

THE DAISHO AND THE NINJA

by Travis Heermann

The ancestral swords of a powerful lord have been stolen! In the dark of night, on the eve of battle, a shadowy figure crept into Lord Kunemura's chamber and made off with the most potent symbols of his power and lineage. Worse, Lord Kunemura has declared war on his old enemy, Lord Shotokami. The imminent battle will be decisive, and the future of Lord Kunemura's lands and family hang in the balance.

The loss of the swords would be a terrible blow to morale if Lord Kunemura's troops hear of the theft. The lord's chamberlain, Tsuyokaze, begs you to recover the swords at any price. According to Tsuyokaze, the chief suspect is the Kunemura's chief historian, Hanashi, who was suspiciously absent on the morning after the theft.

Three servants were killed during the theft, and others whisper of seeing a ninja.

Find the thief and the stolen swords before it is too late!

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Requires the use of the
Dungeons & Dragons® Player's Handbook,
Third Edition, published by
Wizards of the Coast®

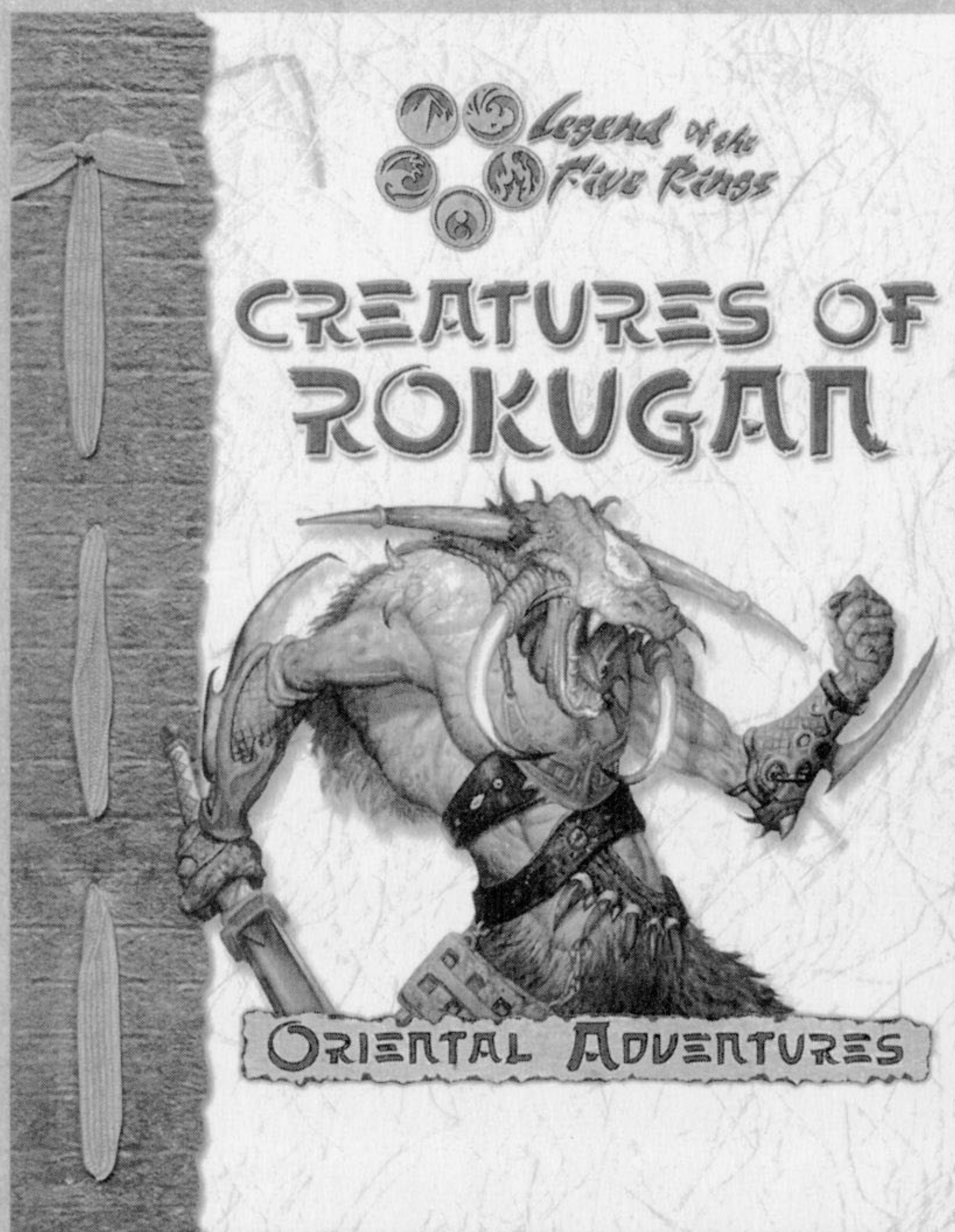


This adventure is designed to be easily dropped into your existing *Third-Edition D&D* campaign. It can be run in a just a single session and makes for an excellent evening's gaming. To prepare yourself to run the adventure, you should read it completely at least once to familiarize yourself with the material. You may wish to photocopy the map in the center of the book for ease of use as well. The text on the back of the book can be read to your players to introduce them to the adventure. After that, you're ready to begin. Good luck!

DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS

This module requires the use of the *Dungeons and Dragons® Player's Handbook, Third Edition*, published by Wizards of the Coast.® You won't be able to run this adventure without it.

"Mostly Harmless..."



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Requires the use of the *Dungeons and Dragons® Player's Handbook, Third Edition* and *Oriental Adventures™*, published by Wizards of the Coast®



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GAME MASTER BACKGROUND

The Daisho and the Ninja is an Oriental-style adventure for 4–6 characters, levels 1–3. The plot is simple. Lord Kunemura's daisho (katana and wakizashi) were stolen and all fingers point to Hanashi. In fact, the swords were stolen by a ninja. But, Hanashi is missing. He witnessed the ninja's actions and the deaths of the servants and followed the thief into the forgotten catacombs beneath the castle.

However, the details are slightly complex. Tsuyokaze and Hanashi are mortal enemies. Tsuyokaze truly believes Hanashi to be the thief. He is so certain that he believes nothing else, perhaps even in the face of hard proof.

The truth of the ninja's identity may bring down Lord Kunemura's entire family. The ninja is Lord Kunemura's middle son, Akashi. Lord Kunemura is not known for his warmth. In this society, the first son is the heir, and any subsequent sons serve as little more than backup in case harm befalls the eldest. As he grew, Akashi tried to please his cold, uninterested father, but was forever relegated to unimportance. He would not act directly against his elder brother, because he truly loved him, but acting against his father was another matter. When Lord Shotokami promised lands and wealth to Akashi in return for betraying his father, the temptation was too great.

Lord Shotokami has been plotting to gain control of Lord Kunemura's lands for years and subverting one of Kunemura's family was a large part of the design. He secretly trained Akashi specifically for this day, when he would steal the swords at the crucial moment.

One of the reasons Lord Shotokami wants to take possession of Kunemura's castle is because of what lies below it — the lost Koda Ninjutsu School. It was abandoned during a great purge many generations ago and its location was forgotten. However, Lord Shotokami knows of it, being a descendant of its most successful ninja. His aims to take the castle at any cost and secretly reestablish the Koda Ninja School using the library of training techniques he believes hidden there.

With his family's ancestral weapons, Akashi escaped into a secret tunnel in the foundation of the castle that leads down into the deserted warren of the Koda school, with Hanashi close after him.

The most desirable outcome for everyone involved is for no one to ever know the swords are missing. As yet, no one has been told. Only Tsuyokaze, Lord Kunemura, and his wife, Midoke, know of the theft.

This adventure has many outcomes, depending on how the PCs handle the situation. The loss of the swords is as important as the very symbol of a family's honor. The ancestral swords, is an extremely delicate matter, one that must be handled very discreetly to guard the honor of everyone involved. Because of the delicate relationship between samurai and lord, Kunemura's chambers are off-limits to everyone.

GENERAL INFORMATION

PCs new to this region determine the following information with a single Gather Information check (DC 15, +5 per additional piece of information the PC wishes to learn). PCs native to this region know three pieces of information without a roll.

- Lord Kunemura's estate is located at the strategic intersection of two important roads. A large village is situated around the intersection, not far from the castle. The village is relatively prosperous.
- The antagonism between Kunemura and Lord is common knowledge. Both daimyo are widely regarded as strong, stubborn, and doggedly persistent in pursuit of their goals. Many local inhabitants believe the conflict arose between two powerful personalities.
- The relations between the two daimyo turned warlike in the last few days. The village and surrounding countryside have been mobilized for battle.
- Lord Kunemura has nearly 2,000 troops at his disposal (500 samurai and 1,500 ashigaru).
- Lord Kunemura has seven children: three sons and two daughters. The eldest son, Kunetachi is heir to the lord's estate and title. He is 21 years old and resides in the castle with his father as a *gunso* (commander). The middle son, Akashi, was sent away to be trained and educated. The youngest son, Tsumitoshi, is seven years old and still lives with his parents in the castle. The two daughters, Mariko and Hatsuko, are 5 and 8 years old.
- Lord Kunemura's wife is named Midoke. The villagers adore her for her beauty, kindness, and culture, a necessary softening of Kunemura's rough edges.
- Kunemura's castle is well fortified, with plenty of provisions and fresh water to withstand a siege.

GETTING THE PCS INVOLVED

- The PCs are Lord Kunemura's retainers, ordered by the chamberlain to find the swords and preserve the family's honor. Low-level retainers are better suited for this task because of the potential for dishonor. They are expendable. However, if successful, the rewards are great — higher status in Kunemura's household or special gifts.
- The PCs are guests passing through Lord Kunemura's domain. Itinerant strangers, or better yet, ronin. If successful, they might be offered fealty.
- They are independent magistrates or a magistrate's *yoriki* (deputies) specially called in to deal with the situation. Magistrates are expected to enforce the edicts of the emperor's law (or whatever type of government might be in place over Lord Kunemura) and maintain discretion above all else.

