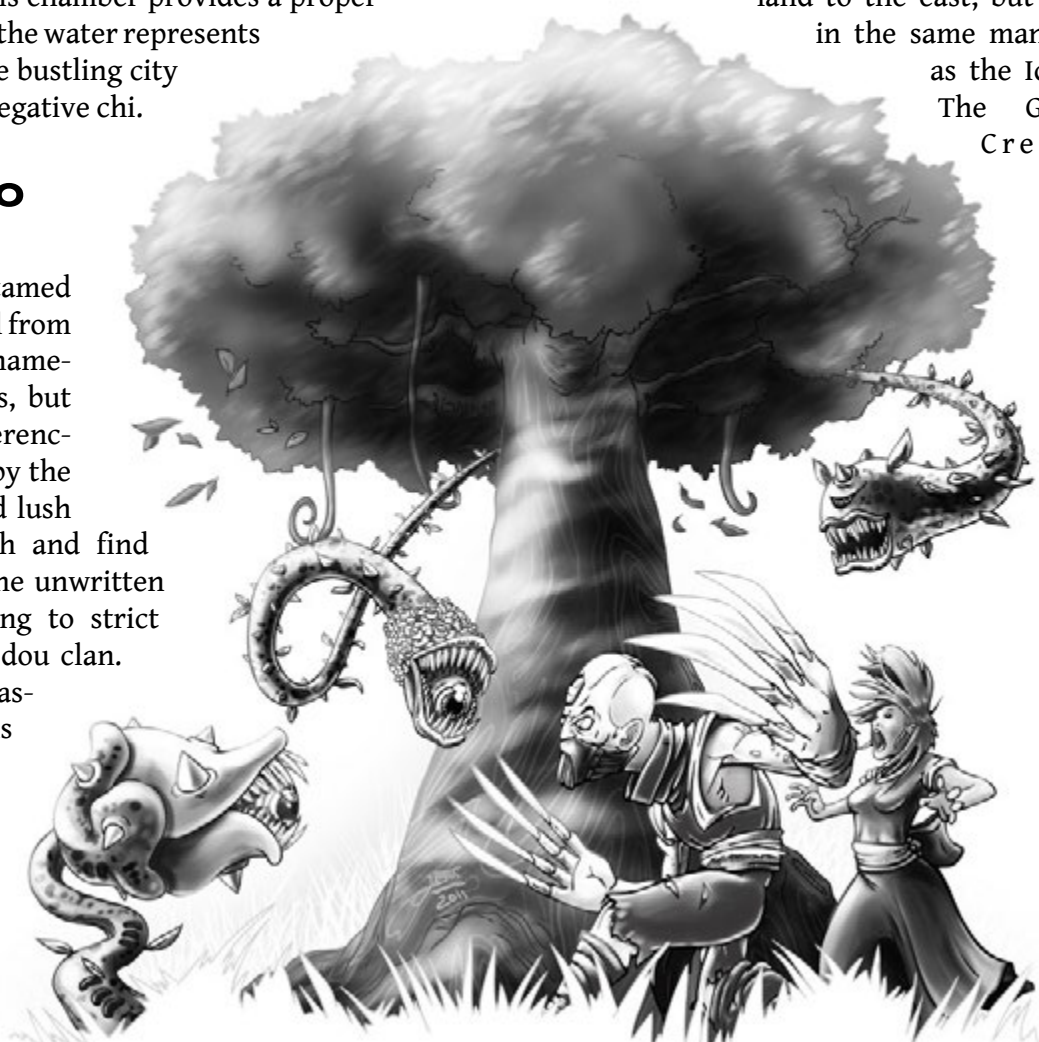
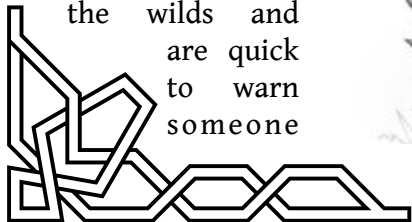
if they are about to do something that will anger the Ido. While they can be intimidating, the Grim Creepers really only have two simple requirements for passage into the Untamed Wilds: Tribute and a Guide.

The Warawara understand that their land is not the best place for crops and is occasionally beset by food shortages - the catalyst for raids against Ido caravans on occasion. It is therefore no shock that the most frequently requested form of tribute for the Warawara is food. That means that travelers have to carry enough food for themselves as well as enough for every ninja they encounter, usually in the form of a bag of rice. Alternatively, the ninja can accept money or other items of value if they see no food available.

The second requirement is that a Grim Creeper guide goes with the group as they journey into the Untamed Wilds. They have an eerie affection for the land to the east, but not in the same manner as the Ido. The Grim Creeper-

### DOORWAY TO THE WILDS

Traveling to the Untamed Wilds requires approval from either the Splendid Chameleons or Grim Creepers, but there are distinct differences. Many are deceived by the manicured gardens and lush vineyards to the north and find themselves breaking one unwritten rule or another, leading to strict punishment from the Ido clan. Warawara guides are astutely aware of the oaths that people take with the Ido regarding the protection of and respect for the wilds and are quick to warn someone





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ers view the Untamed Wilds as more of a homeland. The connection that each of them has with the suu permeates almost every element of their body and soul, connecting them to the creatures on a level that no other ninja experiences. This urges Creepers to travel to the Untamed Wilds often, so adventuring as a guide gives them a perfect excuse. When a group of travelers is encountered and tribute is paid, a single Warawara will insist that they act as a guide for the group. Only one ninja at a time may act as guide, creating a relay guide system of passing along the traveler from ninja to ninja, each of which can demand a new tribute if they so choose. If the travelers are lucky enough to encounter an experienced Creeper near the beginning of their travels, there is a lot less passing back and forth.

## NEJIRETA TSURI PROVINCE

After the sixth Catastrophe, the Izou felt they had finally culled the rebellious spirit of the Blossom people. The combined might of the Izou forces and the Land of Five Blades shattered the amassed army of the Blossom ninja, killing more than half of the soldiers that had risen up to fight the invaders. Through the teaching of the Immortal Lan Caihe, the ninja that would become known as the Splendid Chameleons were born. Though the surviving ninja felt grief at the loss of so many of their allies, the venerable Lan Caihe opened their eyes to the beauty within themselves, the world and even in failure and tragedy. The Idou Clan has taken these teachings and incorporated them into almost every facet of their culture allowing them to use their talents to augment and bring forth the true beauty in everything around them.

The Splendid Chameleons are universally thought of as a joyous clan. Even in the times of deepest sadness and grief, their songs, poems, plays, dances and jokes can always light up a town square. Contorting their bodies to fantastical shapes in wonderful displays of strange jutsu is a great way to amaze crowds, but the Chameleons often use the same talents and gifts as weapons against the Izou invaders. It should never be forgotten that, while they are wonderful

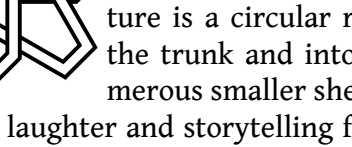
and gifted entertainers, the Idou are - above all - ninja.

Once one enters the territory of the Splendid Chameleons it is almost immediately noticeable to a trained ninja. Grass is greener, trees are groomed down to the deepest thicket and even streams seem to flow around artfully placed stones as they babble along. Their territory additionally lacks the overgrowth or decay that could be expected from something tucked away in the wilderness.

Throughout the Nejireta Tsuru (Twisted Trees) Province travelers are greeted with healthy, lush orchards filled with fruits of every variety. The land is fertile and allows many of these fruits to grow larger and healthier than anywhere else in the country. The villages throughout the territory sell and trade these good to the neighboring communities, but a good amount of the crop is retained and used in a number of wines, spirits and ales. These libations are held in great esteem in cities and villages throughout the country and can often command five to ten times the amount of lesser-quality counterparts. For the most part, however, the remaining terrain does not lend itself well to farming. When combined with the various jutsu of the Splendid Chameleons, the region has some of the best lumber in the Land of Seed and Blossom.

Of utmost importance to the Idou clan is respect of their territory and the Untamed Wilds. Unauthorized logging is not tolerated, but trusted merchants and allies have been known to ask for and be granted rights to limited lumber in select areas. Arrangements usually include the promise of favorable trading agreements, arranged marriages and have even been as simple as a gift of rare or valuable works of art or weapons.

Stumbling across a hidden Idou village is usually like pulling a blindfold away from your eyes. One moment a traveler may be walking through a bamboo forest or dense undergrowth, then with the next step they would step onto soft manicured grass surrounding tall spiraling stone and metal structures intertwining large living trees. Each of the seemingly impossible structures, called ten-mura, or sky villages, contains living quarters for artisans, craftsmen, merchants, villagers and ninja of the Idou clan. On the outside of each struc-



ture is a circular ramp spiraling its way up the trunk and into the branches where numerous smaller shelters can be found. Music, laughter and storytelling fill the air in these hidden villages with smaller trees and sculptures scattered throughout the impeccably kept forest floor.

Most of the concealed Idou villages consist of one of these structures with more traditional housing around it at its base, but there are some villages that have five to ten ten-mura of various sizes connected by delicate walkways seamlessly blended with the vines and branches of the surrounding vegetation. These larger villages can have as many as five hundred people living in them and can usually support a transient population approximately half of that.

## HAREYAKANA KURAFUTO

Arguably the most beautiful city in all of the Land is the Hareyakana Karafuto (Radiant Craft). The city is located in the geographical, feng shui center of the territory allowing it to be easily accessible to those aware of its concealed location. The city is surrounded by woods, trained and crafted to be so thick as to be almost impassable without jutsu to ease travel.


Seemingly crafted out of an entire forest itself, it uses the same organizational model and architectural style of other Idou hidden villages, consisting of the artistic ten-mura hybrids of tree, stone and metal. The main difference one may notice is the lack of houses or structures on the ground surrounding the giant living masterpieces. Instead, all inhabitants live within the ten-mura themselves.

Hareyakana Kurafuto itself presently consists of 54 ten-mura, with more being built each year. These spaces are mostly reserved for the Idou clan, but there are families within the general population that also have living space within the ten-mura. The structures range in size with the largest being around 200 feet high towering over the other ten-mura around it. This central location is the seat of government for the clan and is where the leaders hold council, make negotiations, and where most of the Idou train before they are assigned a master, usually a member of their own family. Afterword, the initiate is trained in individual family training rooms in their own ten-mura.

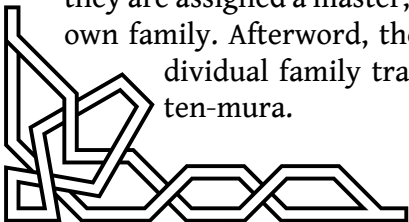


### KUIARATAME NO KESSAKU MASTERPIECE OF REPENTANCE

Often simply called Kessaku, the Kuariatame no Kessaku are grotesquely beautiful amalgamations of wood, stone, metal and flesh that are used to punish those that blatantly disrespect the Idou Clan. Used as warnings to others and erected in highly visible areas, Kessaku are usually shaped like interwoven threads of wood, stone or metal wrapping around the limbs and joints of someone cocooned inside. The person is usually contorted into an extremely uncomfortable position – often breaking bones or joints – before setting the rigid materials indefinitely in place. It can only be released by physically destroying the Kessaku and potentially harming the prisoner. Those that dishonor the Idou greatly or harm innocents in Idou territory are left to serve as an example until their final breaths.



All ten-mura of Hareyakana Karafuto are unrivaled works of art in their own right, but just like anything the Idou do, they serve an ulterior purpose as well. The city has protection, secrecy and defense in its very design. Each of the walkways that connect the massive structures can be either retracted into the branches above or dropped to the groomed forest floor below. The spiraling walkways that lead to the higher levels and branches are designed so that during a frontal assault crushing stones can be rolled down upon ascending attackers. Even the interwoven wood, stone and metal is arranged in such a way that if the ten-mura was set ablaze, the framework would still stand in order to be rebuilt. All of these inherent defenses are strictly precautionary, however. Since its creation, Hareyakana Karafuto has never been discovered by enemy forces nor has it ever been attacked by an outside force.





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### RITEs OF PASSAGE

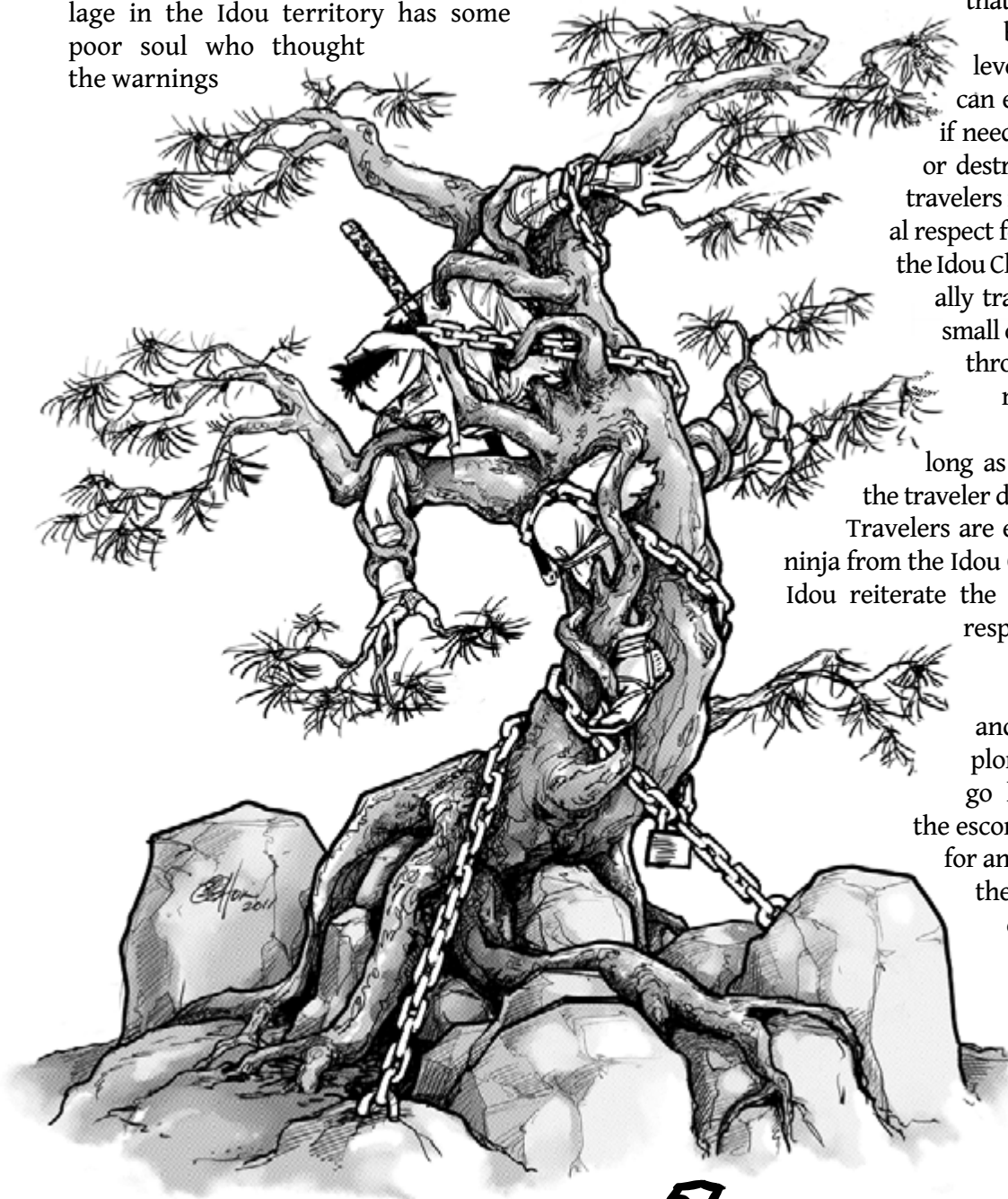
When attempting the journey to the Untamed Wilds to the east, one can take one of two paths; either through the Ido Territory or through the territory of the Grim Creepers. The Ido Clan sees itself as the benevolent protectors of the Untamed Wilds where Blossom ninja or other citizens often retreat for their rites of passage. Most travelers are taught to respect the beauty of the Untamed Wilds and about the statues of warning - especially what can happen to those who do not heed them. Almost every village in the Ido territory has some poor soul who thought the warnings

were wives tales or idle threats. Those people now bear the marks of their transgression in the form of vicious scars or occasionally an eye that has been put out, not deserving of witnessing the full beauty around him.

The Ido generally have peaceful relations with other clans seeking safe passage through their territory as long as their land is respected and the Untamed Wilds maintain their savage beauty. It is the raw nature of the Wilds that the Ido love and speak about with unrestricted awe and reverence. The Ido understand the dangers that lie beyond their eastern border and tolerate some level of collateral damage they can easily repair with their jutsu if need be, but blatant desecration or destruction is never allowed. All travelers must swear an oath of mutual respect for the land and gratitude for the Ido Clan for safe passage. This usually transpires at one of the many small outposts or villages scattered throughout Ido lands, but any member of the Chameleons can grant permission as long as the oath is performed and the traveler deemed worthy.

Travelers are escorted by one or a pair of ninja from the Ido Clan, during which time the Ido reiterate the importance of admiration, respect and care for the Wilds.

After a day or two, the escorts say their farewells and leave the side of those exploring the area, seemingly to go home. For most, however, the escorts secretly tail the travelers for another day or two to see how they react without Ido presence. Those that break their oath run the risk of being attacked at best, or becoming an example for others as a Kuiaratame no Kessaku at worst.





## KIRI TO NI HO TO

On the very southeastern tip of Shitashii Lake, the only part of a major waterway that touches the Nejireta Tsuru Province, is one of the true marvels of Idou craftsmanship. It helps to illustrate the honor the Splendid Chameleons show to their animal namesake, even in their craftwork. Kiri To Ni Ho To, the Tower of Mist and Fire, sits upon a small, jagged rocky island about three hundred feet off shore. The tower appears to be an ancient lighthouse of aged and weathered stone stacked haphazardly to the point that it looks as if it could collapse at the faintest breeze, let alone by a storm off the lake or the frequent crashing waves against the stony island. The lighthouse has been standing vigil over the southeast corner of the lake for the last two years, seemingly appearing out of the mists one autumn night and lighting its fire.

Though many Izou and commoners suspect the supernatural, or the handiwork of Immortals, the tower was crafted by Idou artisans from newly quarried stone manipulated through the careful use of jutsu to appear weathered, pitted and roughly hewn. Since its appearance, the Izou have funded two engineering efforts to tear down the structure, and one to investigate it on a metaphysical level. All three expeditions met with tragedy as their ships were dashed on the rocky shore of the lake or their team members mysteriously disappeared in the night when nearby the tower.



Inside the tower is a secret passage connecting the torch room to the concealed cave system beneath so Splendid Chameleons can occasionally visit to snuff the fires when Izou ships are on the lake, to protect it from those seeking to study or destroy it and keep up the illusion of mysterious supernatural activity. Truly, Kiri To Ni Ho To is a constant reminder of the mastery of trickery and manipulation the Splendid Chameleons wield.



## WARRING STATUARY



Throughout the territory of the Splendid Chameleons seemingly random pieces of statuary and sculpture are found. Some are well hidden as though to protect their beauty from those hoping to destroy them, but in other areas, such as those thought to be holy or blessed places, the sculptures are blatantly out in the open as if daring the Izou to take them down. The Izou soldiers have discovered that many of these sculptures serve as a warning, alerting people to the fact that they are entering a place to be lifted up and respected, and usually leave them be or flee the area unless ordered to do otherwise by their superiors. To harm the artistic statuary or the place it marks is cause for the Splendid Chameleons to torment, pester or attack the culprits, usually ending in gruesome disfigurement or death.

## UNTAMED WILDS

In all of its savage perfection, the Untamed Wilds remains one of the most pristine places among all of the kingdoms of men. The people of the Land of Seed and Blossom have always held the region in high regard. Their people even refrained from moving into the land when under threat of Izou attack and occupation. They have always been in the best position out of all the kingdoms to lay claim to the region, but have deliberately chosen not to do so out of reverence for the very land itself. To defile the Untamed Wilds is akin to forfeiture of one's life, which has led to many bloody encounters with the Izou, and more recently, the occupants of the Honshiken Settlement to the north.

Blossom clans see passage into the Untamed Wilds to the east as a sign of adulthood. Exploration and battle are usually at the forefront of their minds when journeying there, with young, eager ninja wanting to test their mettle against the strongest and most cunning adversaries they can find. Even experienced ninja make jaunts into the region to test their



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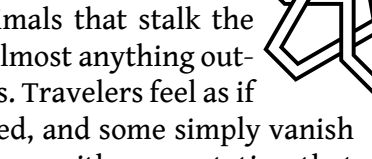
skill, especially if they feel they are disgraced or have something to prove.

Reasons for wanting to explore the Untamed Wilds vary greatly depending on whether or not an explorer is ninja and, if so, to what clan they belong. Some believe that though the Wilds contain many dangerous creatures and plants, there may be other undiscovered medicinal plants or mystical creatures with potential to be tamed or domesticated. Others hope that the land may hold the secrets to their ancestors, but so far speculations of ruins seem to be wholly unfounded.

