

Jigokuraku

By Carvin

Introduction

For millennia, mankind has sought the elixir of life, that mythical potion said to grant whoever should imbibe it eternal life. Such an object has long been considered the stuff of mere legend, however, and few have ever pursued it with any real sincerity. That is, until now. Recently, rumours have spread throughout Japan of a mysterious island far to the south, an island believed to be Paradise itself and the home of the fabled elixir.

However, getting to this island is far easier said than done. By order of Tokugawa Nariyoshi, the eleventh shogun of the Tokugawa shogunate, many men have been sent to the island in search of it, but only one has ever returned alive, braindead and half-transformed into a humanoid flower. Undeterred by these losses, the shogun has organised yet another expedition to this mystical isle.

This one, however, will be different. Instead of the usual fare of scholars and soldiers, this voyage will instead be carried out by a number of Japan's most dangerous criminals, from brutal bandits to heartless ninja. All have committed crimes worthy of execution, but the shogunate has promised to pardon the crimes of any who return with the elixir. These criminals will not be going alone, though. To prevent them from betraying the government and escaping, each convict will also be accompanied by one of the shogunate's executioners, the Yamada clan, each and every one of whom is a master of the blade.

The island, known as Kotaku to its inhabitants, is no paradise though, as those who arrive on it will soon discover. Terrible butterflies carrying venom that can turn men into plants within minutes, towering monsters appearing like twisted mockeries of gods, and more lurk within the island's lush forests, while unpredictable water currents and enormous beasts of the sea prevent anyone who makes landfall from escaping. That's not even to mention the island's rulers, the Tensen: immortal humanoids with a seemingly endless capacity for regeneration and the ability to control a strange, invisible force that lets them tear men apart with a flick of their wrists.

You arrive in this world on the exact day that Yamada Asaemon Sagiri, one of the only female executioners, meets the infamous ninja Gabimaru the Hollow in his prison cell, bringing to him the offer that kickstarts the event of the series. Chances are, you'll soon be tasked with joining this expedition to the island, though depending on your choices you may already be there. Be warned, however – unless you're well-prepared or quick on your toes, in this world death can come quickly and suddenly.

Take **1,000** CP. You're going to need it.

Starting Location

Your starting location is determined by your background. Alternatively, you may choose to pay 50 CP to start in any location you choose in Japan or Kotaku.

Ninja begin in the village that serves as their base of operations, where they were born and trained in their profession. Depending on your choices, this might be the Iwakure that has long been home to the legendary Gabimaru the Hollow, or somewhere else entirely.

Convicts begin in a heavily-guarded prison cell, having recently been caught by the agents of the shogunate and sentenced to death. Should you not escape beforehand, within a few days one of the Asaemon will visit you, bringing an offer to pardon you of your crimes in exchange for travelling to a mysterious, paradisaical island in search of the Elixir of Life.

Asaemon start at the home and headquarters of the Yamada clan, where the swordsmen of the clan are raised and trained in the noble art of beheading. Though your first few days will be fairly peaceful, should you not have any other work that needs doing, the clan head may end up deciding you're a suitable candidate to take part in the expedition to Kotaku.

Tensen begin in the palace of Horai, the grand palace complex at the very centre of Kotaku. Though things will be fairly standard fare for the time being, soon enough a rather interesting group of humans will wash up on the island, humans who, if left unchecked, may well cause the death of your siblings and the destruction of the entire island.

Background

Choose any one of the backgrounds below, any of which can serve as a drop-in option if you so wish. You're free to choose any age you like, within reason. For Ninja, Convicts, and Asaemon, this could be anything from your early teens to old age. An Immortal, on the other hand, would most likely be well over a thousand years old. You may also choose to keep your gender the same or change it for no extra cost.

Ninja - Free

You're one of the many shinobi currently operating within Japan, born and raised in one of the nation's secretive ninja villages in the arts of stealth, espionage, and murder. The ninja of this world, however, aren't merely assassins who strike from the shadows, but cunning wielders of supernatural ninpo too, which can range from suppressing their own presence to move undetected to enveloping their bodies in remarkably unsubtle, but highly destructive, conflagrations. Whether you remained in your village or struck out on your own as some kind of freelancer is up to you, though your skills remain the same regardless.

Convict - Free

Whatever your life might have been like beforehand, you're now a convicted criminal, locked up in one of Japan's prisons. What your crimes were, exactly, are up to you: perhaps you were a terrible monster feared throughout the land, such as a bandit king renowned for your viciousness and cunning or a ruthless warrior-monk who left dozens of samurai dead. Or maybe you're just the last surviving member of a mountain village that didn't pay due respects to the shogunate, or perhaps a swordsman whose display of prowess offended the wrong daimyo.