In any case, the chamberlain, Tsuyokaze, contacts them. He meets them in his chambers in the early morning hours and explains the situation.

Tsuyokaze is a round man, with voluminous robes layered in many bright hues, predominantly Lord Kunemura's family colors. His hair is perfectly arranged and glossy black, and his plump fingers absent-mindedly twist his long, feather-thin mustache. His face is sheened with a sweat, and his voice is high and nasal as he speaks.

"Many thanks for agreeing to meet with me. I apologize for the tenderness of the hour, but evil is afoot in Lord Kunemura's house and it must be dealt with most expeditiously, and most discreetly. I trust you are aware of the current military situation, with Lord Shotokami's army marching on our castle. Our scouts tell us he will arrive in two days." He pauses for a moment, letting this news sink in.

"I cannot stress enough the delicacy of what I am about to impart to you... Lord Kunemura's family daisho has been stolen from his very chambers. I'm sure you can understand the effect this would have on our loyal troops if this were made known. Take this scroll. It gives you the authority to make whatever inquiries around the castle you require. If you are able to return the swords before the enemy arrives, you will have my, and Lord Kunemura's, utmost gratitude."

The scroll is written and signed by Tsuyokaze, stating the bearer may ask whatever questions deemed necessary in a matter "directly related to Lord Kunemura's well-being." The questions must be answered truthfully. Note that this may become abusive and samurai not acting in an honorable manner will raise suspicion.

Sense Motive checks (DC 22) reveal that his anger with Hanashi is deeper than this incident.

If asked about the three dead servants, he says that one was found dead in the stairway from the top floor, one in the kitchen, and one in a storage room. The bodies are currently in the servants' quarters, awaiting burial. Each servant was killed by a single precise slash across the throat.

Tsuyokaze, Ari7: CR 7; SZ M (humanoid); HD 7d4; hp 18; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atks Wakizashi +5 melee (1d6+5); SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +5; Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 16; AL LN. Skills: Bluff +12, Diplomacy +12, Gather Information +8, Innuendo +9, Listen +9, Perform (biwa)+ 3, Ride +1, Sense Motive +10.

"I can even give you the name of the culprit. Hanashi, my lord's historian, is missing this morning. One can only surmise that he is somehow responsible, and has fled to preserve his miserable life. I am sure you will agree with my conclusion when you see his room. He must have killed those three servants during his escape."

THE INVESTIGATION

There are several relevant clues around the castle.

LORD KUNEMURA

If the PCs wish to speak to Lord Kunemura, he grants them a brief audience.

Yojimbo guard the audience hall and open the rice-paper doors. The room is dark. The great lord sits in silence on his dais, with grim, armor plated yojimbo sitting on either side of him. Many eyes watch with careful scrutiny as you cross the room and seat yourselves on the tatami mats at a respectful distance. Their faces grim.

Lord Kunemura is a large man, known for his fighting prowess and credited with the rise in the power of his family during his rule. He is gruff with those he considers friends and openly hostile towards his enemies. As soon as you are situated, he orders his yojimbo to leave the room. When you are alone with him, he speaks with a voice like dry gravel.

“When I awoke this morning, the stand that holds my ancestral swords was empty. My chambers are constructed with nightingale floors; no one may enter without the floorboards alerting me to their presence. It is a terrible thing that Hanashi has done. I had always thought him a loyal servant. Strange how men can hide their hearts with silence. If you can recover the swords, and bring me the head of the man who stole them, you have my undying gratitude. But be warned, if you reveal to *anyone* what has happened, I will have *your* heads.”

A Sense Motive check (DC 15) reveals that he is shaken by the theft of his swords. By allowing them to be stolen, he has dishonored his family and all his ancestors. He wants to minimize the damage this might do to his troops morale if news gets out. Many believe *seppuku* is the only acceptable atonement for the loss of the swords.

He allows the PCs to see his chamber if they wish. The nightingale floors “sing” when someone walks on them. The sword stand rests on a special altar in an alcove on one side of the room. A Search check (DC 25) reveals one ceiling tile is slightly out of place. The space above the ceiling tiles is open to the rafters and across a few separate rooms on the top floor of the castle, including Tsuyokaze’s room, Hanashi’s room, and Kunetachi’s room.

Lord Kunemura, Sam10/Ari2: CR 12; SZ M (humanoid); HD 12d10+24; hp 100; Init +6 (+2 Dex, +4 Imp Init); Spd 20 ft.; AC 19 (+2 Dex, +7 great armor); Atks Katana +12/+7 melee (1d10+2); SV Fort +10, Ref +6, Will +9; Str 15, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 14, Wis 13, Cha 16; AL LN. Skills: Bluff +4, Climb +15, Diplomacy +13, Handle Animal +13, Iaijutsu Focus +12, Intimidate +15, Jump +12, Ride +17, Sense Motive +15, Swim +10. Feats Cleave, Great Cleave, Improved Initiative, Power Attack.

