

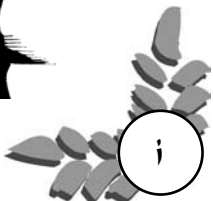


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NINJA BURGER: THE RPG

— 2ND EDITION —

*“This city is a point upon a map of fog...
Like us, it doesn't quite exist.”
— Ambrose Bierce*



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NINJA BURGER: THE RPG

— 2ND EDITION —

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Michael Fiegel, aka “æon,” is a writer and graphic designer best known as the primary force behind Ninja Burger. He is the founding member of æthereal FORGE, a loose coalition of artists and writers responsible collectively for Ninja Burger and several other RPG projects. He was an early member of Fark.com and created many of that site’s graphics during its fledgling years, including the logo. From 2002 to 2006 he was the Lead Columns Editor for RPG.net. He has written extensively for a variety of Roleplaying Game companies, including Dog Soul, Khepera, P.I.G., and R. Talsorian. He is also a regular book reviewer for Slashdot.org and writes for *Dragon Magazine*. He was born in Buffalo, New York and resides in San Francisco, California, where he is employed as a technical writer.

ABOUT ÆTHEREAL FORGE

<http://www.aeforge.com/>

æthereal FORGE is a loosely aligned group of artists, writers and other individuals working primarily in the areas of online content and RPG design and development. Aside from Ninja Burger, projects include: Darkpark.com, Gamegrene.com, Decay, Iconoclast, Sacour, and *Power Grrrl*.

ABOUT NINJA BURGER

<http://www.ninjaburger.com/>

Ninja Burger was founded in 1954, and soon became the world’s predominant underground ninja-run fast food delivery service. The Ninja Burger Web site was developed in 1999 by the honorable Kenshiro Aette-san and Miyoko Aenomi-san in the traditions of their honorable ancestors. Their solemn mission: to defend the downtrodden, fight for the honor of Ninja Burger, and to deliver hot and fresh food to Ninja Burger’s customers. The website debuted in 2000, and in 2001 was turned into an RPG by 9th Level Games; three supplements followed. In 2003 it was also turned into a card game by Steve Jackson Games, with a supplement following in 2004. In 2005, the *Ninja Burger Honorable Employee Handbook* was published as a Print-On-Demand PDF; in 2006 it will be published in print form by Citadel Press, an imprint of Kensington Books.

ABOUT THE PDQ SYSTEM

The **Prose Descriptive Qualities (PDQ) System** has been designed for evocative simplicity, speed, and flexibility in play, with three levels of resolution, suitable for any type of situation. It currently serves as the core game mechanics for *Dead Inside: the Roleplaying Game of Loss & Redemption (DI)*; *Ninja Burger: The Roleplaying Game*; *Monkey, Ninja, Pirate, Robot: the Roleplaying Game (MNPR:RPG)*; and *Truth & Justice (T&J)*. PDQ Core is available as a free download from the following URLs:

<http://www.atomicsockmonkey.com/freebies/di/pdq-core.pdf>

http://www.rpgnow.com/product_info.php?products_id=4175&

<http://e23.sjgames.com/item.html?id=ASM-000>

ABOUT ATOMIC SOCK MONKEY PRESS

<http://www.atomicsockmonkey.com/>

Atomic Sock Monkey Press is dedicated to high-quality, off-kilter, imaginative fun. Currently, that means tabletop games of both the “beer & pretzels” and roleplaying game (RPG) varieties. In the future, they may expand into other areas, but for now Atomic Sock Monkey Press is concentrating on games.

ABOUT CHAD UNDERKOFFLER

Chad Underkoffler is an editor for a telecommunications standards body by day and a freelance game writer by night. He’s been gaming since 1981, to the confusion of his family. His column “Campaign in a Box” appears in Pyramid Online at <http://www.sjgames.com/pyramid/>; he has written material for *Gamma World* (Sword & Sorcery), *GURPS* (Steve Jackson Games), and *Unknown Armies* (Atlas Games); and he is the author and publisher of *Dead Inside*, *Monkey, Ninja, Pirate, Robot: the RPG*, and *Truth & Justice*. Chad currently lives in Alexandria, VA, with his wife Beth and their two black cats.

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ABOUT ROLEPLAYING AS A NINJA

“Ninja? What the hell are ninja?”