The region contains a wide variety of flora and fauna, which has astounded those trying to study and record them all. Scholars and researchers have stated - without exaggeration - that they can stay in the same area for days recording their findings and not see the same type of animal twice. While there are a few species of carnivorous plants in other areas of the world, the Untamed Wilds seems to have more than its fair share. The species in the region are also much larger and deadlier, able to attack, disable and consume large predators and even humans. For inexperienced travelers, it is usually wise to have a guide to point out these unexpected dangers.

Immediately to the east of the territories belonging to the Grim Creepers and the Splendid Chameleons is an area known as the Borderlands. This area is by far the most explored area in all of the Untamed Wilds. Most can enter this region with little fear for their safety, but still do so with caution since the reputation of the Untamed Wilds is one of danger and death. The Borderlands are home to many small predators, colorful birds and multiple species of mundane plants with poisonous fruit. This is where most spend their time when in the Wilds. Ninja just reaching adulthood will also spend a large part of their time in the Borderlands with only the bravest or most foolhardy choosing to go deeper without assistance.

As one travels deeper into the Untamed Wilds, the reasons for its grim reputation become evident. The closer one gets to the heart of the jungle, the more hazardous it becomes. Clear paths, which are few and far between to begin with, are nonexistent, the jungle is almost impassably dense and the sweltering heat and humidity begins choking those unaccustomed to it. The variety of dangerous plants



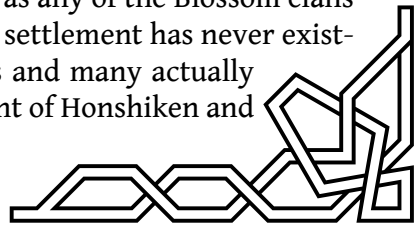
is much greater, and animals that stalk the jungle are deadlier than almost anything outside of the Untamed Wilds. Travelers feel as if they are constantly hunted, and some simply vanish in the night. Accounts vary, with some stating that people are snatched up by predators, swallowed by the ground as they slept or they simply walked away from camp during an attack never to return.

Travel to the Untamed Wilds is extremely limited. Most travel comes through the occupied Land of Seed and Blossom where travelers are expected to secure Rites of Passage from either the Grim Creepers or the Splendid Chameleons. Each has their own requirements for granting access, allowing them to be fairly selective as to who can venture into the region. The Blossom ninja know that access is limited but they try not to lord this over others. They simply want to ensure that the untouched wilderness is protected, and many would give up their lives to guarantee this.

Numerous expeditions have been sent from the Land of Crashing Waves west to make landfall but safe harbor is extremely hard to come by. The shores are rock and the forest is so dense that this feat is nearly impossible. On the few occasions that expeditions managed to land, they were beset by predators, poisonous plants and some say even the earth itself - at least half the landing parties were killed before they managed to even make it back to their boats. The Izou have only attempted a naval expedition a few times but the constant storms in the Arashi Sea maintained by the Land of Exalted Flame brought them to an end before they even reached sight of the coast. Going westward brings its own problems, either from the Land of Crashing Waves or from pirates from Horde Island. Only the Land of Exalted Flame has managed to make landfall and gain a foothold to establish a permanent settlement.

## HONSHIKEN

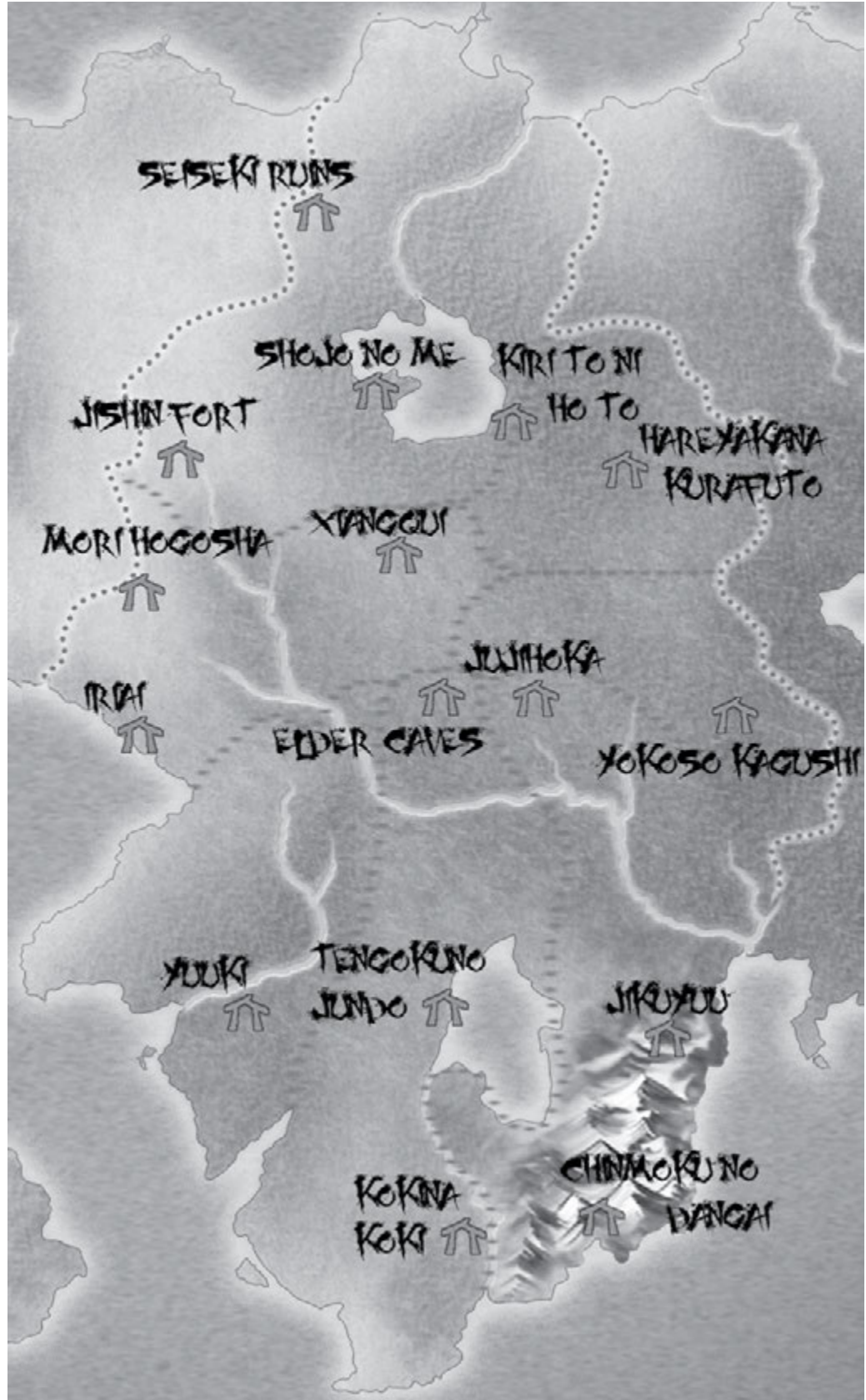
The settlement of Honshiken in the northernmost area of the Untamed Wilds was established by the Land of Exalted Flame in an effort to explore more of the world. As far as any of the Blossom clans knows, a true permanent settlement has never existed in the Untamed Wilds and many actually consider the establishment of Honshiken and



the desecration it brought to be a declaration of war.

Entire sections of jungle were destroyed or razed for lumber, supplies and farmland. Only the complete destruction wrought by the powerful Exalted Flame forces allowed them to build a settlement with limited harassment from animal predators. Blossom ninja who first confronted the settlers were met with violence and extreme prejudice, leading to many of the ninja being killed before a true assessment of the settlement could truly be made.

The clans of the Land of Seed and Blossom have all agreed that the Exalted Flame settlement is a blight upon the otherwise untouched savagery of the Untamed Wilds. There have been a few nighttime raids against the settlement in an effort to test its defenses and see just how established the settlement truly is, but no one has returned from these expeditions. Even more experienced Blossom ninja know that a future full scale assault on the settlement is all but guaranteed, but are fearful of going into any long-term battle blind.



Nobu walked into the tavern and flipped the waitress a few jade to keep the drinks coming. It was a very important meeting tonight, so everything had to be just right. It appeared that Umeko was already awaiting his arrival, her intense femininity showing through the heavy Izou armor she wore. He put on his widest smile and approached.

"Hello there, Lieutenant Etsuko," he said with a slight bow, just enough that he could keep eye contact with her.

"Must you be so formal? We are trying to be secretive and your displays do not help that cause," Umeko responded sternly, but with a smile. "Have you learned of anything new?"

Nobu sat down, noticing an audible crunch under his shoe as he took his seat. "Only murmurs of ninja forces that are moving from the south. Will you be able to hold back ninja that consort with the dead?" Umeko smiled again, "Is that worry I hear in your voice, Nobu?" She reached out to grab his hand, taking it in hers as he answered.

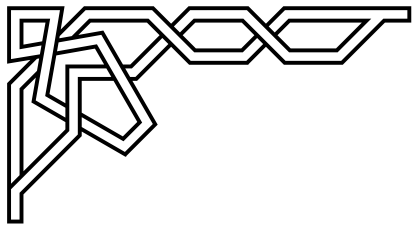
"Of course... for you and for your armies," he smiled back, strange for a Blossom citizen to be smiling so much in the face of an Izou lieutenant. He was, however, a defector, one of the "good ones" by Izou standards and a betrayer by Blossom ethics.

Then a few strange looking flies began buzzing around them, getting into the ears and nostrils like the annoying pests they were. Nobu swatted them away, but Umeko actually squished a few in her heavy iron glove. "That will be the ninja very soon!", she said with a laugh so hard that her head swung back and her eye closed.

When they opened again, she looked upon a ceiling completely covered by the same flies in an arrangement that created a scary face formed in the swarm. "Sooner than you might think," a voice that sounded like the flapping of a thousand insects erupted through the tavern. And with that, the swarm launched itself at the treacherous couple. No matter how much Nobu covered his mouth and other openings or how protective Umeko's armor would have been against a traditional attack, the bugs could not be stopped. They burrowed into their skin, entered their mouths and ears and began eating them from the inside out.

As the couple saw death coming for them, they held on to each other's hands. Unfortunately for them, Warawara Takuya was unfazed by shows of emotion. If only his colony had not already replaced his heart.

When all was said and done, the swarm exited through random cracks in the tavern and left the room empty, carrying the bones out piece by piece.



# CHAPTER FOUR:

## SEEDS TO BE PLANTED

Below are new ways to make a character that lives in the Land of Seed and Blossom. There are a number of exciting changes, such as Birthstone instead of Elements and Castes instead of Professions, but the majority of character creation remains the same afterward. There are a few new Afflictions for Tragedy selection, but Blossom ninja can suffer many of the same hardships as Izou ninja. Step Four: Forge remains unchanged, as many of the same roles in the war against the Izou reflect the same tactics being used in the Uprising.

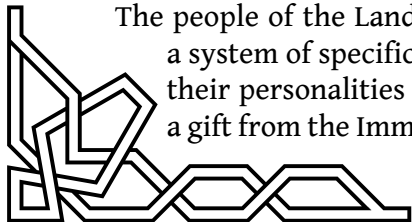
### STEP ONE: BIRTHSTONE

The people of the Land of Seed and Blossom use a system of specific Birthstones to determine their personalities and fates. It is considered a gift from the Immortals and puts them clos-

er to the spirit world simply by being one of the Blossom people. The exact cut of the Birthstone isn't important, so one character with a 5-pointed Ruby and another with a rectangle Ruby would work the same mechanically.

During character creation, instead of choosing an Element, players of Blossom ninja select a Birthstone that colors the personality, Skills and Ki Balance of their character. Of course, GMs can continue to use the standard Element system from the Ninja Crusade 2nd Edition Corebook if they prefer, but Birthstones add to the flavor of the Blossom ninja and how different they are from the Izou.

Each Birthstone is closely linked to one of the Elements discussed in the Ninja Crusade 2nd Edition, meaning the player can choose from any of the existing Temperaments that correspond with the right Birthstone, but they may also pick one of the new ones as well.





## DIAMOND (EARTH)

Characters with the white Diamond Birthstone are as bright as the jewel they possess. They are known for their intelligence and commitment to balancing their lives. Looking at everyday situations from every possible angle comes in handy when faced with a dangerous existence. Diamond characters are often regarded as born leaders.

**Skills:** Empathy +1, Fortitude +1, Intuition +1, Survival +1

**Ki Balance:** +1 Yin or +1 Yang

### OVER THINKER

**Gift:** The character has a way of taking their time to look at a situation from every possible angle. While some say this makes them slow to act, they just can't speed up perfection. They gain +1 Intuition to come up with solutions after a moment to consider.

**Trigger:** It is sadly true that they are slow to act. Gain 1 Karma when the character takes too long in contemplation and loses some advantage.

### SHARP TONGUED

**Gift:** The character has a sharp wit and quite the penchant for getting away with making remarks others wouldn't dare. This includes insults, witty comebacks and even veiled threats. +1 Intimidation for taunting someone.

**Trigger:** Few believe the character is sincere, always waiting for the other shoe to drop. Gain 1 Karma when something they say is taken as an insult even when it was not intended that way.

## EMERALD (WOOD)

Characters with the shiny green Emerald Birthstone are creators and innovators. Everything about their lives revolves around performance, and they often have a skip in their step wherever they go and a smile in the face of danger. Emerald characters are born artists and actors.

**Skills:** Athletics +1, Crafts +1, Might +1, Perform +1

**Ki Balance:** +1 Yang



## CRITICAL

**Gift:** Some see it as a fault, but the character is always able to see the flaw in something, whether it is a plan, a structure or an argument. They gain +1 Perception to find a weakness in anything before them.

**Trigger:** It becomes hard for the character to enjoy anything, having the habit of always picking things apart. And others don't like the constant nagging either. Gain 1 Karma when their unsolicited critiques cause issues.

## LOYAL

**Gift:** The character finds it easy to devote themselves to others who they care for. Some call them naive, but they just don't know what it's like to be true to someone. They gain +1 Speed when coming to the aid of a friend.

**Trigger:** Sometimes they put their own safety in jeopardy to help a friend, even if they don't need to. Gain 1 Karma when they suffer a loss to help a friend.

## ONYX (METAL)

Characters with a black Onyx Birthstone are quiet and mysterious, quite the opposite of an Emerald character. They are known for their silent nature and observance of the world around them, possessing an almost constant solemn mood. They are thought to be born thieves and spies.

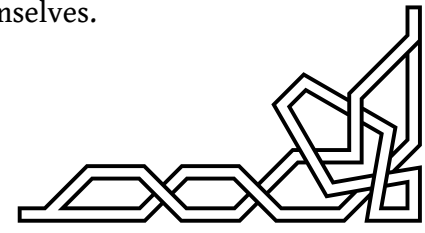
**Skills:** Deception +1, Holistics +1, Perception +1, Stealth +1

**Ki Balance:** +1 Yin

## INDEPENDENT

**Gift:** The character is known for going it their own, rarely asking for help from others. This often leads to long stints in the wilderness on the hunt in solitude. They gain +1 Survival to surviving on their own.

**Trigger:** Being independent means shunning assistance when they really do need it. Gain 1 Karma when they attempt something alone that should never be dreamed of by themselves.





## INTENSE

**Gift:** The character cares deeply about a lot of things and is never shy about sharing that with others. They gain +1 Persuade when attempting to bring someone to their side of thinking.

**Trigger:** They can, at times, come off as too intense about a certain topic. Gain +1 Karma if they cause tensions with their strong opinions.

## OPAL (WATER)

Characters with the blue-green, amorphous Opal Birthstone are just as ever-changing as the ocean waves. They love travel and are quick to change their mind if introduced with new information. Opal characters are also known for their pleasant personalities and are born diplomats.

**Skills:** Discipline +1, Marksman +1, Persuade +1, Travel +1

**Ki Balance:** +1 Yin

## CLEVER

**Gift:** The character has a real knack for figuring things out, especially when racing against the clock. They are used to being the smartest person in the room. They gain +1 Crafts when needing to quickly figure out how an object or trap works.

**Trigger:** Their cleverness can sometimes get the better of them, and they become unbearable know-it-alls. Gain 1 Karma when they step into trouble because they thought they had it all figured out.

## SENSITIVE

**Gift:** The character is very in touch with their feelings, and has a real way of connecting with just about anyone they encounter. They gain +1 Empathy to get people to open up to them through conversation.

**Trigger:** Being deeply sensitive can, at times, send the character into bouts of depression. Gain 1 Karma when they find it hard to act or operate because they simply feel too much.

## CHAPTER FOUR - SEEDS TO BE PLANTED

### RUBY (FIRE)

Characters with the burning Ruby Birthstone bring a passion unlike any other. They are not known for bringing anything less than their best effort to any task and are quick to excite or anger. The Ruby character is thought to be a born warrior, as only they can bring the art of battle to the next level.

**Skills:** Fighting +1, Intimidation +1, Knowledge +1, Speed +1

**Ki Balance:** +1 Yang

### ENVIOUS

**Gift:** No matter how much they have, the character always looks to others and covets their life and what they have. Of course, they often have the power to change that. They gain +1 Deception to trick someone into giving them the thing they want.

**Trigger:** Constantly looking to what others have means they are not watching their own possessions. Gain 1 Karma when an important item is lost because they weren't keeping an eye on it.

### LEADER

**Gift:** Others seem to follow the character's lead, sometimes even without them trying. They just have a knack for heading up groups and doling out responsibilities. They gain +1 Persuade when issuing orders.

**Trigger:** They are so used to people taking orders that they just start doing it to everyone around them. Gain 1 Karma when telling the wrong person what to do causes issues.

## STEP TWO: CASTES

Also replacing the Profession for the Blossom people is the Caste System. While each citizen of the Land of Seed and Blossom certainly holds a profession within their communities, what they contribute is less important than the status such a position grants them within society. As a character's Caste also reflects their connection to the social aspects of their life, it is not uncommon for a Blossom ninja's Caste to change more frequently than an Izou ninja's Profession during any given story. For more information on changing Choices, see NC2E, pg. 95.



## CHAPTER FOUR - SEEDS TO BE PLANTED

During character creation, the player chooses one (1) starting Caste for their character, making note of the Skills on their character sheet. Then, they pick one (1) Responsibility the character has been tasked by their village, recoding the associated Gift and Trigger.

### ADVENTURERS

Travelers and explorers, these characters are given respect for their worldly experience. They are known for having different homes, friends, families and lives in the various lands, surviving by their excitement for new experiences.

**Skills:** Athletics +1, Knowledge +1, Perception +1, Travel +1

### DIPLOMAT

**Gift:** The character travels not for fun, but to meet with other village leaders and make treaties to promote peace. They gain +1 Discipline to keep negotiations going despite distractions and for keeping a level head.

**Trigger:** Words are the preferred way of solving issues for a diplomat, even at inopportune times. Gain 1 Karma when someone's words cause inaction in the character when action would have been more prudent.

### STORYTELLER

**Gift:** There is always a need for someone to remember what happens in the world, and that is the role of this character. They travel around, viewing events and reporting them back. They gain +1 Perform for storytelling and making things sound more interesting.

**Trigger:** Getting the story and not interjecting is a part of being a storyteller. They wish to relay the information as it happens, not as they made it occur. Gain 1 Karma when their lack of action causes terrible consequences.

### TRADER

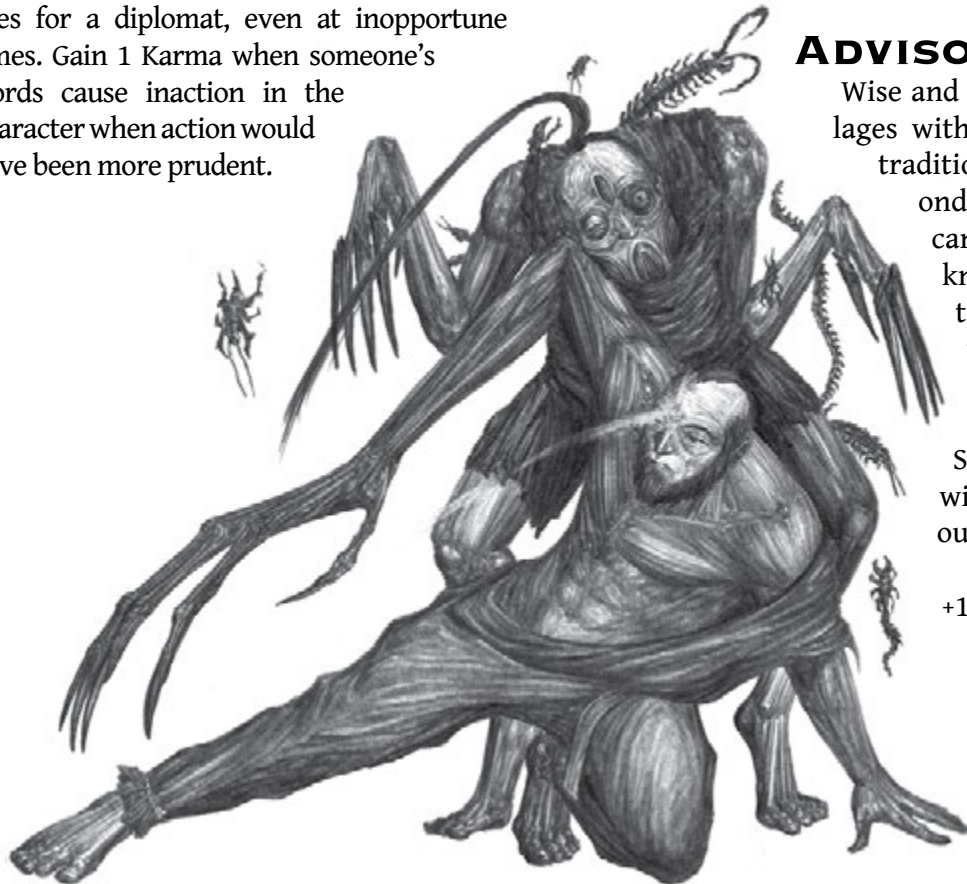
**Gift:** No village has everything their people need, so deals must be made. This character travels to enact barter and return home with the goods. They gain +1 Persuade for haggling for the best deal.

