

# Ninja Nights:

The Warlock's Journal

September 2015 - Contest #21



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# Introduction

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Welcome to *The Warlock's Journal* Contest!

The Warlock's Journal is a roving contest, at a different blog or website each month. The host picks the topic and then solicits entries from the RPG community at large. When all the entries are in, they are shared with the community and a fan vote is taken for the most popular entry. In September 2015, the contest was hosted by Tabletop Adventures.

This month's topic is "Ninja Nights." The challenge given was to describe a place for a ninja, in any genre, in less than 500 words. The locations described range from a dark rooftop, hidden tunnel, or quiet corner, to other, more exotic, places. Writers were allowed to submit more than one piece, and a few people chose to do so. The public was invited to vote on the entries (which were presented anonymously) and select the favorite.

**The winner of the Warlock's Journal Contest #21 was Mixu Lauronen for the entry, "The Eye of the Worm." Congratulations, Mixu, on having the favorite selection!**

This is the final version of "Ninja Nights," which gives the name of the author of each piece as well as acknowledging the winner. Visit the Tabletop Adventures website for the entire list of Warlock's Journal Contests.

We hope you enjoy each entry, and wish you good gaming.

The good people of Tabletop Adventures,

And the Overlord.

# 1. Bloodbark, Tree of a Thousand Corpses

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Author: Phil Nicholls

At a deserted crossroads outside the mighty Wildwood stands a lone tree. This gnarled chestnut tree bears a dark reputation.

It stands alone, twenty paces outside the eaves of the Wildwood. Many believe it once stood within the shadowed halls of this mighty forest, only for the nearby trees to step back from the fell spirit of this twisted chestnut. Indeed, the edge of the Wildwood does arc around Bloodbark, creating a wide clearing around the twisted boughs of the tree.

Bloodbark is a prime example of hiding in plain sight, for everybody in the Wildwood knows dark tales about this tree. For centuries, Bloodbark has been used as a gallows by the Forest Council. The higher branches bear all manner of decaying corpses, some swinging from nooses, others rotting in rusty iron cages. A few times, outlaws have been nailed to the trunk of the tree, leaving the distinctive red stains which give this tree its name.

Yet, Bloodbark holds another secret. The trunk of the Tree of a Thousand Corpses is hollow, and has been converted into a secret lair for a clan of woodland ninjas. Access to the trunk is via a hidden panel behind an ancient iron cage.

A ladder within the trunk takes the ninjas down into a series of small caves. There is always at least one ninja in residence, who spends most of the day concealed in the branches of Bloodbark, watching passing traffic. However, these caves have sleeping room for ten, allowing the tree to serve as a base of operations for any mission within the Wildwood.

The ninjas rely upon the haunted reputation of Bloodbark to keep away the inquisitive. Every few years, they stage a mock haunting, or similar event, to maintain the reputation of the tree, and ensure their base stays secret. The ninja clan has even befriended the resident crows to help maintain their secret.





## 2. Death Corner

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Author: Dean Keith

She pulled back into the shadows between the lights under the large canopy. Her hiding spot was perfect. There were deep shadows, with the bright lights in front of her to help keep her unseen. She was far enough away from the tables in the center of the pavilion to not be heard, but close enough to still keep an eye on her boss and the man he was meeting with. And the corner she was in was a nexus for the sound waves bouncing around, allowing her to listen in on their conversation. She could do her job but still remain out of the way until needed.

## 3. God in Jade and Gold

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Author: Darvis Vonkallack

In a moon lit valley, a secret grove, and until recently a lost temple.

Back to the old times it harkened, a faith now lost, but tonight, tonight it could be again. In this hidden shrine there was an altar few had ever seen. Next to it the old priest knelt. His life spent in study of the rituals needed, his mind set, his chi centered, he waited to bring his lost gods back to this world.

High above in the rotted peaked roof of the building, was shadow. Banished by myriad of candles and paper lanterns on the altar, the night seemed to find the only refuge there was amidst the beams and cobwebs of the rafters. Swallowed by the dark, one with the shadows, she sat and watched. Her years of training making her as motionless as the dust that lay undisturbed on the wooden beam beside her. This was more than just her duty, it was her fate and her faith.

Looking out through the window, the priest saw that the stars were right, and began his incantations.

Tonight was special, tonight the world would change. This was the priest's plan, to enact the correct esoteric rites, at the right time, to make things anew.

Looking out between the roof slats she saw that the stars were right and she could strike.

She pulled the small jade and gold squid-headed idol from her shozoku, and unscrewed its head. Removing a dart covered in a sticky ooze that seemed to move on its own, she slid it into the blowgun. Silently she mouthed a quick prayer of pure madness.

She would assure that the old ones would remain in power, the priest would be stopped, the light would be extinguished, the jade and gold god would continue.

## 4. Hotel of 1000 Blades

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Author: Jason Newman

The Red Orchard Hotel in Manhattan boasts some of the most luxurious service in the city to its wealthy clientele. There are some services they offer however that you won't find on their website. The truth of the matter is that the Red Orchard is an American front for the Fire Wind Society, a clan of ninja who sell their services to the most powerful men and women in the world to fuel their own mysterious agendas.