Asaemon - Free

You're a member of the Yamada clan of ronin, and a rather prominent one at that. No, you're not one of the servants the family heads or even one of the clan's many apprentices learning the way of the sword, but one who bears the Yamada Asaemon name: in other words, one of the sword testers and executioners the clan is known for, each a master of the blade. How you became a member of this clan is up to you: while some are born into it, others who show promise are adopted and trained by the clan's schools from a young age, or perhaps even later if they're talented enough.

Immortal – 600 CP

By choosing this background, you've long since transcended the limits of your own humanity, if you were even human to begin with. No, you're one of the Tensen, or Heavenly Immortals, that rule over the island of Kotaku, an eternally youthful being well over a thousand-years-old that can regenerate from almost any injury at an

alarming rate. The exact nature of your immortality is up to you: perhaps you're a synthetic being created from a fusion of human and plant, like most of the Tensen, or maybe you're more like Rien, who was once a mortal human who now resides within one of these artificial bodies. Whatever it may be, only the most exceptional of humans could even hope to challenge you in combat.

The full details of what choosing this background gives you are detailed under the 'Tensen' perk of the Immortal perk line.

Perks

All backgrounds may discount two perks at each price tier on their corresponding perk lists, with a discounted 100 CP perk being free.

General

Taoist – Free

Within this world there exists a mystical energy known as Tao, which serves as the source of all things, both living and non-living. In living creatures, small amounts of Tao are expended with each action they take, such as moving or thinking, and as such may very well be seen as a creature's soul or life force. However, this is not all living beings can use Tao for: in particular, exceptional humans, whether they are aware of it or not, may learn to manifest and manipulate their own Tao to accomplish incredible feats many would consider supernatural.

The way Tao is manifested is through achieving balance in one's spirit, accepting both the opposing extremes in their heart to achieve a middle path, such as by balancing both their strengths and weaknesses or achieving a state that hangs between the extremes of pure tranquillity and raging emotion. It is important to note, though, that one's mental state also affects one's ability to wield Tao. Emotional turmoil, despair, or other significantly unbalanced emotional states may cause one's strength to falter, while other, particularly intense emotions like love or anger can lead to sudden, temporary surges in strength.

Not everyone's Tao has the same qualities, however. This is because each person's Tao possesses one of five elemental attributes: Fire, Earth, Metal, Water, and Wood. This is of particular note as Tao of each attribute is strengthened by contact with one attribute and hindered by contact with another. For example, a person with Fire Tao will find themselves recovering faster and their abilities strengthened when a person with Wood Tao makes contact with them, but their Tao will be weakened by someone with Water Tao. Furthermore, the Yang Tao of males and the Yin Tao of females are also subtly distinct. While this has nowhere near the practical effect of the elemental attributes, it is worth noting that, through intimate contact between two individuals of these opposing extremes, the Tao of both partners will be replenished and strengthened.

The uses of Tao are many and varied. The most basic and fundamental of such usages is the ability to sense the Tao of living beings and objects around them. Through sensing their Tao alone, even an inexperienced user would be able to detect someone and ascertain details about them ranging from their exact height and weight to the state of their health, even if they were on the other side of a wall or building.

You possess a basic awareness and ability with Tao, enough that you can sense both your own Tao and that of both the people and things around you. With experience and training, it will become possible to use this sense to determine the intentions behind someone's movements in combat, making it easy to predict what they're

going to do. Further uses, too, may also be learned, such as being able to enhance your own physical abilities, firing off powerful projectiles that are invisible to anyone without the ability to sense Tao, cloaking yourself in a protective armour of Tao, and many other, more esoteric abilities.

It is worth noting, though, that usage of Tao is not without its risks. As stated before, Tao is, in essence, the user's life force, so excessive expenditure may lead to detrimental effects, ranging from fatigue at the lower end to loss of memories or even death at its most severe. Fortunately, there are numerous ways for one to recover lost Tao, from resting to contact with someone with a restorative attribute, and these risks don't tend to affect those who only use Tao in moderation.

Ninja

Oft-Forgotten Basics – 100 CP

With how much the ninja of this world like to employ flashy ninjutsu techniques like turning their body to rock or setting their entire body ablaze, it can sometimes seem as if these shinobi have entirely forgotten their training in stealth and subterfuge. However, this is only because it is nigh impossible to hide from beings that can sense your very life force, making head-on attacks the most practical option. Against more mortal foes, their abilities in the shadowy arts remain just as potent as ever.