**Trigger:** They have become addicted to making deals. Gain 1 Karma when they leap to make a deal without looking at all the details, and they owe more than they get in return.

### ADVISORS

Wise and helpful, Advisors aid their villages with counsel and a penchant for tradition. These characters are second only to a Chief in what they can get their hands on. They are known for living in larger estates they often open up to the downtrodden or village visitors. Characters receive a free Knowledge or Empathy Specialty to reflect their overall wisdom and their ability to root out someone's intentions.

**Skills:** Deception +1, Might +1, Persuade +1, Speed +1





## EXPERT

**Gift:** The character knows much about the world, from the different cultures to how best to use ninja from other lands to the Uprising's advantage. Gain +1 Knowledge to recall information about other nations and their citizens.

**Trigger:** Knowing and experiencing are often two different things, leading to assumptions and prejudice not based on experience. Gain 1 Karma when the character's assumptions about others cause conflict.

## ORGANIZER

**Gift:** Some Blossom villages are small, but when an Organizer is put in power, there is always substantial growth. They know how and when to expand and build to grow the village's power. They gain +1 Crafts for drafting building plans or large projects.

**Trigger:** Organizers don't think small, and often ignore the small details in favor of the bigger picture. Gain 1 Karma when a minor detail missed causes terrible issues.

## SHAMAN

**Gift:** Healing capabilities are not something every village possesses. The character is knowledgeable in the use of herbs for healing purposes, often sought for their expertise. They gain +1 Holistics for healing others.

**Trigger:** The character finds it hard to turn away someone in need, and hate to see death. They have devoted their lives to healing, after all. Gain 1 Karma when they put themselves in danger in order to save someone else's life.

## CHIEFS

The leaders of the individual villages and towns, these characters answer directly to the Blossom Elders. Characters of this Caste have the power to do or say anything and everything they want, including the ability to declare war on other villages or request an audience with the Blossom Elders. They are not unlike Izou Nobles, but are more inclined to physical altercations. The character receives a free Deception or Persuasion Specialty, as a Chief must be able to see through lies and lead their people in a prosperous direction.

**Skills:** Discipline +1, Fortitude +1, Intimidation +1, Intuition +1

## CHAPTER FOUR - SEEDS TO BE PLANTED NEXT IN LINE

**Gift:** Even though they are not officially the Chiefs of the village, being an Elder has its privileges nonetheless. Their role is often as a buffer between the actual Chief and the villagers. They gain +1 Deception to spin truths that make reputations seem favorable.

**Trigger:** Sadly, the Next in Line can also be the scapegoat when the Chief has made a bad call. Gain 1 Karma when fault is applied to the character to horrible effect.

## WARMONGER

**Gift:** Some Chiefs are bent on war, often being put into power in order to spur change in a more aggressive direction. These Chiefs don't sit back and give orders; they fight on the front line beside their warriors. They gain +1 Fighting when waging war.

**Trigger:** Warmongers are not known for being calm or timid people. Their hostility extends into their everyday lives. Gain 1 Karma when they lose their temper when cooler heads would have been much better.

## WISEMAN

**Gift:** Some Chiefs are kind and wise leaders, seeking peace and unity above all other things. They take the advice of their people and apply it to future plans. They receive +1 Speed for quickly coming up with solutions for their village's prosperity.

**Trigger:** A Wiseman holds their sword in the face of anger, and sees the good in people. Gain 1 Karma if they make a wrong judgement and bring shame upon their station.

## FAMILY BEARERS

Finally becoming an adult and surviving their rites of passage, the character can now take a partner, own land and have children if they so choose. Though they seldom have huge tracts of land, they can own a small shop and aid their village in other ways.

**Skills:** Empathy +1, Holistics +1, Marksman +1, Perform +1

## CHAPTER FOUR - SEEDS TO BE PLANTED

### **FARMER**

**Gift:** One of the primary tasks for Family Bearers is to tend to herbs and cultivate crops for their village. This can take quite the toll on the body. They gain +1 Fortitude to resist physical exhaustion.

**Trigger:** Farmers are even more removed from civilized society than other Blossom people. Gain 1 Karma when misunderstandings cause unneeded issues between the character and the Izou occupation.

### **LOVER**

**Gift:** Once the character is an adult, it is expected they will support their nation by helping to raise up the next generation. They gain +1 Persuade to seduce others into their embrace.

**Trigger:** There is a time and a place for flirting, and the character often cannot turn it off. Gain 1 Karma when their flirtatiousness causes disastrous results.

### **SURVIVOR**

**Gift:** Not every Family Bearer survives the necessary trials to become an adult. This character exceeded expectations due to a natural resistance. They gain +1 Fortitude against poison effects.

**Trigger:** Other citizens suffered greatly to reach adulthood and often hold grudges against those who pass so easily. Gain 1 Karma when this viewpoint makes the character's life harder.

### **HUNTERS**

The character is seen as a provider to their community, allowed not only to hunt in the wilderness but also to defend the people if necessary. In exchange, they are given larger portions of land, a lion's share of their catch and receive weapons and supplies from the people.

**Skills:** Crafts +1, Fighting +1, Speed +1, Survival +1

### **DEFENDER**

**Gift:** Some Hunters remain behind to defend village borders and protect the people from outside attacks, whether from wild animals or other villages. They gain +1 Marksman when defending their village.

**Trigger:** They stick close to home, only rarely leaving to hunt the wilds with their fellow hunters.

This leads to them not knowing their surrounding areas as well as others. Gain 1 Karma if they lose their way.

### **STALKER**

**Gift:** Stalking animals is a skill Hunters have worked hard to develop, making them the perfect predator. Even the jungle tiger is jealous. They gain +1 Stealth when hunting their prey.

**Trigger:** The Hunter has a way of seeing everyone as potential prey, always seeing themselves as better. Gain 1 Karma when they underestimate a target and are unpleasantly surprised.

### **WARRIOR**

**Gift:** Some move silently through the wilds, but others rush toward their prey to simply outrun them. They gain +1 Athletics when in forests, as only Hunters can master the wilds.

**Trigger:** The character's great physical abilities often go to their head, making them overconfident at times. Gain 1 Karma when they rush into obvious and overwhelming danger without blinking an eye.

## NEW AFFLICTIONS

### **FA CARRIER**

**Tragedy:** Ravaged Body

**Ki Balance:** Yin

**Gift:** The character has the dreaded Fa Blood Disease. While it is devastating to the body and breaks down their ability to create new cells, it also makes it harder for other foreign bodies to invade. They suffer -1 Fortitude for most physical checks, but +1 Fortitude to resist Poisoned, Diseased or Dosed Conditions.

**Trigger:** Pregnancy involving a Fa Carrier as a parent usually ends in birth complications and the death of the mother, child or both. In a society where population is so important, this creates a huge social stigma for the character, parallel to Untouchables in the Izou Empire. Gain 1 Karma when this reduced social status causes even more problems for the character.



## UNTEWELED

**Tragedy:** Unending Stigma

**Ki Balance:** Yin

**Gift:** The character is a Blossom native who has never undergone the Jewel ceremony or has had their jewel removed. They make sure to stay hidden when possible, never taking the spotlight, and gain +1 Stealth to hide in crowds.

**Trigger:** It's now too late, and the character is constantly looked down upon because of it. Gain 1 Karma when their lack of a jewel causes conflict with other Blossom citizens.

# NEW FIGHTING STYLES

## FROG STYLE

The Frog fighter is one of constant movement. They like to leap around to keep their opponent off balance and throw knives to incapacitate from afar, before rushing in for the finish. With this style, they deal minimal damage, hoping to whittle their opponent down little by little.

### WALL LAUNCH

- ✦ **Level One:** The fighter learns how to leap from walls, trees and other structures to maximize their attack. They may add Athletics as a Secondary Skill to the combo for an attack and gain a +1 bonus (per level) to their attack if they do so. Obviously, there must be a surface to jump from and it must be sturdy.
- ✦ **Level Two:** They launch themselves even farther, making a full Move Action during the attack as well.
- ✦ **Level Three:** They may pick an environment type they are most comfortable with (urban, forest, swamps) and gain an additional +2 bonus to their attack in this type of area.



### EXPERT DODGER

- ✦ **Level One:** The fighter is well-versed in grand gestures, both offensively and defensively. With this technique, the Frog-stylist may

## CHAPTER FOUR - SEEDS TO BE PLANTED

spend 1 Dynamic Action to gain a +1 bonus to all Dodge checks for the Round. This can be done up to (Level) times in a single Round.

- ✦ **Level Two:** The fighter receives +1 Marksman to a Counterattack used after a Dodge.
- ✦ **Level Three:** They may pick a particular kind of weapon (unarmed, swords, arrows, etc.) and gain an additional +2 bonus to Dodging attacks from that weapon.

### POISON TRAINING

- ✦ **Level One to Three:** Training to emulate a frog puts them in contact with poisonous types, leading to many receiving poison training. Each level adds +1 Holistics when dealing with the Poisoned Condition or when using Alchemy to create poisons.

## RHINO STYLE

Rhino fighters strategically fight close up, using punches and body rushes with exact precision. Knocking their opponent off balance is key to this fighting style, allowing them to gain the high ground quickly and dispatch with the battle. Unfortunately, if attacked from afar, Rhino fighters can be taken down a notch.

### DESTABILIZING STRIKES

- ✦ **Level One:** Rhino-stylists know all about knocking their opponents off-balance during a fight to gain the advantage. With a Boost, they may create an instant Knockdown effect, throwing their target back (Might +5) feet. They need to make a Moderate (2) Athletics + Speed check or also fall to the ground.
- ✦ **Level Two:** Double the distance the target is thrown back. In many ways, this is perfect for widening the space between the fighters for the best use of Pushing Through the Wind.
- ✦ **Level Three:** They learn to leverage their standing advantage and now deal +2 damage to targets that have been knocked down.

## CHAPTER FOUR - SEEDS TO BE PLANTED *PUSHING THROUGH THE WIND*

- ✦ **Level One:** The fighter gets very good at rush attacks, playing space on the battlefield to their advantage. Attackers suffer a -3 penalty (instead of -2) while the fighter uses a Sprint Action (NC2E, pg. 144) and they deal +2 damage (instead of +1) on their follow-up attack.
- ✦ **Level Two:** The fighter cannot make Dodge checks against incoming attacks normally while Sprinting.
- ✦ **Level Three:** They benefit from Armor 2 while rushing, as the very air they pass through protects them from outward attacks.

### **THICK HIDE**

- ✦ **Level One to Three:** Ninja are not known for wearing armor, but Rhino-stylists understand the benefit of having a hide to protect them from harm. For each level, penalties related to wearing Armor (NC2E, pg. 146) are reduced by 2.

### **SLOTH STYLE**

Sloth fighters learn from the slow and very calculated movements of their animal namesake, making them amazing strategists in combat. They almost always utilize their staff, but are also quite capable with punches or grappling if necessary. A Sloth fighter always looks as though there is an opening in their stance, but there never truly is.

### **CALCULATED MOVEMENTS**

- ✦ **Level One:** The ninja is skilled at acting later than others, due to their purposefully slow movements. Attacks made after Initiative 5 receive a +1 bonus (per level).
- ✦ **Level Two:** Attacks made after Initiative 4 may ignore up to 2 level of Armor.
- ✦ **Level Three:** Attacks made after Initiative 3 inflict a Slowed 1 Condition on the target (even without a Boost).





## **SLOW AND STRONG**

✦ **Level One:** The fighter has turned slow movements into their source of power.

They may sacrifice 2 Initiative to boost the damage of their attacks for the Round by +1. This can be done up to (Level) times per Round.

- ✦ **Level Two:** The fighter's Actions cannot be Interrupted as long as they are acting at Initiative 5 or lower.
- ✦ **Level Three:** They gain another +1 damage while acting at Initiative 4 or lower.

## **IN THE TREES**

**Level One to Three:** Sloth-stylists have trained for years in the forest and jungles, making these locations perfect for their style. They are known for climbing trees and swinging from branches during battle. For each level, they receive +1 Athletics while operating in the wilds.

## **SPIDER STYLE**

Spider fighters emulate the idea of the arachnid, learning how to act as if they had multiple limbs. They are trained to attack and defend with every part of their body, be it an elbow, fist, shoulder, mouth, knee or foot. It is not unusual to face a Spider fighter who has a knife in each hand, one in their mouth and blades on their feet.

## **DECEPTIVE MOVEMENTS**

- ✦ **Level One:** The fighter knows how to keep their opponent guessing, so they quickly learn how to move deceptively whenever possible. They gain +1 Deception (per level) for the purposes of using a Feint (NC2E, pg. 142).
- ✦ **Level Two:** The ninja may use one free Feint Action per Round.
- ✦ **Level Three:** If a Feint is successful, they gain a +4 bonus to their follow-up attack (instead of +2)



## **SPIDER STRIKING**

✦ **Level One to Three:** The ninja may equip one additional weapon per level, as long as each weapon shares at least one Qual-

## **CHAPTER FOUR - SEEDS TO BE PLANTED**

ity and is a small weapon. In this way, the ninja takes advantage of the additional weapons' Qualities. In addition, they deal +1 damage for each additional weapon they wield. For example, a ninja with Spider Striking 2 could wield a Katana (Sharp, Quick) in each hand, and a dagger in their mouth (Sharp, Concealable), dealing +3 damage in combat.

## **8 LEGS STRIKE AT ONCE**

- ✦ **Level One to Three:** Spider-stylists are masters of taking on multiple opponents, actually reveling in the excitement of the battle. By spending 1 Dynamic Action, they may add a +1 bonus to their next attack for each opponent they currently face. This bonus can only be used once per Round and cannot go beyond their (Level x3), however. For example, a fighter with Whirlwind Assault 2, facing seven opponents could spend a Dynamic Action for a +6 bonus. If facing a Squad, the GM determines how many members of the group there are against the ninja. If facing a Legion, the fighter receives their maximum bonus automatically.

## **NEW JUTSU**

### **WAY OF DENIED REPOSE**

**Element:** Earth

**Training:** The Phantom Voices are tuned in to the spirits that once ruled the Earth, learning how to call upon them for assistance in times of need. On a Boost during activation, they receive +1 Persuade when dealing with the dead.

**Backfire:** Failing an activation loses favor with the spirits in the area and causes a -2 penalty to the ninja's next check, regardless of what Skill it is based on.

### **BASIC JUTSU**

- ✦ **Death Immunity (Yin + Discipline):** The ninja learns to stave off the effects of death itself for a short time. The next time this Scene the ninja's Health would drop to 0, it instead only drops down to 1. They may spend 1 Yin to use this reflexively.

## CHAPTER FOUR - SEEDS TO BE PLANTED

- ✦ **Death State (Yin + Discipline):** The ninja goes into a trance to appear dead. Their body remains still, their blood stops flowing and their heart no longer beats. The ninja's skin even becomes paler, giving the appearance of being dead for (successes) days (the ninja may end the jutsu at any time). During the trance, they are fully aware of everything occurring around them, but cannot move or react.
- ✦ **Reanimate Beast (Yang + Survival):** The ninja can touch a dead animal and animate their corpse to their liking. There is no limit to how long it can have been dead before using this jutsu. The animal has all the same statistics as they did when they were alive, but must also have the parts to use them (i.e. a bird corpse with no feathers cannot fly and a pawless cat skeleton cannot scratch). They can command the animal for 1 minute per success and any corpse can only ever be affected once. On a Boost, the animal appears as if it is alive.
- ✦ **Shallow Grave (Yang + Survival):** Similar to Open the Earth (NC2E pg. 105), but it simply creates an opening about the size of a person. Once a body (or other items) is thrown in, it covers itself back up with dirt... making the perfect instant gravesite. Some ninja use this jutsu to hide gear or as a trap for unwitting trespassers.
- ✦ **Voice on the Wind (Yin + Intuition):** The ninja opens themselves up to listen to whispers of the dead, being able to fully see, speak with and fully understand nearby spirits. On a Boost, they gain a +2 bonus to track down the spirit for the Scene.

### MEDIAN JUTSU

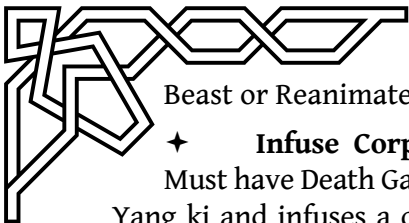
- ✦ **Death Gaze (Yin + Intimidation):** The ninja can look into the eyes of a dead body or even just a skull and instantly sense their last moments before death. Some may see a gruesome murder through the eyes of the victim, while another may only see a peaceful slip into death's embrace.
- ✦ **Corpse Disposal (Yin + Crafts):** The ninja places their hands on a dead body and turns it instantly into dust. It is great for quickly and discretely disposing of a kill or cremating a body to later spread their ashes. This only works if body is

already dead, not on someone in a Death State, and has no effect on the living.

- ✦ **Corpse Recreation (Yang + Crafts):** A body that has been utterly destroyed or even reduced to ash can be returned to its former state, even if reduced to ash with Corpse Disposal. This recreates the corpse it once was.
- ✦ **Reanimate Person (Yang + Empathy):** Must have Reanimate Beast and Death Gaze. Like Reanimate Beast, the ninja now temporarily brings a person back from the grave. The corpse is under the ninja's complete control and, if reanimated within 6 hours of death, retains the knowledge and personality they had when alive. This allows the ninja to ask questions or interrogate the dead person. If dead for longer than 6 hours, they are only mindless zombies. If utilized as weapons of war, use the target's previous stats with a -3 penalty to all checks or rules for Average Citizens (NC2E, pg. 159). Lasts for up to 2 minutes per success.
- ✦ **The Dead Know Secrets (Yin + Persuade):** Must have Voices on the Wind. The ninja asks nearby spirits to retrieve information on their target, reading their aura and listening to conversations. The spirits may then relay the info to the ninja at the end of the Scene, thus granting the ninja a +2 bonus to mental attacks against the target for (successes) days.

### ADVANCED JUTSU

- ✦ **Audience with the Ancestors (Yin + Persuade):** Must have Voices on the Wind and The Dead Know Secrets. The ninja recites a mantra for twenty minutes that summons the spirits of their ancestors. Once they are there, they may seek guidance and ask a number of questions of their ancestors equal to successes gained. The GM should take into account what the ancestors will and won't have knowledge of. Spirits have watched the world secretly and know many things, but they are not omniscient.
- ✦ **Hoard Jutsu (Yang + Crafts):** Must have Reanimate Person. By enacting a ritual beforehand, they may create up to (Yang) zombies at one time when using Reanimate



Beast or Reanimate Person.

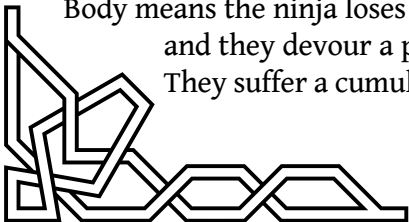
- ✦ **Infuse Corpse (Yang + Perception):** Must have Death Gaze. The ninja collects their Yang ki and infuses a corpse with it, making the body volatile. Anytime within the next ten minutes, the ninja can make it explode with an Action, inflicting 4 damage that ignores 2 levels of Armor to everything within Close Range. If the body is not ignited within the allotted time, the body automatically disintegrates and leaves no trace.
- ✦ **Reanimate Self (Yang + Discipline):** Must have Death Immunity, Death State and Reanimate Person. The ninja places a piece of their soul and mind into their Birthstone. This jutsu must be used before the ninja dies or is killed. If this occurs, they continue to be completely aware of their surroundings (but cannot move) and can instantly revive themselves at any time up to 6 hours afterward. Any lost major organs or limbs are also restored. When they are revived, they take on a Revived 5 Condition, where they suffer a -1 penalty to all checks and cannot mold Yang ki for as long as this Condition continues. This Condition cannot be removed or lowered by the Holistics Skill.
- ✦ **Spirit Shock (Yang + Marksman):** Must have The Dead Know Secrets. The ninja releases a wave of spiritual energy to hit everyone and everything within Near Range for an unblockable 2 damage. Their activation check is their attack, and Boosts are treated normally.