HANASHI’S ROOM

This modest room is in shocking disarray. The tatami, nightclothes, and blankets are strewn across the floor. The small writing table is knocked askew, with ink spilling across the polished surface. The daisho stand is empty.

Search checks (DC 15) reveal the following information:

- The floors in this room are not nightingale floors.
- One of the ceiling tiles has been disturbed.
- The scrolls on the writing table are mundane descriptions of current events in the castle, supply inventories, troop counts, and the like.
- A scroll hidden in the wardrobe appears to be Hanashi’s personal journal. PCs who read it find nothing that would incriminate him. On the contrary, many passages express his loyalty and devotion to Kunemura. Moreover, the animosity between Hanashi and Tsuyokaze is evident. Hanashi believes Tsuyokaze is jealous of his position. A Sense Motive check (DC 20) reveals that Hanashi is intelligent and compassionate. He holds little patience for back-stabbing trivialities of courtly life.

Hanashi is a mute, an obvious fact around the castle, but one that few ever discuss. He is almost universally liked and respected and people do not mention it. The inability to speak may be an impediment to some, but he used it to become an excellent listener, with a nearly eidetic memory.

The ninja used Hanashi’s room to gain access to the space above the ceiling. Hanashi awoke just after the thief made his exit. When he spotted the dead servant in the stairway, he hurriedly gathered his things to investigate, knowing he would be unable to make anyone understand quickly enough to prevent the intruder’s escape.

KUNETACHI, ELDEST SON AND HEIR

Kunetachi is the spitting image of his father twenty years before; strong, stubborn, proud, and ambitious. He is currently a 5th Level Samurai and a worthy successor.

Sense Motive (DC 15) shows that he is angry and worried. His father, mother, and Tsuyokaze refuse to tell him anything and he greatly resents underlings or outsiders who know the truth, when he, the heir, does not.

Kunetachi was asleep in his room when the theft occurred. He has heard servants whispering about a ninja in the castle, but he believes that to be utter nonsense. No ninja could possibly get past his guards on the walls.

MIDOKE, LADY OF THE CASTLE

Lady Midoke oversees the daily operation of her husband’s house and takes care of the children. She may have been beautiful and lively once, but years of child rearing have torn that from her. She is a devoted mother and a timid wife, often trampled by Kunemura’s hard-charging demeanor, but she never complains.

She has no idea who may have committed this horrible deed. She knows Tsuyokaze believes the culprit is Hanashi, but she believes Hanashi is too kind and loyal to do such a thing. A Sense Motive check (DC 20) reveals that she is very worried for her husband's future and her own. If he commits seppuku over the loss the swords, she will be expected to follow him in death by cutting her own throat, leaving no one to care for her young children.

OTHER INQUIRIES

Interviewing the castle servants and guards allows the PCs up to three Gather Information checks (DC 15) each. Successful checks reveal the following information:

- Hanashi has been mute all his life. He is widely regarded as a compassionate, thoughtful man, and he is Lord Kunemura's most favored confidant and councilor.
- The castle servants and guards view Tsuyokaze mainly as a blustering fool, quick to anger and cruel to those below his station.
- Tsuyokaze and Hanashi despise each other.
- Lord Kunemura is universally respected and feared, but not regarded as particularly kind or compassionate.
- Many of the servants are frightened to enter the deepest parts of the castle foundations, because of tales of unexplained disappearances. (This is the clan of *bake-mono no tanuki* luring unsuspecting humans away to be eaten. See *New Monster* section.) The servants have reported the disappearances, but no one believes them. Tsuyokaze knows of this, but does not mention it. He believes the servants ran away.
- Two servants sneaking some late-night bottles of sake claim to have seen a ninja.
- These two servants are cooks, and both vehemently claim to have been sober at the time, because they had not started drinking yet. One of the servants killed was their third drinking partner. They were in one of the many storage rooms in the foundation of the castle, awaiting their companion, when they heard a short gurgling scream and peeked out of their secret meeting place. They saw the ninja moving away and their friend dead on the floor. They offer to show anyone who asks the location of the attack.

CASTLE FOUNDATIONS

Eventually the characters' inquiries should lead them to the dark recesses of the castle foundations, where storage rooms are filled with provisions and the forgotten entrance of the Koda Ninjutsu School await those persistent and perceptive enough to find it.

The two cooks who saw the ninja easily find the spot, because it is their customary meeting location, in a small room where much of the sake is kept. They also know

which direction the ninja went. A Search check (DC 20) reveals a bloodstain. Another Search check (DC 18) reveals another bloodstain five feet away in the shape of a footprint. It leads in the direction toward a little-used portion of the storage areas.

One of the storage rooms contains the secret entrance to the tunnels below. Another Search check (DC 20) reveals the footprints in the dust leading up to a stack of shelves, and scrape marks indicate that the shelves swing aside.

The secret door can be opened with a Strength check (DC 15) and behind the cleverly hidden construction yawns a hole, with steps leading into unknown darkness.