You are well-versed in the mundane skills any ninja should know, be it espionage, guerrilla tactics, or the usage of traditional ninja weaponry such as kunai or shuriken. On top of this, you're also skilled in a martial art of your choice, be it something mundane like judo or kung fu or something more esoteric, like a secret taijutsu taught exclusively in your ninja village.

Your real specialty, though, lies in the art of stealth, an area in which you easily surpass most of your shinobi peers. It would be well within your abilities to sneak into a well-guarded fortress, assassinate the commander, and escape without any of the inhabitants noticing a thing until you had long since escaped, and even many ninjas would have trouble noticing your presence unless they knew exactly where to look. Unfortunately, this perk doesn't give you any of the more ostentatious supernatural skills some in your line of work are capable of, though that may be for the best.

The Fifth Iron Rule – 100 CP

The shinobi of Iwakakure village abide by a number of guidelines within which they operate to accomplish their missions. Known as the Iron Rules, these include such principles as instructing adherents to fully analyse the abilities of their foe before confronting them, or to inflict grievous damage upon their foe should death be upon them. One of these rules, however, takes on greater importance in Kotaku than all others. The Fifth Iron Rule: avoid confronting an unfamiliar enemy.

You, in particular, are a master of this rule. At a glance, you are able to ascertain the approximate strength of your foe. You won't get any detailed information, but you'll be able to tell if they're weaker, stronger, or around equal to you, and if it turns out that they're so powerful that your only chance of survival is to flee, that's where the second part of this perk kicks in. You have an uncanny ability to make 'tactical retreats' from battle. So incredibly slippery are you when making your escape that only the most overwhelmingly determined and swift of foot would ever be able to catch up to you.

The Battle for Normality is Punishing – 100 CP

In many villages, the training to become a ninja is incredibly brutal. Starting from early childhood, they are made to undergo brutal training in the killing arts, exposed

to drugs that induce agonising pain, and forced to kill off those who might be their friends, all to mould them into merciless killers with nothing but indoctrinated loyalty to their clan. As such, it is no surprise that many ninja have a screw or two loose, being so far off the deep end that, even if they escaped, they could never live a normal life.

You, however, are different. No matter what trauma, indoctrination, or torturous experiences you go through, no matter how irregular or inhuman your mindset becomes, you will always remain capable of recovering. Even if you were an emotionless husk of a man who lived for nothing but murder, you'd still be able to find a ray of hope that, if grasped, would allow you to regain the full scope of human emotions. Though it may not be easy given the experiences you might go through, you'll always be able to overcome your past and, one day, live a normal, peaceful life like everyone else.

Empty – 200 CP

From a young age, the one who would become known as Gabimaru the Hollow was trained to become Iwagakure's greatest assassin, casting aside all fears and desires to become an emotionless killer without mercy or remorse. Though, perhaps ironically, he became far stronger once he found a connection and weakness in his wife, leading to him regaining his emotions, there were some strengths that he lost in this process: namely, his newfound empathy led to him occasionally hesitating when he should strike.

While you still have the full range of your human emotions, you have gained many of the remorseless traits that made the Gabimaru of old so feared. For one, no amount of corpses, violence, or gore, no matter how brutal or gut-wrenching, will ever make you flinch or hesitate in the slightest, allowing you to look over fields of mangled bodies as if they were an everyday sight. Furthermore, you'll never let your emotions or anxieties get in the way of what needs to be done. No matter how morally reprehensible an action may be, you'd be able to do it if the situation truly called for it. You might not like it, but if there truly is no other practical alternative, you can accept this and carry it out without hesitation.

Drink Up – 200 CP

In this world, the use of ninpo allows ninja to achieve various effects that are quite undeniably supernatural. For some, this can take on the form of producing convincing illusions to deceive the senses, but many more go down a more ostentatious route, pulling off such tricks as turning their arms to stone to breathing huge gouts of flame like a dragon. While undeniably powerful, these abilities do tend to be lacking in the subtlety shinobi are known for, an area you seem to be well-versed in due to your area of expertise: poison.

By taking this perk, you've become capable of a rather potent technique through which you can convert any of your bodily fluids, from saliva to blood, into a tasteless

poison that can painlessly kill even powerful ninja within a minute. Naturally, you are completely immune to this poison, and can choose at-will whether this ability is active or not. However, there are a few limitations: for one, the bodily fluids in question must be in contact with your body to be converted into this poison, though they retain their poisonous properties when separated afterwards of course. Secondly, the poison must enter the body to take effect, either through ingestion or an open wound. As such, this technique is best used for assassination purposes, for it is rather difficult to use in open combat.