## WAY OF THE HIVE BODY

**Element:** Wood

**Training:** The Grim Creepers train by hollowing out large portions of their body to keep their hives of suu. Their insects become a living epicenter of their power, without which they would feel incomplete. On a Boost during activation, the ninja gains a +2 bonus to their next Way of the Hive Body activation.

**Backfire:** Failure while using the Way of the Hive Body means the ninja loses control over his comrades and they devour a part of his body as a result. They suffer a cumulative -1 Fortitude penalty.



## CHAPTER FOUR - SEEDS TO BE PLANTED *BASIC JUTSU*

- ✦ **Bug Bomb (Yang + Discipline):** The ninja infuses one of their suu with enough Yang to make the bug grow to the size of a fist. They can then send it to a location and detonate it with an Action to inflict 2 damage that ignores Armor up to a 10 foot radius. The suu is considerably larger and slower, so the ninja may need to make appropriate Stealth checks to position it for traps. Others simply throw them at a pack of enemies. On a Boost, the suu stays small, making Stealth checks unnecessary.
- ✦ **Empowered by the Hive (Yang + Fortitude):** The Grim Creeper calls to their suu to fully inhabit his body, drawing from their collective strength to become stronger. The ninja gains +2 Strength and +2 Initiative for (successes) Rounds or until they decide to release their suu.
- ✦ **Gifted Wings (Yang + Survival):** The ninja commands the suu to their hands and feet, giving them limited hovering ability that allows them to go (Yang +10) feet in the air and move at +5 Movement. While hovering, they also receive a +1 bonus to Dodge, but due to their bugs' locations, they cannot hold weapons. Lasts for the Scene or Battle.
- ✦ **Under the Skin (Yin + Stealth):** The ninja plants one of their bugs under the skin of their target with a Touch. While the bug settles undetectably, it secretly lowers the target's Initiative by 1. The bug can stay under the skin for up to (successes) hours.
- ✦ **Words in the Sky (Yin + Crafts):** This fundamental ability allows the ninja to use the suu to deliver messages. A stream of bugs can be sent to a location to then form into kanji for their message. The stream can be small and up close or even large enough to give silent messages to anyone viewing them in the sky for (successes) miles.

## *MEDIAJAN JUTSU*

- ✦ **Barrier Devourer (Yin + Survival):** The ninja sends their suu to devour objects in their way (i.e. doors, walls, etc.), regardless of what it is crafted from. They inflict 2 damage per Round to any non-living target, ignoring all Armor until the object is completely devoured. In combat,



## CHAPTER FOUR - SEEDS TO BE PLANTED

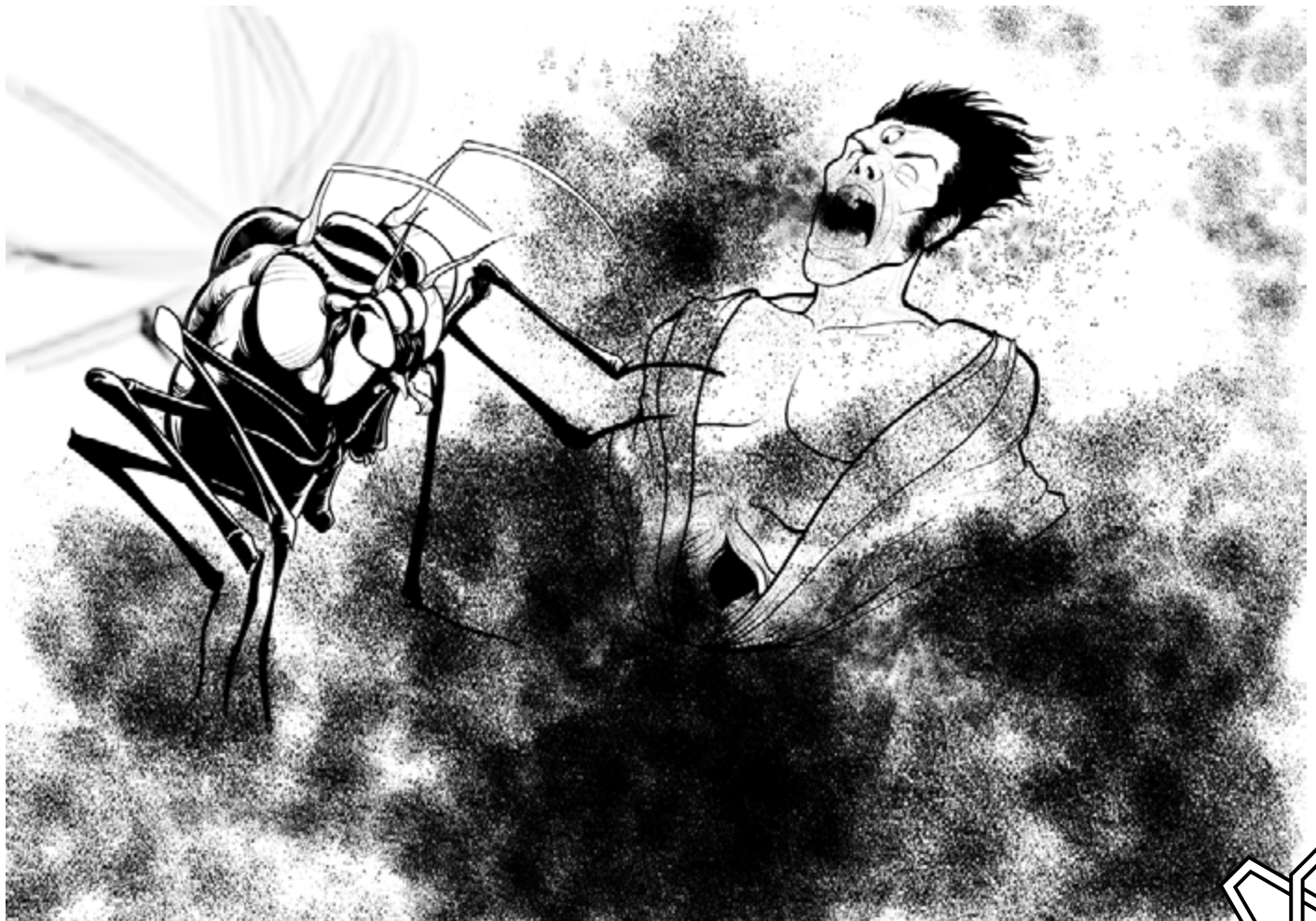
this jutsu is effective at disarming an opponent or devouring their armor, but requires a successful Marksman + Speed check at a -2 penalty. Does not affect enchanted, magic or master-crafted weapons. On a Boost, the suu inflict 4 damage per Round, devouring twice as fast.

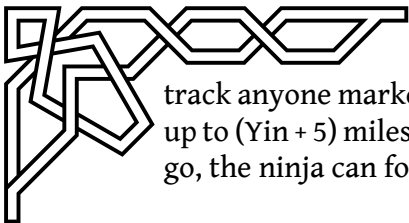

- ✦ **Insect Cloud (Yang + Intimidation):** Must have Words in the Sky. The ninja summons up several thousand suu, released from orifices all over their body, and expels them in a cloud that surrounds them up to (Yang x10) feet in all directions. The barrage of insects obscures vision and crawls in the ears, nose and mouth of anyone within range. Anyone in the area suffers a -2 penalty to checks (not including Grapple or jutsu activation checks), but does not affect the ninja. Lasts for (successes) Rounds. On a Boost, all victims must make a Moderate (2) Fortitude check each Round or they suffer a cumulative Poison 1 Condition.

- ✦ **Insect Spiral (Yang + Marksman):** The ninja launches a spiraling torrent of suu that sharpens to a point as it descends upon an enemy within Near Range. This inflicts 2 damage and forces a Moderate (2) Fortitude check against Poison that inflicts another 2 damage if they fail.

- ✦ **Mask of Insects (Yin + Fortitude):** The ninja's body erupts with suu who rip their flesh away, revealing a mixture of blood, bone and viscera crawling with bugs. Onlookers must make a Discipline + Empathy check against Fear with a Difficulty equal to the ninja's (Yin) or they suffer 1 mental damage and an Afraid 1 Condition. On a Boost, the Afraid Condition is raised to Level 3.

- ✦ **Track the Female (Yin + Perception):** Must have Under the Skin. The female suu release a certain pheromone only detectable by the males of their species. This allows the ninja to use their suu to





track anyone marked with Under the Skin for up to (Yin + 5) miles. Regardless of where they go, the ninja can follow them.

## ADVANCED JUTSU

- ✦ **Into your Heart (Yang + Survival):** Must have Under the Skin. The embedded suu may crawl its way to the enemy's heart, their emotional center, and cause them to look at the ninja favorably. This causes 1 mental damage and both a Convinced 1 and Confused 1 Condition. On a Boost, both Conditions are raised to level 2.
- ✦ **Ki-Gobblers (Yin + Intimidation):** Must have Barrier Devourer. The ninja sends a cloud of suu to attack their opponent, swirling around and biting them. Their activate check is their attack, and the suu's ravenous appetite for flesh inflicts 1 physical and 1 mental damage, ignoring up to 2 points of Armor. In addition, the bugs devour 1 Yin or 1 Yang. On a Boost, this lost ki is transferred to the ninja.
- ✦ **Multiply Attack (Yang + Intimidation):** Must have Under the Skin and Insect Cloud. The ninja targets someone they used Under the Skin on already and causes that imbedded suu to multiply a thousand times over inside the victim's body. This causes an instant 3 physical damage, which cannot be negated, and causes a Bruised 1 and Deprived 1 Condition as they burrow out.
- ✦ **Swarm Form (Yang + Fortitude):** Must have Gifted Wings. The ninja transforms into a swarm of a thousand suu, taking off into the air. This allows them to enter areas unknown to humans and evade most physical attacks outright. They can still speak in this form, but their voice sounds like the hum of a thousand insect wings. They can travel at 3x their Movement and can fly as high as any other insect. If even a single of their suu swarm exists, they cannot be killed. However, if large portions of their swarm are slain, they may reform with missing limbs or horrible scars (GM's choice). This also gives them a +2 Intimidation for the Scene.

- ✦ **10,000 Eyes (Yin + Perception):** Must have Words in the Sky. The ninja sends hundreds of thousands of suu in every direction

## CHAPTER FOUR - SEEDS TO BE PLANTED

up to (Yin) miles. They can then sync their vision and hearing to the bugs, allowing the ninja to scout their surroundings or view inside places unreachable by humans. Some consider this the ultimate sensory ability, as it gives extrasensory abilities for miles and miles.

## WAY OF MOLDED BONES

**Element:** Fire

**Training:** The Splendid Chameleons bathe themselves in potions that create bones and flesh that can be easily manipulated by their jutsu. On a Boost during activation, their body becomes even more flexible, granting a cumulative +1 Athletics bonus.

**Backfire:** Failure during use of the Way of Molded Bones hurts the ninja, causing 1 physical damage (cannot be negated) or a Bruised 1 Condition (player choice).

## BASIC JUTSU

- ✦ **Bending Body (Yang + Athletics):** The ninja is able to contort their body, bending their joints in all directions, allowing them to fit into small spaces and move in impossible ways. This provides +2 Athletics for actions like releasing themselves from any chains or other binding. Lasts for the Scene. If used in Battle, they receive a +1 bonus to any Parry or Dodge checks for 1 Round.
- ✦ **Bone Capture (Yin + Fortitude):** When an opponent attacks the ninja, they can spontaneously sprout bones that break through their skin as their Defense. The bones entangle the attacker's weapon or limb, and the two are now in a Grapple. The bones retract when the Entangle is done or the ninja wants to let go. On a Boost, the attacker is disarmed once the bones retract.
- ✦ **Defense of Holes (Yin + Speed):** When targeted by any weapon, the ninja can shift their body to avoid the attack. They create holes in their body for arrows to pass, kunai and even swords to fly through by shifting their flesh, bone and organs. The ninja receives a +2 bonus to all Defense checks against Ranged weapons and a +1 bonus against Close Combat attacks. Lasts for (successes) Rounds.

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- ✦ **Malleable Flesh (Yang + Perform):** The ninja makes their skin completely malleable to allow them to change their facial features or create artful displays with their body. With this they may give themselves a +1 bonus to Persuade or Intimidation (choose one), based on how they change themselves. Obviously, most also require a mirror or an assistant to get their shapes just right. These changes stay in place for up to about half a day.
- ✦ **Stretch Attack (Yang + Fighting):** The ninja can stretch their bones and skin to deliver martial arts blows at a distance, taking advantage of extended limbs. The ninja's activation check is their attack, and they may attack enemies within Near Range and deal +1 damage. Lasts the Scene or Battle.

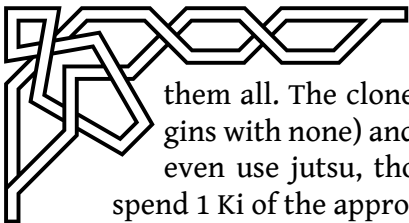
### MEDIAN JUTSU

- ✦ **Bone Weapons (Yang + Fortitude):** Must have Bone Capture. The ninja produces a weapon from their own bones that splits their skin and ejects itself into their hand. They can create any type of weapon instantly, but each one gains the Piercing Quality in addition to any it already has.
- ✦ **Change of Face (Yang + Crafts):** Must have Malleable Flesh. The ninja learns to instantly mold their face to appear as another person. By touching a target's face, they can even take on exact facial features, skin color, speech patterns and even their accent. Cannot be used to change their gender.
- ✦ **Flesh Servant (Yang + Crafts):** Must have Stretch Attack. The ninja can create a servant from their own flesh. By pulling off a hand, an arm or a leg, they can transform it into a small creature they now control. A hand may form into a spider or mouse, while a leg may turn into the equivalent to a dog. Pulling off multiple limbs adds mass and can create larger animal types, like large cats. These servants can be used to attack, to deliver messages or even just to separate the ninja from a cuffed hand if necessary. If the creature is defeated, it falls limp, and the ninja must rejoin the flesh to themselves. If it is destroyed, the ninja loses that limb permanently.

- ✦ **Mend Wounds (Yin + Fortitude):** Must have Bending Body. The ninja with complete control of their flesh can instantly mend torn flesh, removing bruises, cuts or scars. They regain 3 Health and receive a (Yin) bonus against Poison, Disease and Pain for the Battle.
- ✦ **Sweet Fragrances (Yin + Persuade):** The ninja infuses their pores with ki, releasing a sweet smelling pheromone into the air. Anyone within (Yin x10) feet who inhales the fumes must make a Fortitude check against poison and against the ninja's activation check. On a failure, the victims' senses are dulled, giving them a -2 penalty to all checks for (successes) Rounds. The pheromones also act as a hyper-sexualizing agent, making victims lose their inhibitions (penalty raised to -3 to resist Seduction).

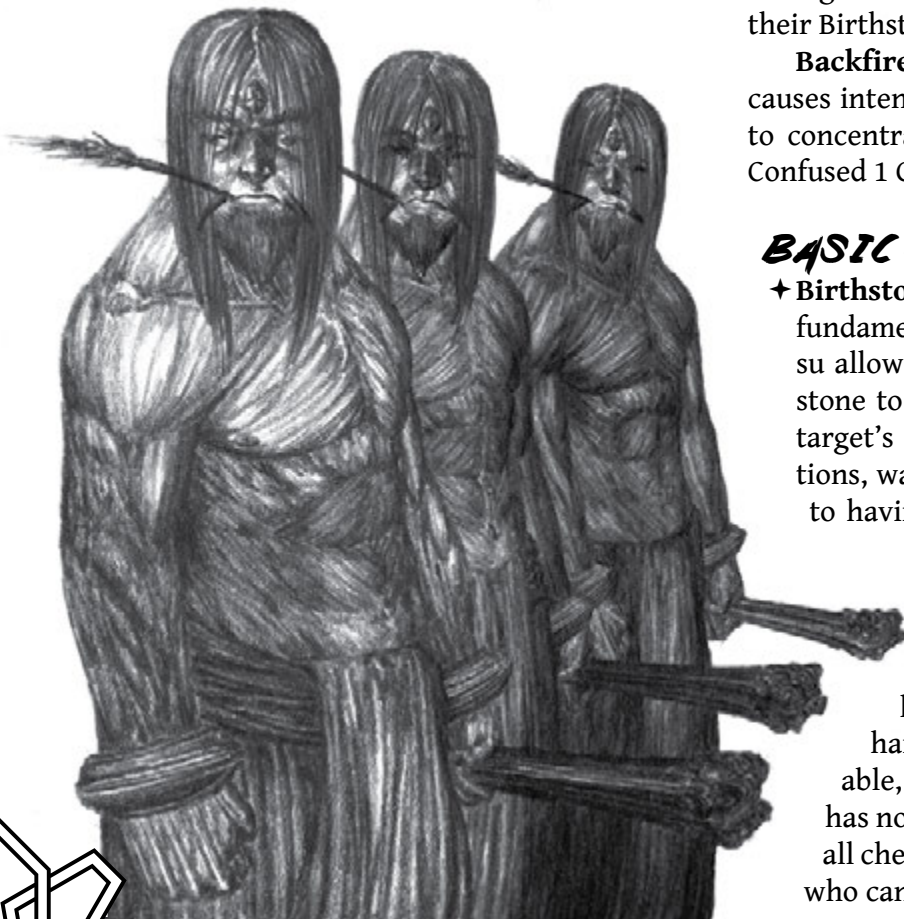
### ADVANCED JUTSU

- ✦ **Bone for Blood (Yang + Intimidation):** Must have Bone Weapons. For the rest of the Battle, the ninja's bones are ready for the counterattack. Any time they are physically attacked, their skeleton fires a boney spike at the attacker, who must immediately make a Tough (3) Defense roll or take 1 damage. On a Boost, the Defense Difficulty raises to Challenging (4).
- ✦ **Clone Technique (Yang + Fortitude):** Must have Flesh Servant. The most powerful showing of a Chameleon's art is to accurately replicate themselves. The clone requires a strip of skin ripped from the ninja's body that then pulsates for 1 Round and grows into their copy. Some use it to put on shows without needing additional actors to fill all the roles, while more aggressive ninjas use the Clone Technique to gain an edge against their enemy in just about any fight. Use of this jutsu creates an exact clone of the ninja with the same Skills and abilities as the ninja. If they are split up and the clone is destroyed, the ninja retains any information learned, making it great for spy missions with great danger. In combat, the clone receives its own Initiative, but suffers -2 to all combat checks. If they create more than one, this penalty increases by 1 for each additional clone and applies to



them all. The clone holds its own ki (but begins with none) and can mold to gain more or even use jutsu, though they always have to spend 1 Ki of the appropriate type to use.

- ✦ **Flesh Stealing Technique (Yin + Crafts):** Must have Mend Wounds. The ninja primes their touch to extract fleshy material from the target of their attack. For their next attack, damage dealt can be exchanged for inflicting an Injured Condition (equal to damage done, up to Level 5). The ninja can then use that damage (again, up to 5) to directly recover Health, can lower their own physical Conditions or can regrow lost limbs (2 points for a hand, 3 points for an arm or 4 points for a leg).
- ✦ **Gender Switch (Yin or Yang + Fortitude):** Must have Change of Face. A favorite technique of the Splendid Chameleons, the ninja forces an instant transformation of their body to the opposite gender. It is quick and permanent, requiring another use of the jutsu to change back. 1 Ki must be spent



## CHAPTER FOUR - SEEDS TO BE PLANTED

during activation to seal its power; Yang is used to turn into a man and Yin is used to turn into a woman. This change is not superficial, as the ninja actually “becomes” the opposite gender – even for the purposes of reproduction.

- ✦ **Putrid Stench (Yin + Persuade):** Must have Sweet Fragrances. Instead of making the air sweet, the ninja instead fills the air with a rancid aroma. Animals immediately run from the scene, unless commanded to stay by their owners. People caught in the cloud must make a Tough (3) Fortitude check against poison or they take a Dazed 2 Condition and also can do nothing save flee the area.

## WAY OF SHARDS

**Element:** Earth

**Training:** The training regimen undertaken by Crystal Bearers requires years of focusing to connect with their Birthstone. For this reason, on a Boost during activation, the ninja receives a +1 bonus to their Birthstone Gift for the Scene.

**Backfire:** A failure when using the Way of Shards causes intense mental discomfort and makes it hard to concentrate. They suffer 1 mental damage or a Confused 1 Condition (player choice).

## BASIC JUTSU

- ✦ **Birthstone Knowledge (Yin + Perception):** The fundamental jutsu of the Crystal Bearers, this jutsu allows the ninja to peer into another’s Birthstone to see their soul. They instantly learn the target’s name and their most immediate intentions, wants, needs and desires. This jutsu is key to having a strong negotiating position, granting a +2 bonus to social checks.