The entire hotel is staffed by ninja, most of which were street kids taken from the city, brainwashed, and trained in the hotel's extensive underground training facility. They are trained in the ninja arts of combat, espionage, and assassination and conduct missions all over the USA. Even when working at the hotel weapons and traps are ingeniously hidden all over so the staff will never be unarmed should they be attacked.

The penthouse of the hotel is never vacant as it is the home of Takeda Kusanagi, hotel manager and head of the American branch of the Fire Wind Society. At first glance the penthouse seem just like any other luxurious penthouse, but, like the rest of the hotel, there are compartments hidden all over containing weapons, traps and other surprises should a rival clan decide to attack. It is from here that Takeda ruthlessly coordinates training of new recruits, missions, and making sure the customers have the best stay of their lives at the Red Orchard Hotel.



## 5. Stars Fell on Ooki

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Author: Margaret Ernsberger

Ooki's "Palace of Purgatory," as it was called by the citizens, was a focus of anger and sometimes outright hatred from those whose taxes financed both the construction and lavish decoration. Add to that the money Ooki had stolen in various ways to keep his pockets well-lined, there wasn't a single member of the populace that didn't at least dislike him

Tanaka took one last check of her equipment. Two weapons, her shizuka no kunai, a multipurpose blade that she planned to use to gouge out places in one of the chimneys to get inside, and her shuriken no kaze, what some people called 'throwing stars' because of their shape.

Tanaka was in place just before the banquet guests arrived. She was underneath the extremely long table and was going to have to crawl the length of it to get to her target at the other end. The custom of the day called for table cloths to go to the floor on all sides, making it even easier to remain unseen.

Just as she reached the end, the tablecloth was lifted up to reveal Izanagi Ooki himself, an ugly, evil man who was so lazy he used a new piece of technology: a steam-powered chair to move around in just because he could. He suffered no illness but extreme greed.

Two guards yanked Tanaka to her feet, whereas she pushed upward against the floor and planted her feet in each of the guards' stomachs, then flipped around so she was on her feet again, leaving the guards on the floor. She pulled out a couple of her throwing stars but everyone sat frozen. Tanaka pocketed one of the stars and got out her blade. She put it against Ooki's throat and looked at the guests around the table. One woman cried out "You're not going to kill us all, are you?"

Tanaka looked at her almost tiredly, glad that her head covering only showed her eyes. "Foolish woman," she said. "Ninja are assassins. We aren't murderers. You should know at least as well as I what crimes this man has committed." She addressed the entire company, "Go, now. Tomorrow you will know the outcome, and the city will be free."

They didn't need anymore pushing, but quickly left the room. She turned to Ooki. He gave her a smirk. "I didn't know they taught women to be assassins. They must be running out of real men---"

Before he could finish speaking, she had whipped the star in her hand so that it cut through the hose that supplied steam to his chair. The hose whipped around, scalding him in the process. She stood there, watching him. He had done far worse to others, and his laziness had led to his punishment. He didn't have the strength to move out of the way of the boiling steam.

Tanaka remembered how her sensei had taught her that sometimes the best weapons were the ones that you improvised!

## 6. The Eye of the Worm

**\*\*Contest Winner\*\***

Author: Mixu Lauronen

A palace somewhere in the heart of a kingdom. The usual sort, with valets and gargoyles and tapestries. A guard stands at every door, armed to the teeth. Nobody can enter or leave without their knowledge. The king feels safe and cozy in his little world. He really is safe here.

The palace is built with bricks of local gray clay. They are unbreakable and unclimbable. Many a ninja have found the wall better than them. The whole structure is standing on a ledge above a great crevasse. Bones of unfortunate climbers litter the bottom.

Covered by bones, there's a hole. It opens up in a tunnel, meticulously dug by a ninja. For ten years he has dug and dug, burrowing through mud and stone. There's two more years to go, he estimates. There's no hurry. He has made a vow. The king will be dead before the end of the decade. That's four years from now.

The Eye of the Worm, the ninja calls his little underground escapade. Everybody thinks he has left the country, afraid of king's wrath. They were once brothers. Now they are bitter enemies.

Thirteen more cubits, and he is under the palace. The king's bedroom is in the middle of the structure. He is paranoid for good reason. Then it's just digging through the wooden floor of the bedroom at night. The ninja grabs his wakizashi. That will be the last thing the king will ever see.





## 7. The Faceless One's Lair

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Author: Dean Keith

He stood in a small, nondescript room. It had unpainted concrete walls with bolts sticking out in spots around the room. Pressing the right combination of bolts caused a small section of the wall to retract, exposing a shaft leading down with a ladder against the far side. Climbing down the ladder, he emerged into a large, square room. The door was in the center of one wall. To its left was a small table, a metal, industrial sink, and a closet filled with clothes. To the right was another table, a bit bigger than the other. Along the wall near that table was a small counter top with a stove, a microwave, and a small refrigerator. Most of the rest of the room held a padded mat with various practice dummies scattered around on it. The walls were adorned with shelves holding the various weapons and implements of his trade. A faint light emanated from the ceiling, allowing him to see without causing any eye strain. At the base of the entry shaft was a small lift used for bringing items too large to carry down the ladder into the room.