Return to Sender – 200 CP

While the training a ninja might receive will naturally vary from village to village, it stands to reason that the martial arts are one of the key aspects taught. The shinobi of Iwagakure, in particular, have demonstrated proficiency in the art of aikido, which focuses on using an attacker's own power against them. While of questionable utility in the real world compared to most other martial arts, when its teachings are combined with a more practical mindset and a ninja's strength, they can prove to be a rather effective tool against some of this world's more dangerous foes.

You, in particular, are a master in this art of redirection. Even when fighting foes that are far stronger than you physically, such that even taking a single hit might be enough to kill you, you're able to use their own force against them, taking the force behind their attacks and redirecting them into powerful counterattacks of your own. This doesn't just apply to physical combat either, but more supernatural abilities, too. In this world, for instance, you could redirect the current of an opponent's Tao right back at them, allowing you to bypass their defences to harm them normally even if their attribute should normally hinder you. It should be noted, however, that this way of fighting is not without risks, for some opponents may well be too strong, fast, or cunning for you to counter in this way.

The Wicked Prevail – 400 CP

There are many who believe that the only true way of fighting involves a simple, head-on clashing of blades, an honourable battle where the stronger fighter wins. To a ninja, however, this is simply not true. Putting aside matters of stealth, it completely ignores the fact that combat is composed not just of a physical battle, but an equally important psychological one, too, a fact that can be manipulated to allow weaker opponents to triumph over foes that should be their superior in every way simply by toying with their emotions and breaking their wills.

It is in this art of psychological warfare that your expertise lies, for you have an uncanny talent at finding your enemies' emotional and mental weaknesses through even the most basic of conversation, or in certain circumstances even just their body language or the way they're fighting. And once such a weakness has been identified, you're fully capable of mercilessly exploiting it to its fullest extent, whether that be by breaking your enemy's will or manipulating them into fighting exactly the way you want them to. You're skilled enough that, given the right circumstances, you'd be

able to take on the strongest of the Tensen and come out alive even if you knew nothing of Tao, though actually harming them may still be beyond you without other skills.

As one's mental state affects the strength of one's Tao, this ability is especially useful in this world. For instance, by driving someone to an emotionally unstable state you could weaken their abilities significantly, perhaps allowing you to land a decisive blow they might otherwise shrug off.

Kunoichi – 400 CP

While female ninjas, or kunoichi, are overwhelmingly in the minority in Iwagakure, that's not to say they don't exist as a whole. To the contrary, entire villages dedicated to training these shinobi exist. Though the training they receive may differ a little bit from other ninjas, being more focused on deception over direct combative ability, that's not to say they are any less deadly than their male counterparts. Few are better in the field of assassination, and with the right ninjutsu at their disposal they can be surprisingly deadly in a straight-up battle, too.

Now, be you female or not, you have been trained extensively in the ways of the kunoichi. For one, this makes you incredibly skilled in the arts of deception, enough so that you could quite easily talk your way past highly alert, well-trained guards who ordinarily might just try to kill you on sight, and that's before you make use of your skill at seduction. So long as they're attracted to your gender and not highly devoted to someone, your honeyed words could spark the flames of attraction in almost anyone you choose to use them on, making it that much easier to get them to do what you want.

On top of these, you also gain access to a powerful set of ninjutsu exclusive to the kunoichi. Using these techniques, you're able to secrete unusually large amounts of sticky, mucus-like fluid from your skin and form them into thick strings you can manipulate at-will. While it may not seem too powerful at first glance, this ninjutsu is incredibly versatile in its application. Aside from the obvious of using these strings to ensnare people, wrapping them up much like a spider would their prey, they can also be formed into garrottes or whip-like tendrils sharp enough to slice an unarmoured foe into pieces. With enough practice, you may even develop further uses, such as connecting these strings to corpses or hollow suits of armour to use them as puppets to fight for you.

Hair-Forged – 400 CP

To an experienced ninja, almost anything can be used as a weapon. Aside from the traditional staples like kusarigama and shuriken, most shinobi are incredibly skilled unarmed combatants too, making them almost as deadly with their fists as with a blade. However, it might be said that the best weapon of all is one your opponent never expects, that won't be seen as one at all until it's too late. After all, the hardest thing to defend against is an attack you're not expecting.

Taking this to heart, you've mastered a certain ninjutsu that allows you to turn perhaps the most harmless part of your body into a deadly weapon: your hair. Aside from now being able to control your hair as if it were just another limb and adjust its length at-will, capable of growing it by many metres in the blink of an eye, you've also developed a number of techniques to make full use of this ability. For one, by shaping your hair you're able to form it into almost any mundane tool you can think of, such as keys, functioning whistles, and kunai that cut just as well as the real thing, all of which retain their form even when separated from your body.