THE KODA NINJUTSU SCHOOL

1. TRAPPED CORRIDOR

The stairs are cramped and narrow, leading down into the darkness. The dust on the stone steps is clearly disturbed by three sets of footprints, one set leads up, and two sets lead down. The corners of the ceiling are choked with ancient, dusty cobwebs, and the stairway is narrow and treacherous. Stagnant air wafts up out of the cool, moist depths, bearing the smell of earth and... something else.

This switchback corridor has several traps meant to dispatch any unwanted intruders. All the traps in this corridor can be disabled by pressing a small, camouflaged stone on the east wall at the foot of the stairs (Search, DC 25). There is a pressure plate in the floor near this switch that resets all the traps if they were disabled by the button in Area 2 or were set off. Alternatively, each trap can be discovered and disabled individually. All four traps are triggered by pressure plates in the floor, and automatically reset themselves after one hour.

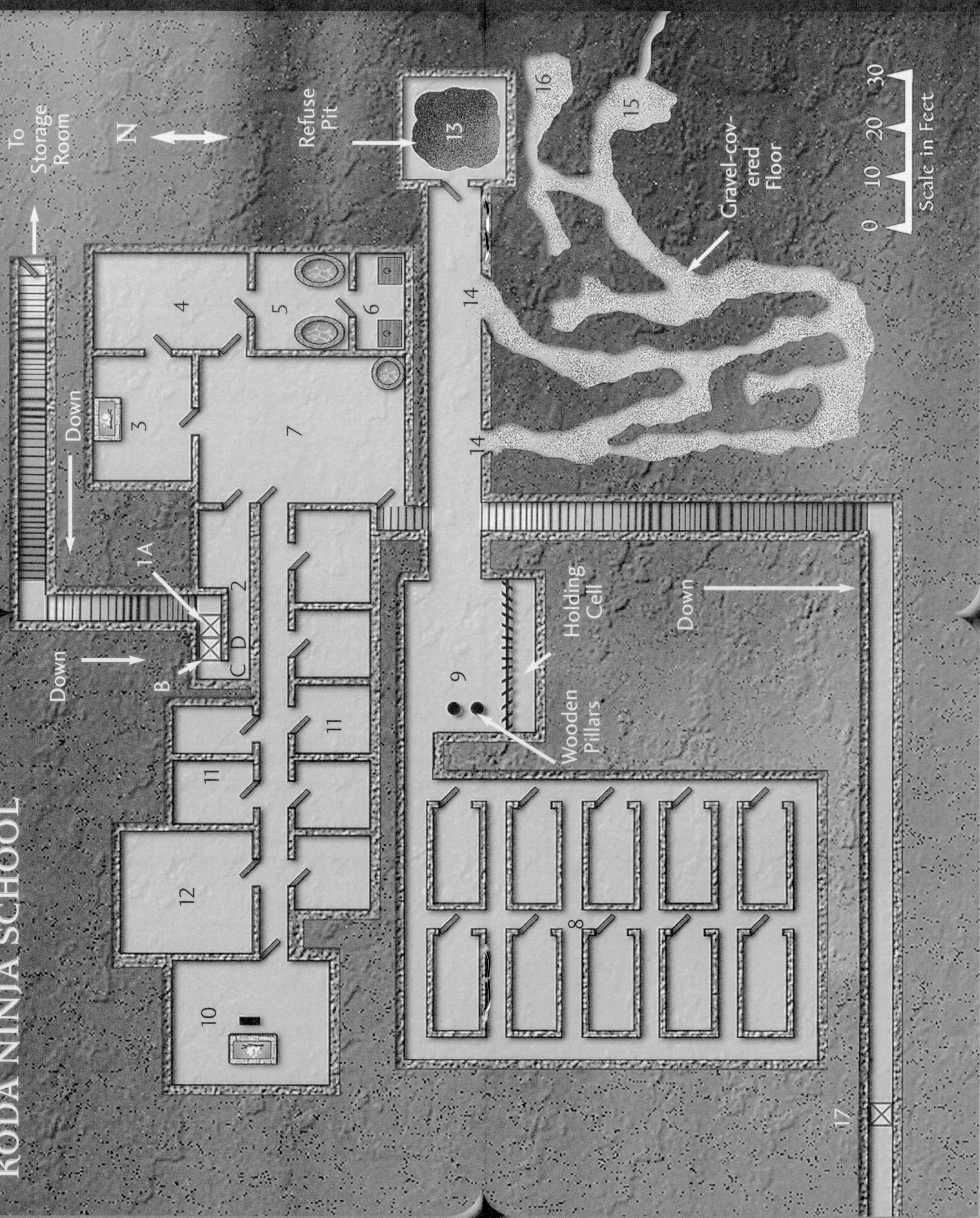
A. Spiked Pit Trap: The first trap is a spiked pit 5 ft. wide, 10 ft. across, and 20 ft. deep.

Spiked Pit Trap: CR 2; 2d6 falling damage; +10 melee 1d4 spikes for 1d4+2 damage per hit; Reflex save (DC 20) avoids; Search (DC 10); Disable Device (DC 20).