## 8. The Ledge of Death

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Author: Dean Keith

The rain was falling in sheets drenching everything around. But he remained dry, ensconced as he was under the eaves of the house. He crept slowly along a ledge on the third story, ever closer to the open window where his target slept. The ledge was narrow, only about six inches wide, covered in bird droppings, and severely cracked in spots, making it treacherous to navigate. Not to mention that this side of the building overlooked a two hundred foot chasm that wouldn't take much effort to fall into. The difficulty in traversing the ledge, and a desire to stay in the shadows and avoid the motion detectors, meant he had to move very slowly, taking a couple hours to reach this point. Only another hour and he would be in the room.



## 9. The Shaft of Foul Winds

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Author: Michael Kwiatkowski

The clan were hired to take out a high ranking official.

This official was very paranoid of keeping his position considering he had killed his predecessor...

He was constantly guarded except

when he went for his morning constitutional.

Enjoying these moments of quiet he had built a lavish washroom and a midden with a cushioned throne.

The only unguarded part of his estate was thru the shafts of foul winds ..

The shafts led to a small chamber beneath the throne. Which was rinsed every several months.

The ninjas climbed thru this shafts and waited through out the night til he made his appearance.

They left a paralytic on the seat and a major artery was cut.

They say it was not until midday when the official was finally found.



## 10. The Unsettling Worry at the Victim's Mind

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Author: Daniel Alves

In the dark corners of the mind, after the District of Curiosities, lies the Quarter of Fears. In it the Ninja has made its residence, striking from within at the helpless victim. The dimensions don't obey any logic understood by humanity and that allows the Ninja to always be close by. The presence of the Ninja slowly consumes the victim, who cannot distance itself. Inside its mind, the Ninja has amplified powers, for the fear increases its powers, and needs no sustenance besides the fear that let it inhabit this place. The Ninja is closer when the victim feels more vulnerable, and it feels like it could appear at any moment...





# 11. Yomi

Author: Jason Z.

There it was, the place I was to meet my source. I was deep in a back alley in Chuo Tokyo. My contact had asked me to meet him at some hole in the wall restaurant. I sat next to an unassuming looking old man at the counter, he was blowing on some udon noodles and reading a newspaper. I recognized him as my contact immediately. He was wearing a blue baseball cap, brown coat and blue jeans. His face was sharp and studded with grey stubble.

I sat next to him and slid a small envelope his direction. He laid his newspaper over the envelope and began to speak.

Yomi, he said in a hushed tone. Yomi, was one a place spoken of only in legend. It is the traditional land of the dead for my people. What most don't know is that Yomi is very real. Yomi is all around you right now and you don't even know it. Yomi is home of the Ninja, an underworld where business is attended to, wares can be acquired and contracts are assigned to those of sufficient skill.



You don't find Yomi on a map but it is built into the existing structure of Tokyo from the ground up. It exists between lines on maps. A few feet here a block there, Yomi spreads out like a cancer through the city. It consists of twisting corridors, large buildings, sprawling private grounds, and an entire wing of the subway system that is entirely hidden from the main subway. There are entire buildings hidden from the public that extend into the ground instead of above. Training facilities, clan houses, shops, some people spend their entire lives in Yomi never seeing the rest of the world.

The entrances to Yomi are all around you. The old woman across the street in the dry cleaners. The wall behind her register is false, leading to one of many entrances that are hidden all throughout the city. I turned to look but the old man clicked his tongue in disapproval so I simply looked forward and took in his words. He described a hidden city within a city. An underworld that was so meticulously hidden in the design of the city that if one didn't know what to look for one would never see it.

Many believe that the Ninja had been phased out of existence with the new world but that's not what happened at all. They did what Ninja's do best. Vanished.



## SPECIAL PREVIEW:

### Warlock's Journal Contest, October 2015

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After a summer break, the Warlock's Journal has begun travelling again; for October, the roving contest returns to [Tales of a GM](#). Here the contest focuses on the interplanar organization, Storm & Shield. Previous contests have determined the structure of the group itself, its nemesis, and later the headquarters of both groups. In the previous round of the Storm & Shield contest at Tales of a GM, we learnt of Hanna Crip's plan to boost her power by masquerading as a False Goddess.

For the fifth contest we turn our attention to the equipment used by agents of Storm & Shield. What Galactic Gadgets do the highly-trained agents use as they travel the cosmos? A utilitarian screwdriver? A pan-galactic blaster? A pen from Department Q which transforms into a sniper rifle? Just what do agents of Storm & Shield carry in their back pockets?

Sponsored by Ennead Games, the contest Storm & Shield: Galactic Gadgets launches at Tales of a GM on 1st October. Along with full entry details, there will be a complete rundown of the prizes on offer.

Come back to [Tales of a GM](#) in early October for all the terms and conditions to the Storm & Shield: Galactic Gadgets contest.

Happy Gaming  
Phil