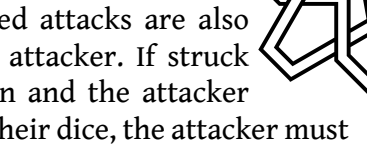
- ✦ **Crystal Weapon (Yang + Crafts):** The ninja creates an instant crystal weapon within their hands to be used in Battle. The crystal is harder than steel and practically unbreakable, though it vanishes the moment the ninja has no use for it. The ninja enjoys a +1 bonus to all checks using the weapon, but is the only one who can wield it.

## CHAPTER FOUR - SEEDS TO BE PLANTED

- ✦ **Focused Journey (Yin + Perception):** By glimpsing into their mind's eye, their birthstone shows the correct path they should take and makes for safe travels. With each use of this jutsu, the ninja gains a +1 Bonus for checks during the Ocean or River stage of a Journey (NC2E, pg. 138).
- ✦ **Swirling Eyes (Yin + Perception):** The ninja looks into their target's eyes as their own begin to swirl and shine. The target resists with Discipline + Speed against the ninja's activation check, and suffers a Confused 2 Condition if they fail, as their world spins and shifts out of focus.
- ✦ **Swirling Shards (Yang + Crafts):** The ninja creates crystal from thin air, making it swirl around them to great effect. They can receive a +1 bonus to Block for (successes) Rounds. They can conversely choose to roll Marksman + Intuition to launch the floating edges and deal 2 damage. Throwing the shards as darts uses 1 Round of their defensive bonuses.

### MEDIAN JUTSU

- ✦ **The Crystal Within (Yang + Fortitude):** The ninja's skin peels off to reveal a being of pure crystal underneath. In this new form, the ninja gains additional Health equal to successes gained, as well as +1 Fortitude and +1 Stealth.
- ✦ **Reflection Stance (Yin + Perception):** Must have Shimmering Barrier. The ninja surrounds themselves and their target with a series of (Yin) crystal mirrors that show the ninja's image. Suddenly, the target cannot differentiate the ninja from the reflections around them, giving the ninja a +4 bonus to combat rolls and Initiative. If their opponent attacks the mirrors, they can break them by doing 3 damage, with each broken mirror reducing the ninja's bonus by 1. However, attacks on any of the mirrors are considered attacks on the ninja and can be defended against normally.
- ✦ **Shimmering Barrier (Yang + Crafts):** Must have Swirling Shards. The ninja summons forth a reflective barrier made of crystal up to (Yang x25) feet long. Many use this jutsu to seal off entryways or stop advancing attacks. Not only is the wall incredibly strong, possessing (Yang x3)

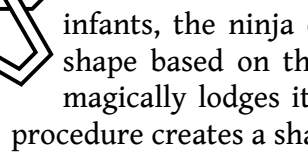


Health, but any ranged attacks are also reflected back to the attacker. If struck with a ranged weapon and the attacker rolls any 1 results on their dice, the attacker must then defend against their own attack. This does not affect Close Combat attacks.

- ✦ **Spikes From Below (Yang + Marksman):** Must have Swirling Shards. The ninja transforms the very earth beneath their target into crystal shards that rise with deadly sharpness. When this occurs, the ground shifts ever so slightly, giving their target warning and the chance to get out of the way. The ninja's activation is their attack, and the target may only Dodge or use jutsu to Defend. If the attack lands, it deals 3 damage and the spikes, now lodged in the target's skin, also lower their Initiative by 2 for the Round.
- ✦ **Window to the Soul (Yin + Perception):** Must have Birthstone Knowledge. By peering into a Birthstone, the ninja may see everything their target has seen, said or done within the last (Yin) days.

### ADVANCED JUTSU

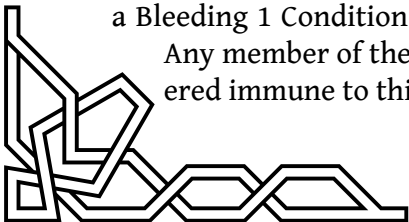
- ✦ **Encase (Yin + Crafts):** Must have Shimmering Barrier. This jutsu allows the ninja to encase almost anything within a crystal cocoon. The ninja need only choose a target, be it another ninja, a rampaging beast or incoming fireball, and it is instantly covered in a crystal carapace (up to 200 square feet). There are legends of ninja squads freezing entire towns within their crystals. Whatever is inside is kept preserved in a state of agelessness for up to (successes) days. In some cases, members of the clan reinforce the cocoon each day to ensure what is inside never escapes. The cocoon is unbreakable from the inside, as the item/being inside remains alive but unmoving. The cocoon has Durability 20 with Armor 4, making it very hard to break it even from the outside. One must be very careful not to damage the contents with too much force, as well.
- ✦ **Imbue Birthstone (Yang + Perception):** Must have Window to the Soul. The ninja at this level is able to bless another with a Birthstone of their very own. Usually performed on



infants, the ninja chooses the best cut and shape based on the child's personality and magically lodges it into their forehead. The procedure creates a sharp pain while the jewel is placed, but is painless afterward. If the subject is willing, this jutsu can be performed even on an adult, thus removing their Elemental nature and replacing it with a Birthstone (pg. 62). This ritual is an important piece of the Land of Seed and Blossom culture and isn't performed lightly.

- ✦ **Lights in the Sky (Yin + Perception):** The ninja releases a number of crystal molecules into the sky, making the entire area glitter and shine. It becomes the playground of the Blossom ninja, not allowing anyone without a Birthstone to Mold or spend Ki for a number of Rounds equal to successes gained. If up against a domestic enemy, the Difficulty for jutsu activations for everyone but the Blossom ninja using Lights in the Sky is raised by 1.
- ✦ **Release True Power (Yang + Perception):** Must have Imbue Birthstone. The Crystal Bearers have learned to release a seal on their birthstone, becoming a wondrous sight to behold. The ninja's skin glows and their eyes become the same kind of jewel they have upon their forehead. They immediately recover any damage they may have taken, lower any Conditions by 2, and receive a +4 bonus to all combat checks and +2 to non-combat checks for the Scene. They can freely use any jutsu with a +3 bonus to their activation check, and automatically resist Fear for the duration. When the effect ends, they suffer a Recovering 3 Condition which gives them a -2 penalty to all checks, as the unrestricted power takes a toll on their body. This Condition cannot be lowered by the Holistics skill.
- ✦ **Spikes From Above (Yang + Marksman):** Must have Swirling Shards. Large spikes grow from the ground and fire into the air where they shatter into a thousand falling shards. Anyone within a (Yang x20) feet radius takes 3 damage and suffers a Bleeding 1 Condition if they fail their Defense.

Any member of the Crystal Bearers is considered immune to this effect.



## CHAPTER FOUR - SEEDS TO BE PLANTED

### WAY OF UNENDING BLIGHT

**Element:** Metal

**Training:** The ninja's almost constant contact with various sicknesses has given them a deep understanding. On a Boost, they may raise or lower the Diseased Condition of someone within Near Range by 1.

**Backfire:** A failure while using the Way of Unending Blight leaves the ninja weakened to other outside forces, suffering a cumulative -1 Might penalty.

### BASIC JUTSU

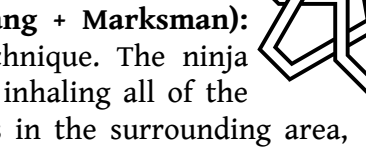
- ✦ **Aura of Sickness (Yin + Crafts):** The ninja develops an eerie feeling to their very presence, making it harder for others to be around them. They gain +1 Intimidation, and may automatically cause an Afraid 1 Condition with a Boost.
- ✦ **Disease Dissolution (Yin + Holistics):** With a touch, the ninja instantly dissolves any trace of sickness from their target, removing all Diseased Conditions. In addition, the target receives a +2 bonus to any new resistance checks against Disease for 1 day. If used on a sickness made by Pox Creation, it can only reduce the Condition by 1 per usage and cannot be attempted more than once per Session.
- ✦ **Overwhelm Poison (Yin + Fortitude):** The ninja fills their body with sickness, which eliminates any Poison Conditions they are currently suffering. On a Boost, this eliminates Dosed Conditions as well.
- ✦ **Sense Disease (Yin + Intuition):** The ninja hones their mastery of disease to sense if there is any sickness in the surrounding area within (Yin -1 mile). They can sense a child with a cough, someone dying of a wasting sickness, anyone with the Diseased Condition or even a bug carrying a vile plague. This jutsu doesn't pinpoint the source or type of sickness, but the ninja receives +2 Survival to track it down.
- ✦ **Spoil Technique (Yang + Crafts):** With a look, this jutsu spoils food and other perishables. It is the first step in harnessing the power of disease for a Pox. Spoiling a plate of fruit could make it instantly rotten, while spoiling fresh meat could produce maggots chewing through it. If spoiled

## CHAPTER FOUR - SEEDS TO BE PLANTED

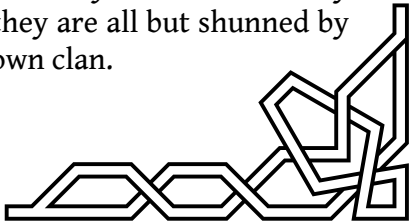
food is eaten, the target must make an Opposed Disease check against the ninja's activation check. On a Boost, they may affect a room, silo or other large amount of food at one time.

### MEDIAN JUTSU

- ✦ **Plague Transference Gem (Yin + Holistics):** Must have Disease Dissolution. A deceptively simple jutsu, it allows the ninja to remove the sickness from their target without destroying it. Instead, the disease is extracted in the form of a swirling magical crystal, not unlike the Blossom Birthstones. The target is left healthy, and the ninja has a new weapon to add to their arsenal. By touching the crystal to another's skin, their victim begins to feel the effects of the sickness at the stage their subject previously had. For instance, someone touched with a crystal forged from someone in the final stages of a wasting disease (Diseased 5) would instantly find themselves in the final stages as well. The Pox are believed to have farms of sick people from whom they harness the most potent gems possible.
- ✦ **Rotting Technique (Yin + Crafts):** The ninja degrades something not normally perishable. Metal might be rusted, while the earth that sustains a stone wall may loosen. This change renders a -1 penalty on the item for a number of uses equal to success gained. For instance, an enemy may suffer a -1 penalty to strike with a rusty blade or a wall will lose 1 Armor, making it weaker. On a Boost, the item takes a -2 penalty instead.
- ✦ **Secret Carrier (Yin + Holistics):** Must have Disease Dissolution. The ninja can suppress the effects of a target's Diseased Condition for the Scene, allowing them to feel as good as new. For the next (successes) days, everyone the target comes in contact with must make a Moderate (2) Fortitude check against Disease or they will take on the same disease (Yin) days later. When the duration ends, the Diseased Condition returns to target and is doubled (both the level and its effects).

- 
- ✦ **Sick Lung Blast (Yang + Marksman):** Must have Spoil Technique. The ninja takes a deep breath, inhaling all of the bacteria and sickness in the surrounding area, and then expels it in a torrent of disease-laced wind. The attack hits anyone in up to a 20 foot cone in front of the ninja. Those affected must succeed in a contested Fortitude check against the ninja's activation or instantly take 2 damage and suffer a Diseased 1 Condition.
  - ✦ **Sick Strength (Yang + Fortitude):** Must have Overwhelm Poison. The ninja absorbs their target's sickness to increase their physical strength. In times of old, Sick Strength was often used to mow down a town that suffered too slowly for the Pox's liking. When near someone with the Diseased or Poisoned Condition, the ninja simply takes a deep breath to absorb the disease, and for each Condition level taken in, they gain a +1 bonus to combat checks and deal +1 damage. This bonus cannot exceed their current Yang. Lasts for a number of Rounds equal to successes gained.

### ADVANCED JUTSU

- ✦ **Corrupted Land (Yin + Survival):** Must have Sick Strength. The ninja kneels and pounds the earth, sending a wave of diseased ki through the area. Everything within a (Yin x100) feet radius is corrupted; trees wither and die, the ground dries and cracks, the air become stale and water instantly evaporates. This cuts off any ninja's connection to their element, removing any Elemental bonuses (NC2E, pg. 104) they might have received and adding +2 to the Difficulties for any jutsu that directly affect the environment.
  - ✦ **The Dead Tree (Yang + Survival):** Must have Corrupted Land. Before the effects of Corrupted Land have faded, the ninja can viciously extend them to up to a (Yang x2) mile radius, with the ability to completely decimate and entire village's crops and make the area uninhabitable. While powerful, a Pox who uses such a jutsu automatically loses all Contacts, as they are all but shunned by anyone besides their own clan.
- 



## CHAPTER FOUR - SEEDS TO BE PLANTED

### ✦ **Pox Creation (Yang + Holistics):**

Must have Plague Transference Gem and Secret Carrier. The most powerful ability known to Yakubyo's Pox and rumored to be the original source of the Fa Disease, this jutsu lets the ninja create a new disease. After 3 days of chanting and dancing, the ninja imbues a gem with a unique disease of their own design. The player chooses a number of -2 penalties, Level 1 Conditions or 1 damage dealings equal to successes gained, which

are then applied to the victim. The disease takes up to another (6 - Yang) days to take full effect and becomes two Diseased 5 Conditions. One does not start to fade until the other is gone already. This sickness usually lasts until the victim either dies or pays tribute to the Pox to have it removed. This ritual is not undertaken lightly, reserved for those that truly deserve such a fate. Due to the power behind such a jutsu, diseases made with Pox Creation are automatically contagious.

### ✦ **Sick Cloud (Yang +**

**Might):** Must have Plague Transference Gem. The ninja takes a Plague Gem and crushes it in their hand, releasing the sickness into the area as a cloud that extends to everything within Near Range instantly. Everyone within the area automatically suffers a Diseased 2 Condition, unless they have no need to breathe.

### ✦ **Temple of Death (Yin**

**+ Holistics):** Must have Sense Disease. The ninja meditates and extends their senses to an area up to (Yin) miles, pinpointing anyone who has a sickness. The ninja can remove their target's Diseased Conditions and recover damage or Conditions (of any kind) equal to the Condition level cured. Miracles happen when a Pox needs to heal, which leads many to encourage their warfare.







**NEW CONDITION -  
DISEASED**

- ✦ **Diseased:** This Condition is unlike others, in that not all Diseases have the same effect. Some deal periodic damage, while others create mental or physical penalties, and others may cause other Condition effects. The GM (or player, if they are using Pox Creation) chooses the exact effects, including whether it is contagious or not. The Condition level, as always, is how long the effects will last.

**Example Diseases**

**Eternal Bleeding**

This terrible blight strikes the victim's blood system, thinning it and causing recurrent eruptions. The victim always suffers a Bleeding 2 Condition, which cannot be removed until the sickness fades, and they suffer 2 damage on a failed check (instead of 1). This is highly contagious, forcing a Tough (3) Fortitude check against Disease for anyone who comes in contact with the blood.

**Languished Body**

The victim's body begins to eat itself, wasting away. They begin to take 2 damage per day, which cannot be healed through normal means, and suffer a penalty to all checks equal to the Diseased Condition level. Many simply die from this disease before ever receiving treatment. It is only mildly contagious but is transmitted by air, forcing a Simple (1) Fortitude check to resist.

**Wasting Senses**

This Disease is transmitted through any bodily fluids and is feared by many in the Land of Seed and Blossom. Once they fall prey to the Wasting Senses, they suffer a Sensory Loss 4 Condition which affects all senses and cannot be removed until the Diseased Condition fades. The victim is cut off from the world, which can also cause madness. Once someone has suffered from this disease, they are forever a carrier.



**WAY OF VITAL CURRENTS**

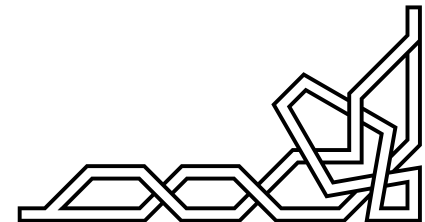
Element: Water

**Training:** Mastery of the Way of Vital Currents means the ninja wields power over life and death itself. Blood is life after all. On a Boost during activation, they gain +1 Intuition, learning how to follow their blood instincts much more clearly.

**Backfire:** Giving into their bodies' desires can often leave them with a muddled mind. They suffer a cumulative -1 Perception for the Scene on a failure.

**BASIC JUTSU**

- ✦ **Adrenaline Technique (Yang + Fortitude):** The ninja gets her own blood pumping, granting +1 Athletics and +1 Might. While this is a fairly simple jutsu for the ninja, they may also spend 1 Yang to use it on someone else.
- ✦ **Blood Darts (Yang + Marksman):** The ninja learns to draw out a small amount of blood from her fingers and fashion it into (Yang) sharpened kunai with the addition of the Brutal Quality. The darts leave only a small bloodstain behind after impact.
- ✦ **Perfect Cleansing (Yang + Fortitude):** The ninja gains the ability to clean the blood of anyone they choose, lowering any Poisoned, Dosed or Diseased Conditions by (Yang). In addition, the target receives +3 Fortitude against Blossom-born Poisons and Disease checks for 1 day.
- ✦ **Sense Bleeding (Yin + Perception):** This jutsu allows the ninja to sense when blood is escaping its living vessel within a half-mile radius. They cannot detect how severely they are bleeding or the cause, however. The ninja can make a Moderate (2) Intuition + Perception to follow their sense to the location of the bleeding. Lasts the Scene.
- ✦ **Stop the Flow (Yin + Discipline):** The ninja concentrates and removes any Bleeding effects from a (Yin x10) foot radius. Damage cannot be converted to Bleeding Conditions for the rest of the Scene.





## MEDIAN JUTSU

- ✦ **Blood Whip (Yang + Fortitude):** Must have Blood Darts. The ninja focuses her ki to form a 7-foot blood Whip from the palm of her hand. On a Boost using this weapon, the ninja can automatically cause a Knockdown effect or Disarm to the target.
- ✦ **Draining Trap (Yin + Survival):** Must have Sense Bleeding. The ninja affects a (Yin x10) foot area within line of sight with their ki. Anyone who passes through this area must make a Tough (3) Fortitude check or take a Bleeding 1 Condition and suffer a -2 penalty to all physical rolls for the Scene.
- ✦ **Draw Out Blood (Yang + Discipline):** Must have Stop the Flow. This jutsu draws blood from the living or freshly dead. When used on the freshly dead, the ninja may draw out as much blood as she likes, often used to fuel other jutsu. On the living, the victim immediately suffers a Bleeding 1 Condition and takes 1 damage instantly. However, their Bleeding Condition raises by +1 per Round. This jutsu requires a Touch action to begin the effect on the target.
- ✦ **Hideous Blood Mask (Yin + Intimidation):** Must have Sense Bleeding. The ninja opens the pores in her neck and face and draws out a thin layer of blood that surrounds her face to fashion into a blood mask of a horrifying image most mortals cannot look at without cowering in fear. Even the act of making the blood mask is a maddening sight to witness. Anyone looking at the mask must make a Moderate (2) check against Fear or suffers an Afraid 2 Condition.
- ✦ **Sacrifice to the Land (Yang + Survival):** Upon killing an opponent, the ninja can enact this jutsu to use their passing spirit to replenish the land with ki. All taps are reset for Molding purposes (NC2E, pg. 91). On a Boost, all friendly ninja within Near Range gain +1 Yang as the land is overflowing with energy.

## CHAPTER FOUR - SEEDS TO BE PLANTED ADVANCED JUTSU

- ✦ **Bending Blood to Will (Yin + Discipline):** Must have Draw Out Blood. The ninja uses the victim's blood to manipulate their ki and bend them to her will. For 1 hour per success, they have complete control of the victim who has only a fuzzy recollection of their actions (remembering requires a Tough (3) Knowledge + Discipline check to get the general impression). If the victim is forced to harm a loved one or Ally, they can attempt an immediate contested Empathy + Discipline check against the Sister's Yin + Discipline. Success means the victim has broken control while defeat means continued servitude. The Sister does not have fine motor control, so the bent person suffers a -2 penalty to all physical rolls. This jutsu does not grant access to memories or what the victim is thinking. It does, however, give the ninja a very limited ability to see through the victim's eyes.
- ✦ **Blood Form (Yang + Fortitude):** Must have Adrenaline Technique. The ninja transforms into a pool of blood and viscera on the ground, capable of moving sluggishly at half their normal Movement. In this form, they are immune to physical damage and may slip under doorways and into areas where others cannot follow. If they are able to make it into a body of water, they then move at Movement x3 instead, as their body fuses with the current.
- ✦ **Blood Mist (Yang + Crafts):** Must have Perfect Cleansing. The ninja collects blood in her throat and expels it into the air as a red mist that obscures vision and provides the perfect smoke-screen for retreat on an ambush. The fog spreads out to everything within Near Range around the Sister, creating a Sensory Loss 3 effect for anyone inside. Victims' bodies are covered in blood, making it difficult to keep a grip on weapons or even stay standing (if on a flat surface). With each Action, victims must make a Moderate (2) Might check to not drop their weapon or Speed check to not slip and fall. The ninja who uses this jutsu is immune and may function without penalty.
- ✦ **Leech Touch (Yin + Fortitude):** Must have Hideous Blood Mask. The ninja can now use another's blood to heal their own wounds. They accomplish this by channeling ki into vulnerable spots on

## CHAPTER FOUR - SEEDS TO BE PLANTED

a living being. When these unarmed strikes hit, the ninja drains an amount of blood out directly through their skin. This jutsu lasts 1 minute and gives the ninja +1 Fighting while active. Any damage dealt is recovered by the ninja. They cannot go above maximum Health using this technique.