– *American Ninja 2: The Confrontation*

Like many games, Roleplaying Games can involve boards, cards, paper, dice, score sheets, plastic or metal markers, etc. However, unlike most traditional games, RPGs don't necessarily require any of those things. Instead, most of the action in an RPG takes place in the imaginations of the players, as they take on the role of a make-believe character, describing the actions that character is performing in certain situations.

Because they focus on intangibles, Roleplaying Games seem unnatural to some people, but in fact they're probably more natural than other games. In fact, you've been doing it your whole life. You started roleplaying when you were just a toddler, by “playing pretend” or “make-believe,” making mud pies and playing house. Then you got older, and moved on to toy dolls or soldiers, and “Cops and Robbers” with plastic guns. A bit older, and you threw away your toys in favor of computer games – playing them, you might have pretended to be a Warrior, or a Race Car Driver, or a Plumber. And then in high school or college maybe, just maybe, you got involved with real acting, and got to be Hamlet, or King Lear, or Othello.

And in the midst of all that, chances are that at some point, you picked up a piece of wood – a broom handle, a tree branch, a 2x4 – and “crossed swords” in a mock sword fight. Chances are, you once said “Hi-yah!” and feigned a karate chop at a friend, or did your best impression of a flying kick. Chances are, you played hide-and-seek, and for a moment imagined you were invisible, hidden in the shadows. Chances are, you climbed a tree or a fence, and believed for a moment that you were something more than just an ordinary little kid. You were a *ninja*.

People like to think they have a pretty good idea of what a *ninja* is supposed to act like, and if you ask someone to pretend to be a *ninja* they'll probably be able to pull something off without giving it much thought. But the truth is that everyone's got a little bit different idea of what “*ninja*” means. Consider:

- The bumbling slapstick of **Beverly Hills Ninja**
- The “chop-socky” Kung-Fu of the **Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers**
- The pizza-loving **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles**
- The katana-wielding hacker Hiro Protagonist in Neal Stephenson's novel **Snow Crash**
- The *ninja* who flip out and “wail on guitars” on the **Real Ultimate Power** website

Quite obviously, there's a lot of difference between such popular notions of the *ninja*, and all of them are equally “true.” Which is to say, they're not “true” at all. Even the basic things that people agree on – that “real” *ninja* were assassins who wore black costumes, for example – are not wholly historically correct.

In actual point of fact, most “real” *ninja* were neither assassins nor spies, instead serving as a sort of Special Forces team, with a focus on surveillance and information gathering – things that *samurai* and other foot soldiers didn't have the time, skill or inclination to deal with. These “real *ninja*” were not cruel demons with magical powers, but rather close cousins of the *samurai*, following a *Bushido*-like code of conduct called *Ninpo*. They were not treacherous backstabbers, but honorable servants and bodyguards of their *Daimyos*.

Ninja also didn't wear black all of the time. That idea probably came from Japanese theater, where stagehands would wear black so they blended in with the backdrop on theater sets; as plays began to feature the “invisible *ninja*,” the obvious costume to choose was the “all-black” outfit the stagehands wore. In reality, *ninja* wore much more appropriate clothing. Generally they either dressed in disguise as peasants, monks or enemy forces, or wore clothing composed of dark red, dark blue, dark green, or some other dark, non-black fabric – totally black clothes actually stand out at night because night is not truly black.

The infamous weapons associated with the *ninja* – the *shuriken*, the *caltrop* or *tetsubishi*, and the *ninja-to* – are closer to the truth, but still carry with them misconceptions as to their use. *Shuriken*, for example, are generally not capable of killing an enemy in a single hit. Along with *tetsubishi*, they were more often used as a painful distraction while a *ninja* fled capture. The famous short-bladed *ninja-to* is mostly a modern invention; while short-bladed swords might have been used at times, “real” *ninja* would have used whatever was at hand, favoring the higher-quality *wakizashi* and *katana* when they were available, or using farming implements or common tools when they were better suited to the mission at hand.

The point in mentioning all this is to demonstrate that no matter what ideas about *ninja* that your players bring to the table – fictional, historical, or somewhere in between – any and all such preconceptions are equally valid (or invalid, as the case may be). There's plenty of room within the *Ninja Burger* world for broad interpretation of the *ninja* concept, and the first thing your group needs to do in order to enjoy this game is to never say “a *ninja* would NEVER do THAT.” *Ninja Burger* *ninja* can do whatever you imagine they might do – the aura of mystery is a major part of what makes them truly *ninja*.