The sliding footprints that abruptly disappear in the dust on the floor make this trap easier to notice. Inside the pit lies the unfortunate Hanashi, his leg impaled on one of the bamboo spikes. He is still alive but barely conscious. He currently has 0 hp. Hanashi is desperate to get out of the pit and catch the thief. If healed, he helps the PCs however he can. Communicating with him may not be easy however and eager PCs may bring him back to Kunemura without asking him what's going on.

Hanashi, Sam2/Ari3: CR 5; SZ M (humanoid); HD 5d4; hp 16; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atks Katana +4 melee (1d10); SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +10; Str 11, Dex 10, Con 11, Int 16, Wis 16, Cha 16; AL LG. Skills: Bluff +5, Climb +5, Diplomacy +11, Handle Animal +6, Iaijutsu Focus +8, Jump +4, Listen +10, Ride +5, Sense Motive +11, Spot +10, Swim +5. Feats: Alertness.

KODA NINJA SCHOOL



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B. Scything Blade Trap. A spring-loaded blade slashes from a camouflaged groove in the wall at about 3 ft. above the floor. It effects individuals standing within square B.

Scything Blade Trap: CR 1; +8 melee 1d8 damage/x3 crit; Search (DC 21); Disable Device (DC 20).

C. Hail of Needles. A hail of tiny metal splinters shoots out of tiny holes in the south wall of the corridor. Anyone standing in squares B and C has a chance to be hit.

Hail of Needles: CR 1; +20 ranged 2d4; Search (DC 22); Disable Device (DC 22).

D. Hail of Needles. This second hail of needles is activated by a pressure plate in the floor, and fires from numerous tiny holes in the west wall of the corridor. Anyone in squares C and D has a chance to be hit.

2. TRAP RESET

If the traps in Area 1 were disabled by the hidden switch in Area #1 or were set off, stepping on a pressure plate at this point resets them. There is also another camouflaged panel that disables the traps in this hallway identical to the one in Area #1.

3. KITCHEN

Searching (DC 20) reveals a chimney above the fireplace. This chimney secretly opens, carefully camouflaged, into the chimney of the main kitchen in the castle above.

4. DINING ROOM

Five small tables, practically rotted to sawdust, are scattered about the floor. In the corner is a pale, huddled shape. The young maiden gasps as she sees you, and cringes away, covering her eyes. "Don't hurt me again!" she weeps. Her dark eyes are wide and fearful. She is dressed in coarse peasant linen, but her features are refined and incredibly beautiful. "Oh, I'm sorry, I thought you were the bad men! I beg of you, help me get out of here before they come back!"

The young girl is really a **bakemono no tanuki (6 hp)** (see *New Monster below*). She intends to lure the PCs into the lair, where the rest of her clan can feast upon them. But first she wants to enjoy some sport at the PCs expense. At the first opportunity, she attempts a *charm person* on the PC most pleasantly disposed to her false appearance.

Her name is Ame. If asked about "the bad men," she says this place is filled with evil men, dressed in black, sneaking about like ghosts. This is untrue, since the Koda School has been abandoned for generations. If time permits, she attempts to *charm person* up to three of the PCs. She particularly enjoys making romantic advances toward those charmed and setting them against one another.

She attempts to lure the PCs to Room #15, where the rest of her clan awaits. She tells them she knows the way out of here. But she is very patient. If they want to do some

exploring first, she is perfectly happy to bide her time and wait. She is not pushy or disrespectful. But, if the PCs have no interest in listening or the one-hour time limit of her current form approaches, she takes the first opportunity to *shapeshift*. When no one is looking, she changes into a small creature such as a rat or a snake, and slip away. She does not take her natural form unless forced to do so, because she does not wish the PCs to see what she really is.

5. BATH

6. LATRINE

Below the wooden doors is the 10 ft. deep cesspit. The waste has long since decayed into soil and dust.

7. DOJO

Two empty bathtubs lie cracked and rotting in two corners. A wooden bucket is rotted to rusted metal bands.

These weapons are rusted beyond use and break if they used in combat. The well is filled with fresh water 50 feet below. The tanuki regularly use this well. A Spot check (DC 15) reveals a bucket beside the well in good repair. It is tied to an iron ring in the wall with a good rope.

8. CELLS

There are two holes in the floor, each about 2 ft. across, covered by rotting wooden doors that have smaller holes, about 1 ft. in diameter, cut into them.

9. TORTURE CHAMBER

The walls of his room are lined with crumbling weapon racks, with a few rusted *kama*, *ninja-to*, and *yari*. In one corner is a low circular well.

10. SMITH'S WORKSHOP

Search checks (DC 20) reveal a chimney in the ceiling, similar to the one in Area #3.

The door is fashioned of once-stout wood, now softened by rot, bound by bands of rusted iron, latched by a simple bolt on the outside. The interior is filled with dust and cobwebs. Rings of rusted iron are embedded each wall.