You're also capable of using your hair in more offensive capabilities, such as by forming it into rope-like tendrils that can burrow through the ground to restrain its unaware victims with ease, striking with dozens of tendrils at once that are each sharp enough to easily tear straight through a man, or even creating extensions to your own limbs out of hair to give you that little extra bit of reach.

I'll Sacrifice Whatever it Takes Otherwise – 600 CP

For most ninjas, their lives are entirely devoted to their clan. They live only to carry out whatever missions their elders give them without question, having no other attachments in the world. As such, most see their lives as completely expendable, making them more than willing to kill themselves if their commander deems it necessary for even the most arbitrary reasons. However, those who do somehow manage to form an attachment tend to cling more closely to life than anyone else.

Like these ninjas, you've got a truly inhuman amount of willpower, able to shrug off the kinds of physical and mental trauma that could break a regular man several times over. No matter how many times you're knocked down, your determination will allow you to get back up again, powering through incredible amounts of pain and injuries that really should have killed you to continue fighting, though naturally there are some wounds you can't power through, whether they be too severe or simply far too great in number.

What's more, you can turn any attachments you might have that may be seen as a weakness, such as having a dearly-beloved wife, into a source of strength. When attempting to protect, rescue, or otherwise fight for their sake, both your willpower and physical abilities become noticeably empowered. It won't be enough to defeat a foe who's well and truly out of your league, but it might just be enough to let you fight with them on even terms.

Iwakure Elite – 600 CP

While the ninjas of Iwakure village are all both highly renowned and feared for their abilities, enough that the shogunate would entrust them with obtaining the elixir of life should the convicts fail, there are some who stand head and shoulders above the others. Aside from just being masters of both stealth and murder, they possess abilities that can only be described as supernatural. And, whether you're from Iwakure or not, it seems that you're one of them.

In terms of physical ability, you're exceptional in all areas. You're strong enough to send hulking giants the size of trees crashing to the ground with a single kick, shatter wooden handcuffs as if they were made of paper, or effortlessly stop the charge of an ox weighing almost a tonne with a single hand. Your speed is similarly impressive, allowing you to dart about at speeds far exceeding that of an Olympic sprinter and strike so fast that your hands become a blur, and your stamina is equally so, such that you could fight for hours on end without tiring and run over 150 kilometres in a single day. In addition, you're also tough enough that you could shrug off blows that could shatter trees to pieces.

On top of all this, you also possess incredible amounts of control over your own body, down to being able to control each muscle of your body individually. Through this, you can harden parts of your body to the point that a katana would snap in twain against your skin, dislocate your joints at-will to grant unparalleled flexibility, and even stop or start your own heart if you so desired it. On top of this, you're also able to adjust your own body temperature as you please.

While this last point may not sound too impressive, it allows you to perform perhaps the most powerful of ninjutsu: Ascetic Blaze. By raising your own body temperature, you cause the oils in your skin to catch fire, wreathing you in an enormous inferno that, fortunately, you seem to be rather resistant to, allowing you to quickly incinerate large groups of foes. Since this technique is rather tiring to use, you're also capable of using a number of other fire-based ninjutsu on a smaller scale, allowing you to expel large goutts of flame from your mouth, coat individual limbs in fire, throw flaming projectiles that explode in a disorientating flash of light, and more, should you spend the time to develop them.

Taolord – 600 CP

Aside from its existence largely being unknown, there's a very good reason most of the people in this world can't manipulate Tao, that being that one's inborn talent has a large influence on how well one can wield it. Some people are exceptional prodigies, capable of learning how to wield it without even realising it. Others, however, are not so lucky, requiring incredible sacrifices just to figure out how to perceive it, and that's only if they even have the potential at all.

Fortunately for you, you happen to be one of the aforementioned prodigies: to you, wielding Tao comes almost as easily as breathing. Even if you'd never even heard of Tao, you could learn to perceive it and use it in combat just from a single battle against a practiced user. Your reserves of this energy are already on par with the Tensen, inhuman immortals who have spent millennia training in it, allowing you to go through over an hour of Tao-intensive battles without running dry, and your precision is equally phenomenal, granting incredible levels of fine control over your power. And while your techniques may not be their level yet, it wouldn't take you long to reach them, as your training in this art is tens of times faster than that of a normal practitioner.

Furthermore, this perk works just as well with any other type of mystical power based on spirit or life energy you may be able to wield, such as the ki or chi of other worlds.