- ✦ **Sacrifice to the Ancestors (Yin + Survival):** Must have Sacrifice to the Land. The ninja calls out the spirits of their ancestors, knowing they are fully listening to their cries and helping them along their path to destiny. For rest of the Battle, every time physical damage is taken (by either the ninja or their enemies), the group gains 1 Karma, as the ancestors give favor in exchange for blood.

## NEW CELESTIAL ANIMALS

### BATS

**Element:** Wood

**Skill:** Perception

Celestial Bats are masters of observation. They often perceive things that most would overlook as inconsequential. Eavesdropping is second nature, but Summoners often make good use of their talents by employing them as spies and gatherers of information. Celestial Bats can often be found flying around their ninja, sleeping in a pocket or in the skies above closely surveying the situation and gathering as much information as they can in order to report back.

- ✦ **Trigger - Giving Away Positions:** Even the best spies crack under pressure. Gain 1 Karma when your animal fumbles a stealth mission.

### HOSHIKO (MAJOR WARRIOR)

About twice the size of his lesser counterparts, Hoshiko is a black bat with vaguely humanoid arms and legs and an almost obsessive need to know as much as possible about everyone's goings on. This information is gathered any way possible, including through purchasing information, or trading select bits of intelligence with those who may know some

juicy bit of gossip. Hoshiko has the ability to remain virtually undetected if he so chooses, disappearing into shadow or becoming semi-invisible himself, a technique he frequently uses when following some-one from the air. Hoshiko is extremely friendly and chatty to the point that people often find themselves engrossed in conversation for hours about the most mundane topics. After a while though, he will appear to lose interest and will go off to investigate something else. It is then that the person may realize that throughout the conversation they learned relatively nothing about Hoshiko himself, but they have given some secret or critical piece of information as easily as a cheerful hello. Hoshiko is usually attracted to people who love the art of conversation. A potential Summoner can gain his attention by either giving him a valuable piece of information or juicy piece of gossip about an influential figure. Hoshiko also recognizes and respects those who can manipulate a conversation with him in which he lets slip any of his own valuable information, a feat which has been known to happen only a few times.

**Health:** 6

**Psyche:** 11

**Attack:** 5

**Actions:** 2

**Defense:** 8

**Armor:** 1

**Initiative:** 8

**Damage:** +0

**Dynamic Actions:** 1

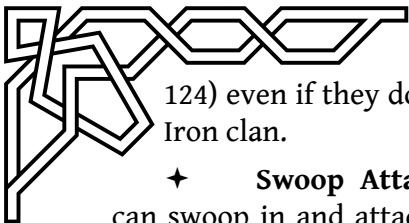
**Suggested Skills (5 dice):** Athletics, Crafts, Empathy, Knowledge, Perception, Stealth (at night), Survival, Travel

### TECHNIQUES

Speed (+), Stealth (+), Fighting (-); Hoshiko stays in the air and hides from most battles, knowing that he is doomed if pitted against a real fighter.

### MARTIAL ARTS

- ✦ **Jutsu:** Hoshiko knows any four jutsu (GM or player choice) from the Way of Beasts and Way of Movement, especially the extrasensory jutsu.
- ✦ **Spotting the Liar:** Hoshiko has spent a long time studying human behavior and relationships and is instantly able to tell if someone is lying. Through his training, his Summoners may learn Deception Proof (NC2E, pg.



124) even if they do not hail from the Will of Iron clan.

✦ **Swoop Attack:** In a pinch, Hoshiko can swoop in and attack, scratching at the eyes and face of his opponent. If he does this and causes at least 1 damage, the victim takes a Sensory Loss 2 Condition.

## GREATER BATS

It is said that Greater Bats have the wingspan to block out the sun. This occurred during the fifth Catastrophe, adding to the already terrible circumstances surrounding the spreading of the Fa Disease. It is said that the ninja coming together at that time to defeat Suzu, the Greater Bat, was a unifying moment and led to peace between the clans. Suzu still seeks revenge from that assault.

## BOARS

**Element:** Metal

**Skill:** Intimidation

In the areas of stubbornness and intimidation, the Celestial Boar has nearly no match. Summoners often use them to end a battle before it even starts since the hulking beasts can scare away reluctant foes and battle-worn soldiers alike. Their Summoner can learn these techniques and use them to great effectiveness to get their way. Boars are more level-headed than rams, and are not as prone to swings in mood, but they are extremely set in their ways. In farming communities, it is easy for a mud-caked boar to be overlooked.

✦ **Trigger - Set In My Ways:** There is no way to change the mind of a Celestial Boar. While not prone to angry outbursts, they will simply sit motionless until they receive an apology for the insinuation that they may have been wrong about something. Gain 1 Karma when a disagreement halts progress and causes issues.

## CHAPTER FOUR - SEEDS TO BE PLANTED

### IMASU, THE BOLD (MAJOR MASTER)

Imasu, a giant humanoid boar, is one of the largest of his kind in all of the animal realms, a quality which he will reiterate to whoever will listen as often as he can. At 21-feet tall he certainly is not exaggerating, and it allows him to be the center of attention, which he seems to greatly enjoy. Imasu, the Bold seems to be a self-granted title which seems to fit this confident personality. Every inch of his frame is covered in well-sculpted muscle only some of which is concealed by his long braided beard, and with which he easily hefts a giant iron club that he is rarely seen without. His eyes glow as though his sockets were filled with embers and smoke rushes from his nostrils. His long, curved tusks appear to be wickedly sharp and capped with gold.

Isamu often boasts that he has never lost a battle, which wouldn't be too far from the truth since no one has ever really recalled him ever fighting in one. He appears as though he would be a fearsome warrior, but those wanting to challenge him are almost always frightened away by his mere presence. When he actively tries to be intimidating, legend says that he has made entire armies faint, fall to their knees begging for mercy, or immediately surrender. Some have speculated (not within his earshot) that Imasu himself may even be the source of these legends. To gain the loyalty of the giant warrior, the potential Summoner must be willing to stand up to overwhelming odds with an unflinching resolve. Imasu has been known to side with a Summoner who has stood up for what was right even when the Summoner's life, reputation or credibility was put on the line.

**Health:** 30      **Psyche:** 15  
**Attack:** 10      **Actions:** 2  
**Defense:** 8      **Armor:** 2  
**Initiative:** 6      **Damage:** +2  
**Dynamic Actions:** 1

**Suggested Skills (5 dice):** Athletics, Discipline, Fighting, Fortitude (Drinking), Intimidation, Survival, Travel

### TECHNIQUES

Might (++) , Fighting (+) , Speed (-) , Crafts (-); Imasu is a strength-based fighter, cracking down on his enemies with overwhelming power. He is slow, however, and is often the victim of traps.

## CHAPTER FOUR - SEEDS TO BE PLANTED

### MARTIAL ARTS

- ✦ **Jutsu:** Imasu knows any five jutsu (GM or player choice) from the Way of the Warrior, Way of Survival and Way of Metal. Twist: None.
- ✦ **Styles:** Imasu fights hard and slow, knowing most techniques from Weapon Style: Blunt and Fighting Styles: Rhino and Wildcat. Twist: None.
- ✦ **Immunities:** Imasu isn't for the flair of battle, preferring to rip his enemies apart piece by piece. He is immune to any Afraid, Knockout, Poison and Embarrassed Conditions. While in his presence, Imasu's Summoner gains a +2 bonus to resist any of these effects as well. Twist: None.

## GREATER BOARS

The Plague of Trees was a wondrous time for the Greater Boars, coming down from their Realm and ruling over the young ninja for a short time. Shingen, the Large, stood as tall as the highest tree and many stories tell of a time when all resources came from the boar. Of course, as the third Catastrophe set in, this took on new meaning as boars were hunted almost to their end. Shingen left but has always wanted to return and reinvigorate his worshippers once again.

## FROGS

**Element:** Water  
**Skill:** Holistics

Celestial Frogs come in all shapes and sizes, from bulbous croaking toads to lithe tree frogs. It's natural for an animal whose bile and blood are ingredients to thousands of different potions to be educated in poisons and antidotes. Though Celestial Frogs seem to have a bad attitude toward their Summoner, this can always be culled with a juicy meal of worms and flies. They are quite fond of eating the suu, much to the dismay of the Grim Creepers.

- ✦ **Trigger - Out of Bribes:** Frogs work for food, but a ninja doesn't always have as much as they'd like. Gain 1 Karma when their frog leaves them in a lurch because they ran out of their bribe.





## RAN (MAJOR WARRIOR)

Ran is a large, fat frog about the size of a lion, appearing with stripes of blue and green on her skin. Her long legs can bring her great distances with every jump and she's known for being the best leaper in the Land of Seed and Blossom. Ran's large eyes make it easy to see what's going on all around her and she is quite the busybody. Despite her size, she tries hard to hide and is quite good at blending into her environment. The seat on her back makes her perfect for a rider who has a good grip.

This Celestial Frog is a snooper. Ran takes great joy in following the soap opera that is humanity, watching relationships bloom and wither every day. She is also a compulsive gambler, always trying to get others to bet with her on whether couples will break up or stay together. She's never above nudging the lovers in the right direction to keep her in the black, but a giant talking frog is not something that regular people take lightly. She has become quite good at sneaking around as an alternative.

A ninja must have love in their heart to attract Ran. She has been known to have crushes on a few of her Summoners, but is often too shy to say anything. Instead, she likes to help her Summoners find a human lover, often through poor advice and stunts. A simple kiss on Ran's cheek or some grand gesture of affection to another human can get this riding frog on the ninja's side. She'll never team up with a member of Yakubyo's Pox.

**Health:** 8      **Psyche:** 6  
**Attack:** 6      **Actions:** 1  
**Defense:** 7      **Armor:** 1  
**Initiative:** 7      **Damage:** +1  
**Dynamic Actions:** 1

**Suggested Skills (4 Dice):** Athletics (Jumping), Discipline, Holistics, Persuade, Stealth, Survival, Travel

## CHAPTER FOUR - SEEDS TO BE PLANTED TECHNIQUES

Athletics (+), Speed (+), Fighting (-), Deception (-); Ran is not a trained fighter, but is quite fast and nimble. Against a superior fighter, she fails, however.

### MARTIAL ARTS

- ✦ **Jutsu:** Ran knows any four jutsu (GM or player choice) from the Way of the Water and Way of Survival, in addition to Tiger's Leap from the Way of Movement. Twist: None.
- ✦ **Frog's Leap:** Every jump Ran uses is affected by Tiger's Leap (NC2E, pg. 113), meaning she can move huge distances with a single Action. In her presence, her Summoner has the ability to use this jutsu even if they do not already possess it. If they do know the jutsu already, they may activate it with a +2 bonus.
- ✦ **Take a Seat:** Her riding seat can fit only a single rider at any time, but one Ran jump covers up to 1-mile distance. With each jump, however, the rider must make a Moderate (2) Might + Travel check or they might fall off. Ran knows how to take smaller jumps if the rider is a novice, but loves to fly through the air much more. If used during a Journey, they may skip every other stage.

### GREATER FROGS

When Celestial Frogs get older, it is believed they grow prophetic in their dreams. They begin to look into their own Birthstone and sense the ever changing flow of the universe. No Greater Frog has ever been summoned to Earth, their connection to their own Realm somehow making this impossible. It is thought, however, that if one were to visit Earth, they could control everyone with a Birthstone to do their bidding.

The Izou captain had his soldiers stroll into the village and take over every corner before he set foot within the gate. There was no place he could go where he wouldn't have a set of eyes on him – very important when dealing with this dastardly ninja from the Land of Seed and Blossom. He entered the home of the town leadership and was faced with a beautifully tall woman of bronze skin and ornately arranged hair, her Birthstone shining brightly.

“Hello, captain. I have been expecting you,” she said upon his entrance.

“Shouka Kazumi, I presume?”, he said, careful to keep his hand on his hilt at all times.

“Oh yes, you have not wandered into the wrong home. Please sit and explain to me why you have beset upon my town,” she said, motioning to a pillow to his side. Kazumi quickly poured the good captain a cup of tea from a crystal pot, created to keep it extra hot.

“Quite frankly, we have heard rumors of an Uprising from the Blossom people and your name has come up more than once. Do you have anything to confess?” He said, careful to give the illusion of drinking the possibly poisoned tea that he had no intention of actually swallowing.

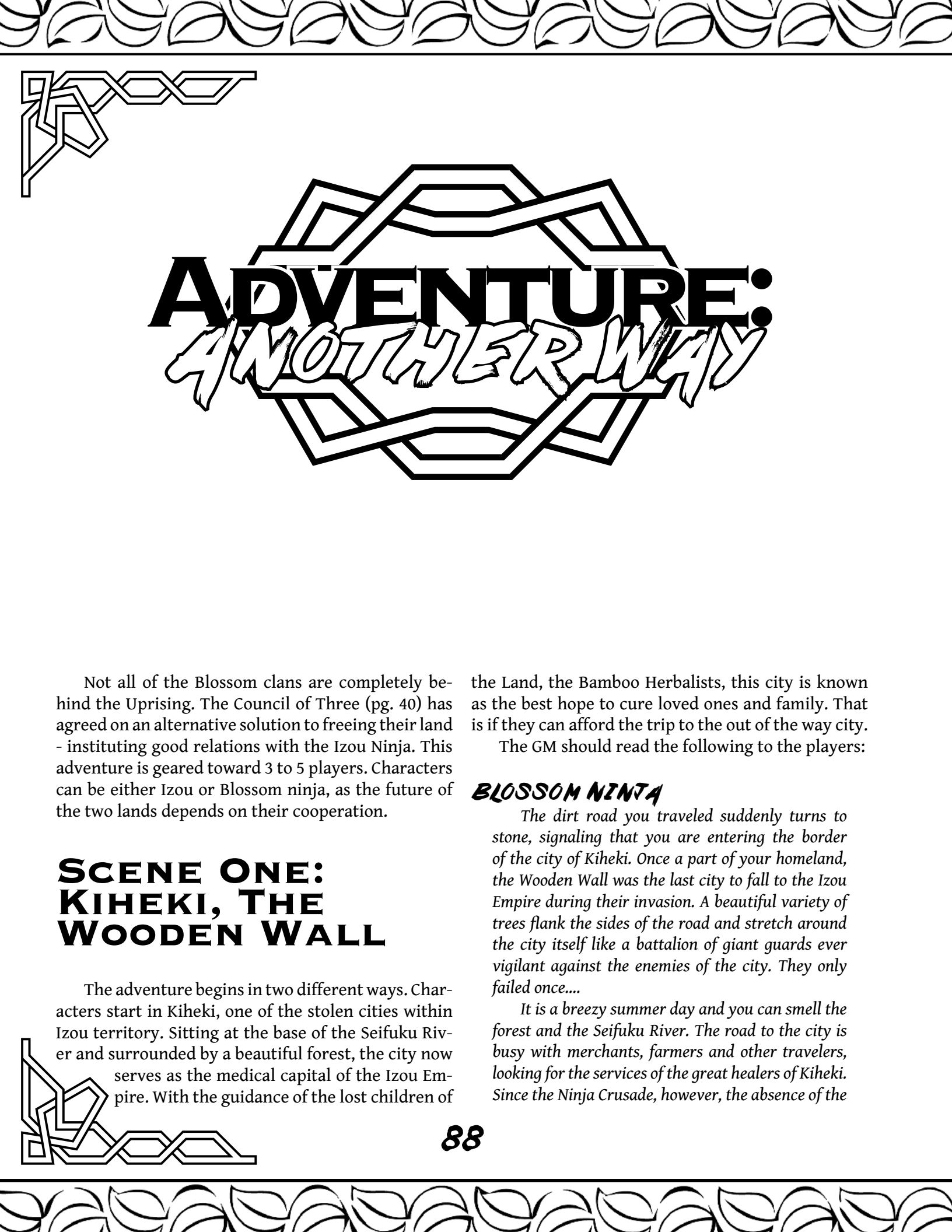
“Why, captain, you've shown your hand much too quickly. This won't be fun at all,” Kazumi said with an off-putting smile. Her Birthstone noticeably dimmed ever so slightly at that moment.

“This is no game. I know you have been doing more in this town than just putting those damn, barbaric crystals into your poor, defenseless children's heads. When I'm through with this town and I've made you watch all of these people die, I'll end my day with your hanging, NINJA!” He made sure to carefully time the emphasis on the last word so it held the most power.

Shouka Kazumi's face held an expression of feigned surprise, as she held her hand over her mouth in mocked horror. “Oh no, captain. You certainly got me there. I guess there's nothing I can do.”

The captain smirked, “And you would be right. Guards, burn this place to the ground!” After a moment of no response, the captain called again, “Guard! Guard?” He stood up quickly and rushed to the door, looking outside to see a town completely bare of Izou presence with true shock. All that remained were slowly shrinking spikes made of crystal.

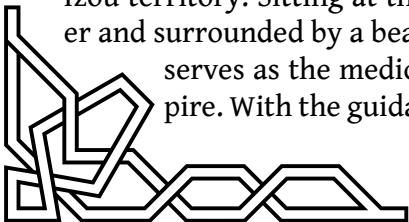
“You thought you had already won, captain. That was your first mistake,” she said as she sliced his throat with a crystal dagger that vanished just as quickly as it appeared. “The Uprising is coming... but no amount of carefulness will save you.”



# ADVENTURE: ANOTHER WAY

Not all of the Blossom clans are completely behind the Uprising. The Council of Three (pg. 40) has agreed on an alternative solution to freeing their land - instituting good relations with the Izou Ninja. This adventure is geared toward 3 to 5 players. Characters can be either Izou or Blossom ninja, as the future of the two lands depends on their cooperation.

## SCENE ONE: KIHEKI, THE WOODEN WALL



The adventure begins in two different ways. Characters start in Kiheki, one of the stolen cities within Izou territory. Sitting at the base of the Seifuku River and surrounded by a beautiful forest, the city now serves as the medical capital of the Izou Empire. With the guidance of the lost children of

the Land, the Bamboo Herbalists, this city is known as the best hope to cure loved ones and family. That is if they can afford the trip to the out of the way city.

The GM should read the following to the players:

### **BLOSSOM NINJA**

*The dirt road you traveled suddenly turns to stone, signaling that you are entering the border of the city of Kiheki. Once a part of your homeland, the Wooden Wall was the last city to fall to the Izou Empire during their invasion. A beautiful variety of trees flank the sides of the road and stretch around the city itself like a battalion of giant guards ever vigilant against the enemies of the city. They only failed once....*

*It is a breezy summer day and you can smell the forest and the Seifuku River. The road to the city is busy with merchants, farmers and other travelers, looking for the services of the great healers of Kiheki. Since the Ninja Crusade, however, the absence of the*



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*Bamboo Herbalists has begun to erode the quality of the care one can receive.*

*You are on a mission to meet Ika Kaijin, a member of the Bamboo Herbalists and a noble in the city. He works as an advisor to the governor and is a double agent for the Lotus Coalition. The Council of Three hopes to settle the Uprising with help from the Izou ninja and that is why they sent the characters to deliver their message. The Council has offered mutual respect and help to the Izou ninja for months, in the mutual cause of defeating the Izou Empire.*

*The front gate to the city is now very close. A small line has developed as Izou soldiers check people in. It is a good thing that Kaijin has provided official papers to enter the city or other means would have had to been taken to enter the city. You wait your turn and soon the guards get to you. You show your papers and the guards motion for the gate to be opened, eyeing your Birthstones and strange garb the whole time. The beautiful city of Kiheki opens up before you!*

## LOTUS COALITION NINJA

*You have been in Kiheki for two days, as the Lotus Coalition was very clear that they wanted to be properly prepared for the guests that are arriving today. You have been staying at the home of Ika Sino, a popular artist in the city and also a member of the Bamboo Herbalists. She is a comely young woman of 24 years of age, usually dressed in a simple kimono with her hair tied up. Her house is very spacious and many of her paintings line the walls of the estate. The best thing about the house is the strategic view of the gates of Kiheki, which led the Coalition to choose this house as the meeting place. Sino, being the daughter of Ika Kaijin, also had a lot to do with it as well, opting to have the meeting here for the view and the fact that Sino has many visitors to see her work. No one would question visitors to Sino's house, not even foreign visitors.*

*As soon as the delegation from the Blossom Ninja enters the gates you will know. Almost as if Heaven had fated it to be, the gates of the Wooden Wall slide open to let a new influx of travelers in as this thought runs through the group. The man looking through the spyglass beside the group nods his head. The Blossom ambassadors are hard to spot in the*

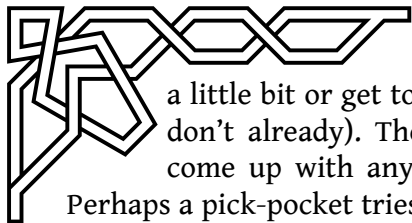
*crowd of travelers but they do not blend in perfectly. It seems it is time to prepare for your guests and see what this requested audience is all about.*

Kiheki is a medium-sized city mostly under the control of the Bamboo Herbalists, though they have stayed out of the public eye since the Ninja Crusade began. Their mark remains, however, as the city is the home to some of the greatest medical minds in the Izou Empire. A large wooden wall is built in a semi-circle shape around the only official entrance into the city besides the docks and much of the city is protected by Herbalist traps and illusions. One of the reasons the Wooden Wall was the last city to fall was the fact that it is so easy to defend. Farms and small residences litter the land right outside and inside the wall. The merchant district is located outside the docks and is a cluttered district full of markets and small shops. The Southernmost district of the city is the Kiheki School of medicine. The nobles are not far from the school and make up the land beside the docks and by the base of the river.