11. LIVING QUARTERS

One side of this room is partitioned by iron bars embedded in the ceiling and floor, creating a small holding cell with a short sliding door in the middle. Two wooden pillars stand side by side, with chains hanging from rings. A stone brazier stands in the center of the room, its cavity filled with cold, dark ash. A wooden table has collapsed in one corner, spilling its implements of torture across the floor. Rusted blades, tongs, pincers, hammers speak wordless volumes about the pain once inflicted in this room.

In the center of his room is a large anvil beside an ancient forge, with its great bellows hanging in rotting pieces from the side. A large hammered-tin tub lies empty along one wall, and the remnants of a few half-finished blades litter the floor.

The detritus on the floor is the remnants of the sleeping mats that once lay on the floors of these rooms. The trainees and their teachers slept in these rooms.

12. SENSEI'S QUARTERS

The floor of these rooms is covered in shredded, rotting cloth, little more than bedding for rats. The air smells sourly of rat droppings and decay.

The sake set is exquisite with a market value of 100 gp. The brush is stuck to the ink vial by the dried ink. The ten shuriken gleam as if freshly polished. These are +1 *shuriken*. The skeleton's skull is missing, and the bones are lying as if the body was cut into several pieces before it fell, with

A large wooden table sits in the center of the room, its great age held at bay by the sturdiness of its construction. Resting on the table are several items, all covered with dust, a fine porcelain sake jar and two beautiful cups, an ink pot with brush sticking out of it, a burned out candle, a stick of red wax, and several neatly stacked shuriken. Lying near the far wall is a headless skeleton, its flesh and clothing long turned to dust.

arm bones and ribs neatly sliced. Hidden in the floor below the table is a secret storage compartment (Search DC 20) with a Poison Gas Trap.

Poison Gas Trap: CR 3, Fort save DC 18, 1d6 Con initial damage, 2d6 Con secondary damage; Search (DC 21); Disable Device (DC 21).

The trap effects everyone within 5 ft. of the table. The gas dissipates after 1d3 rounds. Inside the compartment is a black lacquered box containing a dozens scroll tubes sealed with wax. These scrolls contain all the secret *ninjutsu* techniques of the Koda Ninjutsu School, the collected knowledge of hundreds of long-dead spies and assassins. They are written in a secret language that could be decrypted over time with a Decipher Script check (DC 30).

13. REFUSE PIT

A yawning pit fills the room, 20 ft. across and 10 ft. deep. The bottom of the pit is littered with the detritus of torture and death, hundreds of bones and skulls, broken, splintered, gnawed, or crumbling to dust. The pit stops at the foot of the doorway, so anyone carelessly entering the room must make a Dexterity check (DC 15) or fall into the pit.

14. TRAINING TUNNELS

These tunnels are natural fissures. The walls are rough, but worn, as if by the passage of many feet and hands. The loose rock and gravel that spills over the paving stones cover the floor in the corridor. These tunnels were once used by the school to train ninja students in techniques of stealth and silent movement. The gravel and loose rock was placed here to teach the students how to move silently over noisy ground, therefore any Move Silently check in this area suffer a -10 circumstance penalty. A Wilderness lore check (DC 20) reveals the area is well-traveled. Another check (DC 25) shows the tracks are wildly various types, human footprints, snake trails, and animals of many sizes.

15. PLAY ROOM

In this room, Akashi waits for Lord Shotokami. Two tanuki, posing as messengers, have convinced Akashi that Lord Shotokami is coming in person to collect the stolen swords and reward Akashi for his deed. If the PCs talk to him, a Sense Motive check (DC 15) reveals that he feels guilty about the harm he caused his family, but that is overshadowed by hatred for his father. Under no circumstances does he give the swords back or give himself up. He has burned his bridges behind him; his only path now is forward. Characters who know Lord Kunemura's family, including Hanashi, instantly recognize him.

Akashi, Rog4/Nin1: CR 5; SZ M (humanoid); HD 5d6+10; hp 28; Init +8 (+3 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 13; Atks Ninja-to +5 melee (1d6+2), or 3 shuriken +6 ranged (1 plus scorpion venom); SA Sneak attack +1d6 damage, 12 shuriken with scorpion venom poison (Injury DC 18, 1d6 Str initial damage, 1d6 Str secondary damage), 2 eggshell grenades filled with pepper (Fort save, DC 10 or target is stunned); SQ Evasion rogue ability, ki breath, poison use; SV Fort +6, Ref +9, Will +3; Str 14 Dex 16, Con 16, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 16; AL N; Skills: Balance +10, Bluff +10, Climb +9, Disguise +10, Escape Artist +10, Hide +10, Jump +9, Listen +7, Move Silently +11, Spot +7, Tumble +10; Feats: Dodge.

16. SMALL TUNNEL

Only small creatures can fit into this tunnel. The tanuki use this to retreat if they feel they must flee. It leads outside, but branches wherever GM wishes.

17. SPIKED PIT TRAP

This pit 5 ft wide, 5 ft. across, and 20 ft. deep.

Spiked Pit Trap: CR 2; 2d6 falling damage; +10 melee 1d4 spikes for 1d4+2 damage per hit; Reflex save (DC 20) avoids; Search (DC 10); Disable Device (DC 20).