Convict

A Costly Absolution – 100 CP

Make no mistake, even outside of the isle of Kotaku and the villages of the ninja, this world is a brutal and unforgiving place. Even those trying to live a quiet and peaceful life can be considered criminals deserving of a merciless execution if they fail to kowtow before the shogun's arrogance. Most of the time, such 'criminals' are simply killed without a second thought, but if they have skills the government can make use of, they may just be given a second chance.

For whatever reason, you seem to be offered these second chances more often than most. Whenever you're to be punished for a crime, you'll receive offers from the governing body that apprehended you to perform certain tasks suited to your skill set in exchange for being pardoned. The difficulty and danger of these tasks tend to scale with the severity of your crimes. Steal from a noble and you may be asked to apprehend a noted thief or infiltrate a criminal organisation. Commit mass murder or make a living as a bandit king? You might just be given a task on the level of obtaining the elixir of life. It may not be easy, but you can be assured it'll always be possible to complete.

Be warned, however: abandoning your mission or failing to complete it will not be looked on lightly, and if you are caught again you will receive no further chances.

Betray or Be Betrayed – 100 CP

It might come as a shock to some, but death row convicts don't tend to be the most trustworthy of people. Whether they be bloodthirsty bandits or solitary assassins, they don't tend to work well with others, and even if you do somehow manage to convince one not to attack you right off the bat, the chances are high they'll just literally stab you in the back as soon as they can benefit from it. Or, for certain types, if it merely seems like it'll be fun to do so.

Despite what it may seem, though, there are some ways to get along with these people, ways you are very well-versed in. In particular, you're incredibly skilled at brokering alliances founded on mutual self-interest, capable of getting even heartless killers of questionable sanity to stop trying to murder you for a while and join forces with you, so long as you both have something that you want. What's more, these newfound 'allies' are much less likely to betray you than they might otherwise be so long as even the smallest benefit remains for working with you, making these pacts much more stable than they have any right to be.

Bigger Blade, Bigger Bang – 100 CP

Seeing how most of the major human characters in this setting are either ninjas or samurai, it comes as no surprise that they tend towards more subtle, refined weaponry, such as katanas, daggers, or precise, graceful martial arts. However, though these methods of fighting may be deadly in their own right, there's one thing

they lack: overwhelming destructive power, and what has more destructive power than an impractically oversized weapon?

To you, however, such weapons are not impractical in the slightest, for you're able to wield weapons much larger than you really should be able to without issue. Even if you were a human of average height, in your hands a massive axe wielded by a giant as tall as a tree would be just as usable as any other weapon, though you may need to wield it in two hands instead of the normal one. It's almost as if they become magically balanced to suit your grip, despite the blade alone being taller than you are.

To supplement this ability, your raw strength is also rather impressive, enough that you could lift and carry these weapons without issue and send a man flying six feet into the air with a single kick.

Men Aren't Meant to be Plants – 200 CP

Contrary to what some may have you believe, Kotaku is the furthest thing on Earth from paradise, and little makes this clearer than the deceptively-named paradise butterflies. A single sting from these seemingly innocuous insects can inflict their victim with a terrible venom, rapidly turning their flesh to wood until, minutes later, they're little more than a mindless, man-shaped tree. Worse, the only known way to escape such a fate is to lop off the part of the body that was stung before the arborification can spread.

Luckily for you, you needn't worry about such a fate, for you seem to be completely immune to any attempt to transmute, transfigure, or transform your body against your will. No matter how many times the aforementioned butterflies sting you, you'll suffer no worse effects than a little bit of prickling pain, and even if a being far beyond your power tried to turn your body to stone or into something else entirely, such abilities simply wash over you harmlessly. Unless you deliberately allowed them to take hold, for some reason.

Learn Through Doing – 200 CP

The repeated training exercises and rigid katas taught in dojos are good and all, but any experienced fighter can tell you that they don't tend to translate all that well to genuine combat. After all, swinging a sword over and over again in a relatively safe, controlled environment can't compare in the slightest to the fast-paced chaos of a real fight. This is something you understand well, and it shows in the way you learn.

When you practice a combat-related skill through getting actual combat experience rather than training through mere theory or drilling, the rate at which you improve in said abilities is greatly enhanced, far more than it logically should be. It's to the point that a single life-or-death battle could give you gains comparable to weeks or even months of training. However, there has to be a genuine risk of you actually dying in said combat for this perk to come into effect. A battle against an opponent so weak you could beat them in your sleep will hardly teach you anything new, after all. No, if

your foe is not stronger than you, they should be your equal or at least close to it, otherwise you'll see no improvements from this perk's effects.