The Izou Empire keeps a small amount of military presence here, but that has increased since the Ninja Crusade began. A small, makeshift military barracks sits by the gates and represents the police and military power of the Empire. It really isn't enough to completely deter criminal or ninja activity at the moment, so Kiheki continues to be decently populated with ninja.

## SCENE TWO: A MEETING OF TWO LANDS

The Blossom ninja should prepare themselves for the meeting and then send a messenger to inform the Izou ninja that they have arrived and will meet them in the evening as planned. Of course, the Izou ninja already know that the Blossom ninja have arrived. The hours waiting for the meeting will be mostly uneventful and gives an opportunity for the characters to investigate their environment



a little bit or get to know each other (if they don't already). The GM should feel free to come up with any obstacles if they desire.

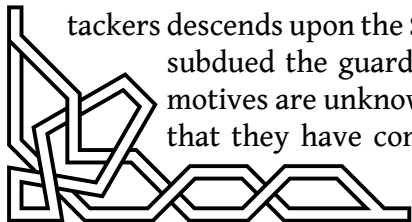
Perhaps a pick-pocket tries to cut their purse or one of the town soldiers decides to rough them up, being foreigners and all. The possibilities are endless.

When it is finally time to meet with the Blossom ninja, it plays out mostly without incident. Ika Sino's house is in the Noble district (Kaijin would not let his daughter roam far), surrounded by a 10 foot wall. The front gate is guarded by two guards, one on either side of the wall. Beyond the gate is a beautiful garden courtyard and a pair of small stairs that lead up to the house built on a small hill. A Moderate (2) Knowledge + Perception check will let Blossom characters figure out that the balcony is built with the main purpose of viewing the front gate easily. Of course, this causes the realization that the Izou have known the Blossom ninja have been in the city since they arrived.

Inside Ika Sino's house are various paintings and sculptures she has created. The meeting takes place in the common room. The gist of the meeting concerns the plan of the Sisterhood of Blood clan which is laid out by a letter the Blossom ninja present. The plan is quite simple: the Izou and Blossom ninja stop antagonizing each other and start working together to bring in Izou ninja to help kick the armies out of the Land of Seed and Blossom. In return, the Blossom ninja promise to help the Izou ninja end the Ninja Crusade and preserve their way of life. There are certain things that the Blossom ninja want, such as regaining control of the Oak Leaf province, which probably won't sit well with the Izou ninja, but the deal seems sincere and honest. It may be worth checking out, since working against the Blossom ninja has already proven to be counter-productive to everyone's causes. The Sisterhood have a specific matter that requires immediate Izou ninja assistance, so everyone should get ready to leave right away.

### ATTACK AND AFTERMATH

When the meeting is coming to an end, a disturbance is heard from the courtyard. A group of six attackers descends upon the Sino home, having already subdued the guards at the gate. Their exact motives are unknown, but it is safe to assume that they have come to rob or kill those in



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the meeting. Five of the attackers use the stats for Bandits (NC2E, pg. 160), while the sixth uses stats for a Golden Lion, Warrior (NC2E, pg. 164), as he once served the Empire as a ninja. The battle mostly takes place in the courtyard, giving a decently sized space for a brawl away from prying eyes.

Successfully interrogated bandits (using a Moderate (2) Persuasion + Intimidation check) will divulge they were told that a group of rich nobles were meeting unguarded. They were taking advantage of what they saw as easy money. In no way were they expecting ninja and the lack of guards present at the house added further weight to this belief. Timetables don't leave long before the group must leave to the Land of Seed and Blossom, giving them the evening and next morning to do some investigation if the players so choose.

Unfortunately, their investigation only raises more questions. The characters can attempt to locate potential info or NPCs with info, checking into the criminal elements, medicinal libraries, talking to local guards or even discussing attacks with other local nobles. Depending on the source of the information the characters choose, the player can make a Tough (3) Knowledge + Intuition check (research), Survival + Intimidation check (knocking some criminal heads or strong arming officials) or Persuasion + Empathy check (going about asking people questions nicely). Most results end up with not much of anything or conflicting information, but if they succeed in their check they get a small but significant piece of information. It seems that the characters were not the first Blossom Ninja to arrive in the last week—a member of the Phantom Voices was in the city only a few days earlier, raising the question: What business would the Phantom Voices have here in Kiheki? Unfortunately, there will not be enough time to answer that question as the characters must leave early.

## SCENE THREE: LEAVING TREESIDE

The characters will be leaving Kiheki the following morning, after preparing for the trip. Their two day travel will eventually take them to the border



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town of Mori Hogosha (pg. 40). The journey should be fraught with danger, so the GM should plug in encounters as they see fit. The following are a couple of examples the GM can use if they choose.

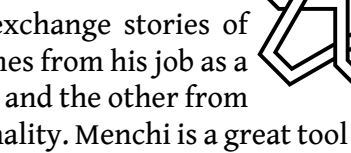
### THE ARISTOCRATS

Upon leaving Kiheki, they cross paths with a noble family traveling to the city in a carriage accompanied by Izou soldiers. The characters are dressed like average people of their class or caste, but this also presents an obvious problem if not approached in the correct manner. By tradition, the lower class of the Izou is supposed to show due respect to those of higher class. If any of the characters do not bow when the carriage passes (and of course, Blossom ninja do not subscribe to the same ideas about class), then the noble will have the carriage stopped. His name is Ikkokou Jorobo and he is easily offended, immediately demanding respect from those lesser than him, even going so far as to insult the characters and their squad. It is up to the players to handle the situation as they choose and their actions may have far-reaching consequences.

If handled poorly, the Izou soldiers will attack at the nobleman's command. The ninja have the choice to either swallow their pride, which none of them is used to doing, or wiping the carriage from existence. Half-way through the battle with the Imperial Battalion (NC2E, pg. 162), the ninja will likely notice that the nobleman has his son in the carriage with him. How will they deal with the young boy? Killing him is ruthless, but effective, but not all ninja share that viewpoint.

### THE BLACK DRAGON INN

The squad comes upon a small path on the side of the road with an almost unnoticeable sign beside the path that reads "Black Dragon Inn Ahead". The characters have traveled for a long time without stopping, and sleeping in a bed sounds much better than on the hard ground. The inn can be seen from the road, a quaint little building with more than enough room for the characters. As they approach the inn, a short, chubby man waddles his way down to meet the prospective guests. He introduces himself as Taro Menchi, a very friendly and loud man who loves to



talk to new guests and exchange stories of the world. Part of this comes from his job as a Lotus Coalition informant and the other from his naturally social personality. Menchi is a great tool for a GM that wants to plant rumors and plot hooks for the characters to follow. It is a great time to connect current events to old enemies or foreshadow events that could take place even after this adventure is complete. Examples of other information and conversations are presented here:

✦ **Talking to Menchi:** Talking to the owner of the Black Dragon Inn nets the characters all sorts of info, but most of it is useless drivel. However, the man does have some curious information hiding behind all of the rumor-mongering. He's not a ninja and doesn't care if the characters reveal that they are, being friendly to everyone he meets.

*"This isn't the only Black Dragon Inn! I have a twin brother in the Bridge to Battle Province. Mention me if you are up that way and you will get a discount."*

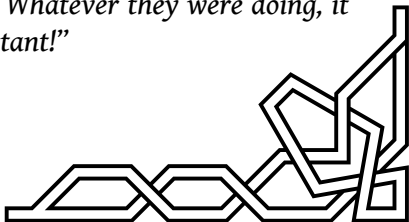
*"There are lots of bandits on the road these days. It seems those Empire patrols are doing nothing to deter their ranks!"*

*"Some say that it is only a matter of time before the new firearms created by the Empire start getting pushed out in mass numbers. Who can stop the Izou Empire then?"*

If asking about the Phantom Voice from Kiheki:

✦ **With a Moderate (2) Persuade + Intuition:** "You know, there was another ninja from the Blossom lands here recently. You can always tell from the lack of clothes they are Blossom folks. Well, and that darn stone in their gourd. It was one of those that don't talk too much. Don't usually see them outside of their homeland, wonder what he was up too?"

✦ **With a Boost:** "That Blossom ninja was not alone either! I saw one of those skull-faced ones with him and a couple of bodyguards. Whatever they were doing, it seemed to be very important!"





## SCENE FOUR: GOING HOME

★ **Talking to the other guests:** There are no specific NPCs the characters need to talk to unless the GM would like to add them.

However, just by going around and chatting, they can gather a little bit of information. The characters can make an Empathy + Persuasion or Intimidation to garner one of the following pieces of information (or other information the GM creates) per success (only the highest number of successes counts):

*“I’ve heard that young women are disappearing from small villages across the Triumph Province. Some suspect the ninja are behind these horrible acts!”*

*“If the Bamboo Herbalists are destroyed, who will the Izou Empire have to train their doctors? We all know the Herbalists are some of the most advanced medical minds in the known world!”*

*“The Izou Empire may have firearms, but this Ninja Crusade is not really sustainable for both parties.”*

*“Watch out, there have been many more dangerous animals stalking the trails these days. It seems war affects every living creature as they must be hungry or being driven from their homes.”*

*“Festival season is starting in the Land of Seed and Blossom. They are such a nice, primitive people. I don’t know how they stand that heat though! It is one of the hottest places I have ever visited!”*

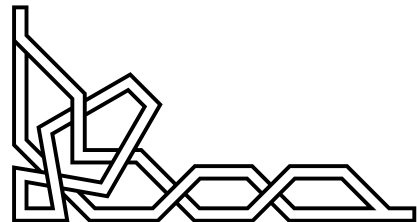
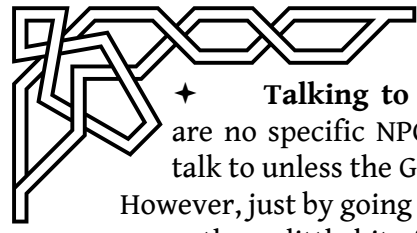
The characters can spend the night at the inn and start back out towards their destination in the morning. They can mark the inn down as a place to stay and gather information.

Crossing the border into the Kokuso Chitai Province is quite the experience. It has been a somewhat eventful journey to the Land of Seed and Blossom and the change in temperature makes some wish they had come in lighter clothing. The weather is beautiful and the sun shines brightly upon the characters. Such beauty is obviously an omen of much worse things to come.

Unbeknownst to the characters, there are enemies awaiting their arrival to the border. The plan of involving the Izou ninja is directly contrary to the Blossom Elders’ wishes, making the characters rebels within their own rebellion. Members of Yakubyo’s Pox have gained a spot among the Elders and wish to rise up against the Izou Empire while they are busy with the Ninja Crusade. The Sisterhood believes it is better to work with the Izou ninja to achieve this goal, while the Pox wants to exterminate everybody.

Tomurai Cho, a Phantom Voice, believes he has had a vision of major importance. The spirits of Blossom ancestors have told him the balance is off in the afterlife and that a certain number of people must die to rebalance the realms of Heaven. Cho is convinced that the Uprising is exactly what the ancestor spirits are looking for and his message has started to gain a following among those in support of violence against all of the Izou. Those same visions uncovered the secret rendezvous with the Izou ninja, and he set out to teach the characters a lesson for going against what the Blossom people need. It is possible that Cho has become slightly unstable. It is true that the Phantoms talk to the dead, but is his vision real? This much is known for certain: he plans on killing all of the envoys, including the characters.

If the characters happened to leave any of the criminals from Scene 2 alive and did a little investigation in the short time before they left Kiheki, they are now rewarded for their diligence. A message will be delivered by carrier hawk a short while before they arrive at the border. The message will explain that Tomurai Cho was the man who gave the information to the bandits and warns of his imminent attack. This



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gives the characters the upper hand in dealing with the attack, maybe even avoiding it altogether (but that's not very likely). If they gained any info at the Inn about the traveling Blossom ninja then they will gain a +2 bonus to sense the Surprise Attack against them as they cross the border. Of course, the characters are left unaware of the upcoming ambush if they spent no time collecting information.

Whatever the situation is, there is indeed a battalion from the Citizens Militia awaiting the characters' arrival, led by a Pox named Kouhei Huao and Tomurai Cho.

The GM can read this to the players:

*As you approach the border, you notice the trees are starting to turn from the oak trees the province you are leaving is named for and are being replaced by giant palm trees. The temperature seems to be much higher, the air is thick and the area smells of moisture. Strange sounding animals make their calls from beyond the trail. You can hear a bird flying over your head towards the marker indicating the border.*

That bird is the carrier hawk if the characters completed the requirement for that, otherwise it is any other bird flying by as the characters march into a trap. There are seven soldiers from the Militia and two formidable ninja. The characters must make a resistance check against the ambush. The Citizens Militia uses two groups of Simple Town Guards (NC2E, pg. 161) with a +1 bonus to all checks. The Citizens Militia and Kouhei Huao will fight to the death or at least until knocked unconscious, as their resolve and purpose is strong enough to give their life for. Cho does not have any such sentiments and won't even actively engage in the battle unless he has the advantage or is attacked first. At the first opportunity, Cho is likely to leave the other warriors as cover for his escape.



## EPILOGUE: FINALLY HOME

With the enemies defeated, this raises more questions than answers. Tomurai Cho probably got away, and if he did not then the secret dies on the attackers' lips. The characters continue on until they arrive at Mori Hogosha, the small trade hub in Blossom territory. Blossom ninja finally feel at home, while the Izou ninja realize that they have stepped inside a whirlwind of chaos that rivals the Ninja Crusade itself. They will meet with the Chief of the village and officially begin their stay in the Land of Seed and Blossom.

So what can the characters do now? Well, the group will want to travel to see the Council of Three in Xianguqui and present the Izou ninja. There is also the matter of Cho and his agenda for pushing the Elders' war on all things Izou. Even if he died during the last scene, most Blossom ninja share his ideas. Cho's death would be seen as the act of a martyr, yet another example of how the Izou ninja can so easily murder the Blossom ninja simply for defending their home. This could mean trouble for the characters in the future.

## EXPERIENCE

+1	Conclude the Izou/Blossom meeting without bloodshed
+1	Defeated Bandits without killing them
+1	Dealt with the Aristocrats
+1	Visiting the Black Dragon Inn
+1	Finished the journey to the Land of Seed and Blossom

# IDOU TAKUMI

**BIRTHSTONE: RUBY (FIRE),  
TEMPERAMENT: ENVIOUS**

- ◆ **Gift:** He has an eye for things belonging to others. +1 Deception to trick someone into giving him something.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma when they lose something important while coveting someone else's possessions.

**CASTE: HUNTER, FOCUS: STALKER**

- ◆ **Gift:** He knows how to hunt animals silently. +1 Stealth when doing so.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma when they underestimate someone they see as prey.

**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: MERCENARY, TITLE: ASSAILANT**

- ◆ **Gift:** He's used to fighting a lot of enemies at once. +1 Fighting if outnumbered.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma when he loses something important to him (as often happens to a warrior)

**CLAN: SPLENDID CHAMELEONS**

- ◆ **Clan Gift - Shifting Body:** +1 Perform when amusing a crowd. Also, any Injured or Broken Conditions are reduced by 1.
- ◆ **Clan Trigger - Overzealous:** Gain 1 Karma when they can't help but draw attention to themselves.

**CONTACTS**

- ◆ **Ally: Fukuda Ton (Crafts):** Traveling the land and spreading his own brand of sake is only one of Ton's many talents.
- ◆ **Rival: Kawamoto Gekko (Marksman):** A young Izou soldier who seems to empathize with the Uprising. Could he be turned?

**MARTIAL TRAINING**

- ◆ **Thick Skin 1 (Bear Style):** Tougher than he looks. +1 physical Armor.
- ◆ **Slow and Strong 1 (Sloth Style):** Once per Round, they may sacrifice 2 Initiative for +1 damage that lasts the Round.

**WAY OF MOLDED BODIES**

**Training:** +1 Athletics on a Boost.

**Backfire:** 1 physical damage or a Bruised 1 Condition (your choice)

- ◆ **Stretch Attack (Basic, Yang + Fighting):** They can stretch their limbs to attack. May use Fighting against Near targets with +1 damage.
- ◆ **Malleable Flesh (Basic, Yang + Perform):** Change their facial features. Can gain +1 Persuade or +1 Intimidation, based on changes.
- ◆ **Mend Wounds (Med, Yin + Fortitude):** Closes their wounds, healing 3 physical damage and gaining +3 vs. Poison, Disease and Pain.

**WAY OF MOVEMENT**

**Training:** Enhanced movement. +2 Movement and +1 Initiative.

**Backfire:** Slowed. -2 Movement and -1 Initiative.

- ◆ **Swift Soul (Med, Yang + Travel):** May add Speed as a bonus to (successes) Defense checks.

**STATS OF NOTE**

**Health:** 8, **Psyche:** 7, **Yang:** 2, **Yin:** 1, **Rank:** 1, **Initiative:** 6, **Dynamic Actions:** 1, **Dynamic Dice:** 3, **Strength:** 2, **Movement:** 10, **Weapon:** None

A life of pleasure and fun is all Takumi had ever known. He became a hunter shortly after his rites of passage and was able to take anything that wasn't already given to him. While stalking the forests, however, he came upon an Izou caravan in a sacred site and decided to make the soldiers pay for their trespassing. Unfortunately, he did not complete the job and became a wanted man.

His nature as a Splendid Chameleon made it hard to keep him in hiding for too long. The Uprising realized he was a useful tool as a crafty spy and masterful warrior, so they send him on missions in remote areas where he is unlikely to be spotted. Takumi, strangely and much to the Elders' chagrin, loves the fact he is wanted and often goes out of his way to antagonize the Izou occupation, just daring them to find out his identity.



**SKILLS**

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

# IKA YUUTA

## **BIRTHSTONE: EMERALD (WOOD), TEMPERAMENT: CRITICAL**

- ◆ **Gift:** He has an eye for finding faults. +1 Perception to spot weaknesses in just about anything.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma when their unsolicited critiques cause issues.

## **CASTE: CHIEF, FOCUS: NEXT IN LINE**

- ◆ **Gift:** He has become great at spinning tales to sound better than they are. +1 Deception to make things seem cheerful.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma when he has to take the blame for a mistake the chief has made.

## **TRAGEDY: RAVAGED BODY, AFFLICTION: FA CARRIER**

- ◆ **Gift:** Contracted the dreaded Fa Disease. -1 Fortitude, but +1 vs. Disease, Poison and Dosed Conditions.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma if their knowledge of their disease becomes known and causes problems.

## **WARTIME ROLE: COMMANDER, TITLE: OFFICER**

- ◆ **Gift:** With people under his wing, he gains +1 Intuition to guess the enemy's next move.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma if he puts personal attachments over those of the mission.

## **CLAN: BAMBOO ALCHEMISTS**

- ◆ **Clan Gift - Bending Reeds:** They take potions to enhance their bodies. +1 Athletics for flexibility and need not breathe. They also age 1 year for every 2 that pass.
- ◆ **Clan Trigger - Xenophobia:** Gain 1 Karma when with anyone/anything non-Blossom causes issues.

## **CONTACTS**

- ◆ **Ally: Ando Io (Crafts):** A warrior who has become famous for her many paintings created from the blood of Izou soldiers she has defeated.
- ◆ **Rival: No Nanami (Intimidation):** A striking mind, she has learned the laws of the Izou people and uses it to help the Uprising where she can.

## **MARTIAL TRAINING**

- ◆ **Wall Launch 1 (Frog Style):** Can launch an attack off of a sturdy surface (wall, tree, etc.), adding Athletics as a Secondary Skill and gaining a +1 bonus.
- ◆ **Alchemy 1 - Area of Study: Healing:** Can create the following potions: Miasma, Poison and Restore.

## **WAY OF CARING HANDS**

**Training:** Lower any Condition within Near Range with a Boost.

**Backfire:** Raise any Condition within Near Range with a Boost.

- ◆ **Healing Trance (Basic, Yin + Discipline):** Recover 1 Health per hour in trance. Boost = stops breathing, bleeding and need for food for the duration.
- ◆ **Morph Ingredients (Adv, Yang + Holistics):** Raise or lower Difficulty to resist Alchemy by 2 or +3 to next Holistics check.

## **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.

- ◆ **Realm of Warning (Med, Yin + Empathy):** Instantly know and see visions if someone enters a (Yin x50ft) area.