This tunnel leads to a secret exit about a quarter mile from castle.

THE BAKEMONO NO TANUKI

These creatures are delighted over the abundance of humans for them to play with. Use them in any way possi-

ble to confound and disconcert the PCs. The tanuki may pose as ninja or other samurai, even impersonating a PCs. Or, they might change into a nonhuman creature and frighten the PCs. When the PCs track down Akashi, they might not believe him to be real.

The tanuki are not evil. They are hungry and they particularly enjoy human flesh. Their caution and their love for a good game temper their hunger. They are intelligent and do not throw themselves mindlessly into a fight, unless they feel their home is threatened. Because they have lived here for many generations, they regard the abandoned ninjutsu school as their ancestral home and defend it by whatever means they can. They fight fiercely when provoked. There are 26 tanuki living here. If more than 15 are killed, they retreat from the area and find a new home elsewhere.

RESOLUTION

If the PCs retrieve the swords with no one else knowing about the theft, Lord Kunemura rewards them handsomely with expensive gifts or magic items, at the GM's discretion.

If news of the theft gets out and the swords are not retrieved, Lord Kunemura and his wife commit *seppuku*. If the PCs retainers, he orders them to commit *seppuku* for their failure or casts them out, making them ronin. To the most honorable samurai, *seppuku* would be preferable.

If Hanashi is exonerated, Tsuyokaze is forced to commit *seppuku* for slandering his name. Tsuyokaze knows this and does everything in his power to prevent it, even if proof of Hanashi's innocence is produced.

If the identity of the ninja is revealed, Lord Kunemura immediately realizes Lord Shotokami was behind the plot. He flies into a rage and vows to wage war against Lord Shotokami until his dying breath.

NEW MONSTER TYPE

BAKEMONO NO TANUKI

Medium-sized Shapeshifter

Hit Dice: 3d8+3 (16 hp)

Initiative: +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)

Speed: 30 ft./burrow 5 ft.

AC: 15 (+1 size, +1 Dex, +3 natural)

Attacks: 2 Claws +1 melee, bite +0 melee

Damage: Claws 1d4, bite 1d6

Face/Reach: 5ft. by 5ft./5ft.

Special Attacks: Charm person

Special Qualities: Alter self, darkvision 60 ft., rage

Saves: Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +3

Abilities: Str 10, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 15, Wis 11, Cha 15

Skills: Bluff +10*, Disguise +10*, Hide +5, Listen +5, Spot +10

Feats: Alertness, Improved Initiative

Climate/Terrain: Any land or underground

Organization: Solitary, bunch (2-5), pack (5-20)

Challenge Rating: 2

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always chaotic neutral

Advancement: 3-6 HD (Small)

The natural form of the bakemono no tanuki is a large badger, almost five feet long and two feet high at the shoulder. Its squat low-slung body is covered in thick brownish-gray fur, with long, sharp claws suitable for tearing through earth or flesh. Its black-striped, dog-like snout is filled with sharp teeth.

The tanuki is widely considered in folktales to be an intelligent, mischievous creature, capable of changing form at will. It is normally considered to be no real threat to society, but this particular offshoot of tanuki is quite different. The bakemono no tanuki take mischief to a more dangerous and vindictive level. Their greatest delight is to dupe humanoid creatures into complacency, then ambush and eat them. They enjoy the chase as much as the meal afterwards. Their alignment is chaotic neutral, but they have a great taste for humanoid flesh.

Solitary bakemono no tanuki are exceedingly rare, as they are very social creatures. They are most often found in packs. They prefer to live in burrows near settlements or well-traveled roads, where they use their abilities to attract prey or simply to cause mischief by playing pranks on unwary humanoids.

COMBAT

The bakemono no tanuki prefers to avoid combat until it and its brethren are ready to attack. Its favorite tactic is to pose as a beautiful human maiden in distress or a frightened child, luring its prey in closer, putting them at ease, even going so far as making amorous passes at males it perceives to be particularly vulnerable to this technique. At the moment the intended prey is most relaxed, the tanuki and its brethren attack. In combat, it uses its teeth and claws to great effect, and its berserker rage makes it even more fearsome.

Alter Self (Su): Bakemono no tanuki have the ability to assume the shape of any small or medium-sized animal or humanoid. It can change of form is a standard action and acts as the spell *alter self* as if cast by a 6th level sorcerer. They can change form three times per day, but may only maintain a shape for one hour before reverting back. If killed, it reverts to its natural form.

Charm person (Su): The bakemono no tanuki can *charm person* three times per day, as if the spell were cast by a 6th level sorcerer. There however is no verbal or somatic component to this spell use and thus takes on a fragment of a second to activate.

Rage (Ex): When the tanuki first takes damage in combat, it flies into a berserk rage on its next turn. It gains +4 Strength, +4 Constitution, and -2 AC. It cannot end its rage voluntarily.

Skills: Bakemono no tanuki receive a +5 racial bonus to Bluff and Disguise checks.

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