Calm in the Storm – 200 CP

For every cool, emotionless warrior you'll hear stories of, there's another about their opposite: the raging barbarian whose every strike is fuelled by their overflowing emotions. However, while the strengths of the latter are undeniable, such a way of fighting has a glaring weakness: one who becomes too gripped by their emotions often loses sight of their rationality. Such was the case of the Bandit King Aza Chobe who, in becoming a monster of superhuman power, lost himself to his inhuman rage and almost killed the only person he cared for in the world before recovering his sanity.

It's a good thing, then, that such a fate needn't ever concern you. No matter what happens, you're always capable of maintaining a perfect grip on your rationality and normal personality. No matter how strong your emotions may become, there'll always be a part of you that remains cool, allowing you to think logically at all times. This even applies in more supernatural cases, such as when you take on a monstrous transformation or enter a berserker's rage. Even as you seem to be in the depths of a fury-fuelled rampage on the outside, your mind will remain as sane and logical as ever. Assuming you were sane in the first place, that is.

Sight for an Eye – 400 CP

Once, the swordsman Tamiya Gantetsusai's name was spoken with reverence across Japan. It was said that his skill with the blade was unparalleled in eight provinces. However, after enraging a daimyo who once sought to employ him, he was reduced to a mere criminal sentenced to death, which was how he ended up on the convicts' expedition to Kotaku. Though, if all goes as it normally should, he'll return alive and receive his pardon, he did not return unscathed, losing his left hand and eye in the process. Despite these great losses, however, his skill with the blade was not diminished. To the contrary: when he returned, he was stronger than ever.

Though this perk may not give you Gantetsusai's mastery of the blade, it does give you something of equal importance: his ability to stay fighting strong no matter what injuries may befall him. From now on, no matter how injured you become, your effectiveness in combat won't be diminished in the slightest. You could be right on the verge of death, blood spilling from all wounds, and you'd fight right on as if you were in your prime.

Stranger yet, by willingly sacrificing parts of your body you'll always somehow end up stronger than before. If you cut off a hand, you'd be able to instantly adjust your balance, fighting style, and handedness to flawlessly compensate for it, and you'd likely figure out a powerful technique or two in the process. If you gouged out an eye, you might adapt to be able to see the very souls and life forces of others. Be warned, however, that the benefits you'll gain from this effect are almost entirely

nullified if you make the sacrifice while knowing it'll only be temporary. Losing a hand is a lot less serious to someone who can simply grow it back, after all.

Survival of the Fittest – 400 CP

It wasn't the raw, unnatural strength or martial skill of Aza Chobe that made him so powerful, but the life philosophy he held to: that the strongest survive by adapting to their environment. It was by living with this in mind that he could, as a mere child, rise up to become the feared leader of the bandit gang that were intent on enslaving him. Even after being sent to the hellish paradise of Kotaku in search of the elixir of life, he never stopped adapting, which eventually resulted in him becoming a being so powerful that even the mighty Tensen would rather ally with and study him than use him as an ingredient for the elixir of immortality, a respect they never extended to any other outsider.

Much like him, you have become incredibly adept at adapting yourself to best suit any situation you might find yourself in. With this, you could not only survive in almost any environment, no matter how hostile or alien, but thrive, going from the underdog to the top of the food chain should it be within your abilities. It doesn't matter whether you're trying to survive all alone in a barren wasteland or trying to navigate the political machinations of an unfamiliar nation, you'll adapt in no time at all.

It's not just situations that you can adapt to, though, but those you face in combat, too. As you fight an unfamiliar foe, you'll quickly find yourself coming to understand the extent and nature abilities and coming up with countermeasures to deal with them. Should they have any weaknesses, be it a weak point on their body or a flaw in their fighting style, you'll come to identify them in no time, too. However, whether you have the power to best capitalise on these weaknesses is another matter entirely.

Sword Dragon – 400 CP

Sure, the Yamada Asaemon may lay claim to the title of the land's greatest masters of the sword, and their execution tricks are certainly flashy. But at the end of the day, tricks are all they are, almost impossible to pull off on anyone who isn't helpless. No, the real measure of what makes one a blade master is how well they can use it for its intended purpose: the destruction of anything its edge comes into contact with. It just so happens, then, that you are well-suited for this style of combat.

In terms of sheer skill with a sword, there are very few who could even be considered your equal, and there are fewer still who could rival the sheer destructive power you can bring to bear. You're more than capable of slicing whole groups of men apart or cutting a full-sized wooden warship in twain with a single swing of your sword, and that's if you're only as strong as a normal man. In effect, even a mundane sword acts as a force multiplier in your hands, allowing you to exert far more power than you normally could.

That's not to say your swordsmanship is lacking in other areas, though – far from it. Though not quite as great as the Yamada Asaemon's best, your speed and precision with a blade is such that, in mere moments, you could cut apart a small swarm of butterflies in a flurry of quick cuts, and bring down a blistering hail of rapid strikes upon anyone foolish enough to catch your ire.