## **STATS OF NOTE**

**Health:** 6, **Psyche:** 8, **Yang:** 1, **Yin:** 2, **Rank:** 1, **Initiative:** 5, **Dynamic Actions:** 1, **Dynamic Dice:** 3, **Strength:** 5, **Movement:** 8, **Weapon:** Katana (Quick, Sharp)

Being born to the chief of Tawasaki village meant a lot was resting on Yuuta's shoulders from a young age. He was scrawny, but had a great mind, capable of finding flaws in plans or picking apart any bully who came his way. Of course, his family's secret is that they are fa carriers, one of the main reason his birth was miracle. Yuuta sought the Bamboo Alchemists' help in finding a cure, and his determination helped him join the clan in the end.

Though his father is old, Yuuta has left his village to serve with the Uprising, using his hyper-critical mind to help strategize. Of course, many within the Uprising see his physical weakness and suspect he is a carrier, putting his actions under a microscope. Yuuta cares little about what others think and spends much of his time in meditation about their next target. The day will come, however, that he must return and rule his village.



## **SKILLS**

Athletics 3, Crafts 2, Deception 0, Discipline 3 (Resist sleep), Empathy 0, Fighting 3, Fortitude 1 (-1), Holistics 3, Intimidation 3, Intuition 1, Knowledge 2, Marksman 0, Might 2, Perception 0, Perform 2, Persuade 0, Speed 0, Stealth 0, Survival 1 (Finding ingredients), Travel 0

# KETSUEKI YUI

**BIRTHSTONE: EMERALD (WOOD),  
TEMPERAMENT: LOYAL**

- ◆ **Gift:** She cares deeply for her comrades. +1 Speed to rush to the aid of a friend.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma when she suffers a loss to help a friend.

**CASTE: FAMILY BEARER, FOCUS: LOVER**

- ◆ **Gift:** As a new adult, finding a mate is imperative. +1 Persuade to seduce someone.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma when her flirtatious nature causes problems.

**TRAGEDY: TORMENTED MIND, AFFLICTION: HAIR TRIGGER**

- ◆ **Gift:** Her reputation precedes her. +1 Intimidation when her target knows of her hair trigger.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma if she loses her head when level heads are needed.

**WARTIME ROLE: MEDIC, TITLE: SAVIOR**

- ◆ **Gift:** She is the ultimate battlefield medic. +1 Perception to find a clear path to avoid danger.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma when she has to choose one life over another with no good choice.

**CLAN: SISTERHOOD OF BLOOD**

- ◆ **Clan Gift - Blood Mastery:** Bleeding Conditions are reduced by 1, and they generate 2 Ki (either type) if they take 4+ damage at one time.
- ◆ **Clan Trigger - Peaceful Instinct:** Gain 1 Karma when she chooses pacifism when action is actually needed.

**CONTACTS**

- ◆ **Ally: Ketsueki Take (Holistics):** When a child is sick or a pregnant mother fears complications, Take is the Sister they come to.
- ◆ **Ally: Network of Spies (Gatherers)**
- ◆ **Rival: Takata Kyuwa (Intimidation):** A young chief, leading an even younger village. He is on the lookout for an Advisor he can truly trust.

**MARTIAL TRAINING**

- ◆ **Cannot Be Tamed 1 (Horse Style):** Once per Battle, she may attack everyone within Close Range with one Action, but suffers -2 penalty to all checks until next Turn.
- ◆ **Master of Spies 1 (Gatherers):** Gains information Gatherers as an Ally.

**WAY OF VITAL CURRENTS**

**Training:** +1 Intuition with a Boost.

**Backfire:** -1 cumulative Perception penalty

- ◆ **Perfect Cleansing (Basic, Yang + Fortitude):** Lower the target's Poisoned, Dosed or Diseased Conditions by (Yang).
- ◆ **Blood Mist (Adv, Yang + Crafts):** Sensory Loss 3 Condition to everyone within Near Range. Mod (2) Might check to not drop weapons from slippery grips.

**WAY OF THE UNSEEN**

**Training:** They becomes less visible. -2 Perception to those trying to see them.

**Backfire:** Suffer a -2 Stealth penalty.

- ◆ **Unscented (Basic, Yin + Stealth):** Cannot be tracked by scent.
- ◆ **Unheard (Basic, Yin + Stealth):** Cancels sound in (Yin x10ft) radius. Boost = target (Yin) others.

**STATS OF NOTE**

**Health:** 7, **Psyche:** 7, **Yang:** 2, **Yin:** 1, **Rank:** 1, **Initiative:** 6, **Dynamic Actions:** 1, **Dynamic Dice:** 3, **Strength:** 2, **Movement:** 7, **Weapon:** Whip (Reach, Sharp, Blunt, Unweildy)

Yui was brought up within the Sisterhood of Blood, always knowing her fate in service of the clan, both as a healer trained by Ketsueki Take and to expand their numbers as a Family Bearer. Her personality is cheerful, and she is fiercely loyal to her friends, but is also known for being no-nonsense and a firecracker when something/someone stands in her way. She protects the people of her village, keeping them healthy for the coming war.

Her healing abilities and her ear for gathering information made her a top choice for the Uprising. She accepted their request, but insisted on staying near her beloved village to keep up with her many suitors. Yui is often sent to the front lines to protect warriors as they battle, remaining unseen with her jutsu. Her loyalty now extends to the Uprising and its warriors, so the Izou occupation better look out.



**SKILLS**

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



# KOUHEI ROKUDENASHI

**BIRTHSTONE: ONYX (METAL),  
TEMPERAMENT: INDEPENDENT**

- ◆ **Gift:** He knows how to make it on his own and receives +1 Survival when doing so.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma when he attempts alone something that requires a team.

**CASTE: HUNTER, FOCUS: WARRIOR**

- ◆ **Gift:** The Blossom forests become his battleground, granting +1 Athletics to operate in these environments.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma when they rush into obvious and overwhelming danger without blinking an eye.

**TRAGEDY: CIVIL DISCORD, AFFLICTION: STAR CROSSED**

- ◆ **Gift:** +2 Knowledge to try to impress someone with trivia.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 2 Karma whenever the ninja misses a detail due to distraction.

**WARTIME ROLE: FOOT SOLDIER, TITLE: CHAMPION**

- ◆ **Gift:** He fights against sicknesses. +1 Fortitude against poison
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma whenever sharing the truth about the war with the wrong person causes conflict/trouble

**CLAN: YAKUBYO'S POX**

- ◆ **Clan Gift - Ready For Battle:** Battle training grants bonus Health, immunity to Disease and a weapon Specialty.
- ◆ **Clan Trigger - Restless:** Gain 1 Karma when he starts a battle at the worst of times.

**CONTACTS**

- ◆ **Ally: Omura Izo (Holistics):** Knowledgeable in all forms of disease, he tends to the sick and alerts the Pox when someone is expiring.
- ◆ **Ally: Network of Spies (Assassins).**
- ◆ **Rival: Nagako Sadako (Perception):** She is an expert in potion making, even able to take a taste and recall all the ingredients used.

**MARTIAL TRAINING**

- ◆ **8 Legs Strike at Once 1 (Spider Style):** Spend 1 Dynamic Action for a bonus equal to the number of opponents (up to +3).
- ◆ **Master of Spies 1:** Gains Assassins as an Ally.

**WAY OF UNENDING BLIGHT**

**Training:** May lower or raise a Near Diseased Condition by 1.

**Backfire:** -1 cumulative Might penalty

- ◆ **Sense Disease (Basic, Yin + Intuition):** Sense any sickness and its severity within (Yin -1) miles. +2 Survival to track it.
- ◆ **Disease Dissolution (Basic, Yin + Holistics):** Removes Diseased Conditions from target and gives +2 bonus to resist more.
- ◆ **Plague Transference Gem (Med, Yin + Holistics):** Sickness eliminated using Disease Dissolution is stored and can be thrown (with Marksman or Touch) at an opponent later on.

**WAY OF THE WARRIOR**

**Training:** Steels their warrior spirit. Dynamic Actions give +2 damage for next attack.

**Backfire:** Their body breaks, suffering a Broken 1 Condition.

- ◆ **Strength Boost (Med, Yang + Might):** x2 Strength and +1 damage. Boost = x3 Strength.

**STATS OF NOTE**

**Health:** 9, **Psyche:** 7, **Yang:** 2, **Yin:** 1, **Rank:** 1, **Initiative:** 5, **Dynamic Actions:** 1, **Dynamic Dice:** 3, **Strength:** 3, **Movement:** 9, **Weapon:** Blossom Spear (Reach, Sharp)

Rokudenashi was always his own person, always hyper-focused on his goals, until he met Sei. She was beautiful, full of joy and one of the few things that allowed him to forget his troubles. The Izou Occupation, however, arrested her and took her away, claiming her involvement in a conspiracy called the Uprising. Rokudenashi changed his focus that day to getting her back, training hard enough to become a Hunter and then to go on to join the Uprising as a member of Yakubyo's Pox... all a means to an end.

Since then, he has become a leader in his clan, even commanding his own brigade of Pox warriors. Bloodshed on the front line fills his life now, as he brings the fight to the Izou soldiers in hopes of getting a lead on where they may be holding Sei. He ponders, however, if she will still love the man he has become over the man he once was.



**SKILLS**

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

# SHOUKA KAZUMI

**BIRTHSTONE: DIAMOND (EARTH),  
TEMPERAMENT: OVER THINKER**

- ◆ **Gift:** She sees situations from all angles. +1 Intuition to come up with a plan after a moment to compose thoughts.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma when they lose an advantage due to being slow to act.

**CASTE: ADVISOR, FOCUS: EXPERT**

- ◆ **Gift:** She has devoted her life knowing about the world. +1 Knowledge to recall info about other nations.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma when the character's assumptions about others cause conflict.

**TRAGEDY: UNENDING STIGMA, AFFLICTION: PARIAH**

- ◆ **Gift:** She is an outcast, but gains +1 Empathy when dealing with other outcasts.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma when your social status directly impedes a goal or mission.

**WARTIME ROLE: VILLAGER, TITLE: CUSTODIAN**

- ◆ **Gift:** She is always waiting for the warriors to come home. Gains +1 Holistics to treat wounds from the battlefield.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma if she chooses loyalty to the village over another valuable loyalty.

**CLAN: CRYSTAL BEARERS**

- ◆ **Clan Gift - Elemental Muse:** They are closer to their Birthstone, gaining a free Basic Jutsu. Also, Embarrassed Conditions are reduced by 1.
- ◆ **Clan Trigger - Scattered:** Gain 1 Karma when people ignore her sage words because they believe her clan is dying.

**CONTACTS**

- ◆ **Ally: Shouka Yasuo (Perception):** He enacts the Birthstone rituals like any of his clan, but is much more fascinated by looking into the souls of others he meets.
- ◆ **Rival: Nozaki Ozaki Shumei (Speed):** An advisor. Sometimes half the plan is having the chief hear your plan first. Shumei is great at this tactic.

**MARTIAL TRAINING**

- ◆ **Destabilizing Strikes 1 (Rhino Style):** On a Boost, knock target back 6 ft. Mod (2) Athletics + Speed check to avoid falling.
- ◆ **Summoner 1 (Frogs):** +1 Holistics, **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma if the frog leaves them in a lurch because they ran out of food.

**WAY OF SHARDS**

**Training:** On a Boost, gain +1 bonus to Birthstone Gift.

**Backfire:** Suffers 1 mental damage or Confused 1 Condition (your choice)

- ◆ **Birthstone Knowledge (Basic, Yin + Perception):** Learn Blossom target's name, intentions, wants, needs and desires. +2 bonus to social interaction with person.
- ◆ **Swirling Shards (Basic, Yang + Crafts):** +1 bonus to Defense checks for (successes) Rounds. Or can fire a shard with Marksman + Intuition for 2 damage, but subtracts 1 Round.
- ◆ **Window to the Soul (Med, Yin + Perception):** Sees everything their target has seen, said or done within the last (Yin) days.

**WAY OF EARTH**

**Training:** Boost gains +1 Armor vs. either physical or mental damage.

**Backfire:** -1 cumulative penalty to Defense and Resistance checks.

- ◆ **Open the Earth (Basic, Yang + Might):** Creates doorway in stone.
- ◆ **Earthen Slumber (Med, Yang + Holistics):** Heals (Yang -1) damage instantly.

**STATS OF NOTE**

**Health:** 6, **Psyche:** 7, **Yang:** 1, **Yin:** 2, **Rank:** 1, **Initiative:** 8, **Dynamic Actions:** 1, **Dynamic Dice:** 3, **Strength:** 1, **Movement:** 7, **Weapon:** None.

Kazumi serves her community well as an Advisor, but always ponders what the future will truly hold. The decline of the Crystal Bearers hit her hard and many fear her retaliation, so she has chosen to live on the outskirts of her village to protect her allies who may lose their honor if she stayed. In the end, she still has nothing less than absolute devotion to her village and her chief, who has other advisors trying to take her place at the moment.

Since the Uprising began, many have visited for her expertise on the Izou army, its capabilities and its weaknesses. While she contributes information, she rarely sees the front lines, believing her first duty is to the people of her village. Kazumi hopes other Keepers follow suit and avoid the war. Their numbers are already low, so more death is the last thing the Shouka clan needs.



**SKILLS**

Athletics 0, Crafts 1, Deception 2, Discipline 2, Empathy 0, Fighting 2, Fortitude 1, Holistics 3 (Diagnosis), Intimidation 0, Intuition 3, Knowledge 2, Marksman 2, Might 1, Perception 3 (Window to the Soul), Perform 1, Persuade 2, Speed 2, Stealth 0, Survival 2, Travel 0

# TOMURAI NORIO

## **BIRTHSTONE: OPAL (WATER), TEMPERAMENT: SENSITIVE**

- ◆ **Gift:** He is in touch with his feelings, gaining +1 Empathy to get people to open up.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma if he becomes paralyzed by emotion.

## **CASTE: ADVENTURER, FOCUS: DIPLOMAT**

- ◆ **Gift:** Travels to other villages to make deals. +1 Discipline to avoid distractions during negotiation.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma when he sticks out in urban settings.

## **TRAGEDY: RAVAGED BODY, AFFLICTION: RUNT OF THE LITTER**

- ◆ **Gift:** He is smaller than average, gaining +1 Stealth when using his size to his advantage.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma if ridicule of his size causes tension or a violent reaction.

## **WARTIME ROLE: PACIFIST, TITLE: OBJECTOR**

- ◆ **Gift:** +1 Fortitude for prolonged activity in protest.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma when sharing their opinions brings conflict.

## **CLAN: PHANTOM VOICES**

- ◆ **Clan Gift - Keepers of the Dead:** Death rites are needed everywhere. Gain +1 Travel and +1 Knowledge on Blossom land, and Confused Conditions reduced by 1.
- ◆ **Clan Trigger - Silence:** They speak only in whisper. Gain 1 Karma when their silence is taken as judgemental.

## **CONTACTS**

- ◆ **Ally: Nakatomi Reizo (Discipline):** A fearless Adventurer who is always there to lead the way when venturing into new lands.
- ◆ **Rival: Kuroda Sachi (Intuition):** A known gambler, the people who bet against him often end up dead.

## **MARTIAL TRAINING**

- ◆ **Force of Nature (Blunt Style):** After a Boost, target makes a Mod (2) Athletics + Speed check or they are tripped.
- ◆ **Portents 1:** Sense Ki and Divination. (Immune to ambush, and +1 to find/avoid traps. May interpret dreams, and significance of it)

## **WAY OF DENIED REPOSE**

**Training:** On a Boost, gain +1 Persuade when dealing with the dead.

**Backfire:** -2 penalty to next check (regardless of type)

- ◆ **Death Immunity (Basic, Yin + Discipline):** The next time they would fall to 0 Health, they are brought to 1 Health instead.
- ◆ **Corpse Disposal (Med, Yin + Crafts):** Reduces a corpse to dust instantly.
- ◆ **Corpse Recreation (Med, Yang + Crafts):** Restores a corpse back to its former form, regardless of how destroyed it becomes.

## **WAY OF THE WATER**

**Training:** +2 bonus to next Defense.

**Backfire:** -1 penalty to Movement and Defense.

- ◆ **Water Walking (Basic, Yang + Travel):** Stand on water like it was ground, with no rolls needed for rough water.

## **STATS OF NOTE**

**Health:** 6, **Psyche:** 8, **Yang:** 1, **Yin:** 2, **Rank:** 1, **Initiative:** 4, **Dynamic Actions:** 1, **Dynamic Dice:** 3, **Strength:** 3, **Movement:** 8, **Weapon:** Bo (Reach, Blunt)

Despite being born the smallest of seven brothers, Tomurai has always had strong spirit and an insatiable need to learn. Once he became a Family Bearer, he worked hard to then move on to the Adventurer caste, since that was his chance to explore the land. Visiting other villages, beside his best friend Reizo, he learned of the suffering many Blossom people experienced and decided to join the Phantom Voices in hopes of helping ease that burden.

When the Uprising began, Norio joined the side of peace and currently pushes for a non-violent approach to the Izou occupation. Unlike other Voices, he isn't afraid to take his cause to leaders of other villages, and has even swayed a few in between. When not fighting the good fight, Norio focuses on practicing the burial rites of his people and counseling the mourning.



## **SKILLS**

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

# WARAWARA TAKUYA

**BIRTHSTONE: ONYX (METAL),  
TEMPERAMENT: INTENSE**

- ◆ **Gift:** He feels strongly for everything. +1 Persuade to bring someone to his side of thinking.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma if his intensity makes a situation weird, causing tension and issues.

**CASTE: FAMILY BEARER, FOCUS: SURVIVOR**

- ◆ **Gift:** He survived the rites of passage at the top of the class. Gains +1 Fortitude vs. poisons.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma when others' jealousy of his reputation causes complications.

**TRAGEDY: VICTIM OF CIRCUMSTANCE,  
AFFLICTION: PLAGUE SURVIVOR**

- ◆ **Gift:** Seeing many die before him, he gains +1 Holistics to heal the sick and downtrodden.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma if he lets his urge to heal put him in danger.

**WARTIME ROLE: STRIKER, TITLE: ASSASSIN**

- ◆ **Gift:** Always knows how to get the jump on his target. +1 Speed when making a Surprise attack.
- ◆ **Trigger:** Gain 1 Karma when he underestimates his enemy and they gain the edge.

**CLAN: GRIM CREEPERS**

- ◆ **Clan Gift - Personal Infestation:** Grants control over the suu and makes them lighter. Bonus Movement, and Poisoned and Diseased Conditions are reduced by 1.
- ◆ **Clan Trigger - Eerie:** Gain 1 Karma when their often terrifying outward appearance causes issues.

**CONTACTS**

- ◆ **Ally: Seto Harumi (Fighting):** A strong Hunter, he fights not for food, but for the entertainment of his village. No one knows what he'd do during a real fight.
- ◆ **Rival: Handa Shihi (Travel):** A guide who ventures into Creeper's lands quite often. For some reason, the suu will not attack him.

**MARTIAL TRAINING**

- ◆ **Spider Strike 1 (Spider Style):** Can equip +1 weapon, as long as it matches at least one Quality, gaining effects and +1 damage.
- ◆ **Mantis Stands Steadfast 1 (Mantis Style):** Double highest Skill in combo to resist being tripped or thrown.

**WAY OF THE HIVE BODY**

**Training:** Syncs with the suu, gaining +2 bonus to next Hive Body use.

**Backfire:** Suffers cumulative -1 Fortitude penalty.

- ◆ **Gifted Wings (Basic, Yang + Survival):** Can now hover and fly at +5 Movement up to (Yang +10) feet off the ground. +1 Dodge.
- ◆ **Insect Spiral (Med, Yang + Marksman):** Inflicts 2 damage on Near target. Followup Mod (2) Fortitude check against Poison to avoid taking another 2 afterward.
- ◆ **Swarm Form (Adv, Yang + Fortitude):** Becomes a swarm of suu. Can travel at 3x Movement and gains +2 Intimidation in this form.

**STATS OF NOTE**

**Health:** 8, **Psyche:** 5, **Yang:** 3, **Yin:** 0, **Rank:** 1, **Initiative:** 5, **Dynamic Actions:** 1, **Dynamic Dice:** 3, **Strength:** 3, **Movement:** 13, **Weapon:** Kama (Sharp, Paired), Dagger (Quick, Sharp)

Takuya has never been one to back down from a battle, proven by his ability to so easily progress during his rites of passage. Showing such strength against insect venom, he was approached by the Warawara clan and introduced to the suu. Again, Takuya went all-in for the Creepers and quickly became one of their most zealous members, made simpler with the passing of much of his family due to plagues thought to have been brought in by the Izou.

His side was chosen from that day forth, and he wanted an active role in the Uprising. With his ability to creep into areas in bug form, Takuya made for an effective assassin. His youth is often questioned by the Elders, however, because it seems like he enjoys himself too much during his missions. Takuya, along with the rest of the Creepers, remain under scrutiny, but he knows where their true loyalty lies.



**SKILLS**

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

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# WE WILL TAKE BACK OUR HOME

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