Monster of the Tan – 600 CP

In order to create *tan*, the prototype elixir of life the Tensen use in order to extend their lifespans and replenish their Tao reserves, one key ingredient is needed: human beings. In a horrifying process, living humans are pumped full of Plant Tao, causing their rapid metamorphosis into the braindead plant-human hybrids from which *tan* can be extracted. However, this does not necessarily occur in all cases. In some rare, exceptional individuals, their human Tao achieves a balance with the Plant Tao instead of being overwhelmed by it, and as such they both retain their lucid mind and come to possess staggering superhuman abilities. Only three people are known to have achieved this: Aza Chobe, Gabimaru, and now, you.

Though you still appear human on the outside, the fact is that the Plant Tao has left a permanent inhuman mark upon your being. Nothing demonstrates this more than the incredible powers of regeneration you've gained that allow you to recover from almost any injury nigh-instantaneously. Broken bones, torn-off limbs, and even decapitation can all be perfectly healed in a matter of seconds, vines emerging from your body to reconstitute your body before your foes' very eyes. There are a few limits to this regeneration, however. The first is that wounds caused by someone with a Tao attribute that hinders yours cannot be regenerated using his, requiring you to heal such injuries naturally. The second is that this regeneration draws on your Tao reserves to function, so the more you use it without recovering, the slower your healing will become until, eventually, it stops entirely.

However, regeneration is not all you have gained from this process. As a result of your Tao merging with that of a particular flower, you have also gained the ability to enter a terrifying rage state at-will. As your skin becomes pitch black and eyes a pure white, your strength, speed, and other physical attributes are enhanced, enough that you could cause great fissures to form in solid stone with a single stomp of your foot. More importantly, though, is that you can produce dozens of whiplike vines at once from your body, each striking with the power of one of your normal limbs and able to be controlled just as well as one. These vines have great range, able to extend out several metres from your body, and can also be shaped into tools like axes. When you enter such a rage state, however, it becomes incredibly difficult to maintain your rationality. While an incredibly strong will would let you stay lucid, even a moment's slip could lead you to mindlessly lash out at anyone you see in your fury, be they friend or foe.

Fortunately, you need not fear undergoing arborification by using these powers, unlike their other recipients.

Giant – 600 CP

In combat, skill at arms and technique are certainly important factors that contribute to how great a fighter one is. After all, they're one of the few areas the weak can train in to become stronger. But the harsh truth is that, oftentimes, sheer physical prowess and natural talent can overwhelm even the most technically proficient of fighters. After all, there's a reason that featherweights aren't pitted against heavyweights.

Fortunately for you, you have no lack of natural physical power. No, you're a veritable giant, standing well over twice as tall as your average man, and you've got the power to match your overwhelming size. So strong are you that you're easily capable of uprooting a tree with one hand and throwing it through the air like a javelin and creating massive craters in the ground with your fists. Before your might, mighty samurai can be reduced to a bloody paste with a casual swing of your hand, and even those possessing unnatural resilience can be brought to the brink of death by a single punch.

Your durability, too, is equally impressive. Unless wielded by someone of incredible proficiency, mundane spears and swords are entirely useless against you, your skin being so tough that they mere bounce off as if it were stone. Even the attacks of an Iwagakure ninja, strong enough to send full-grown men flying with a single kick, would hardly even graze you, though they might be able to knock you off balance.

Furthermore, contrary to what your hulking size might imply, your speed is nothing to be sneezed at either. Though you may not be quite as quick as them, you're more than fast enough to threaten even the most agile of ninjas with your blows and, should the need ever arise, your reflexes are good enough to let you dodge an experienced samurai's sword, too.

Death Frenzy – 600 CP

Without a doubt, all the convicts sent in search of the elixir of life are extraordinary in their own way, ranging from being unparalleled seductresses to veritable giants. However, if there's one thing that each of these people have in common, it's their overwhelming desire to survive. That desire is the very reason they decided to go to Kotaku, knowing very well it may result in a fate worse than death, and it is that desire that allows the greatest among them to keep fighting and claim victory from the jaws of defeat.

You, too, share this trait, though in your case it's a fair bit more potent than may be seen in others. For you, when you're on your last legs, you can always find a final burst of energy to help you survive, temporarily boosting all of your physical abilities to great heights. Until either you or your foe lie defeated, you become much stronger, faster, and tougher, far more so than you were at your peak, giving you enough power to threaten foes you could barely even wound before. However, this second wind doesn't last forever: as soon as the battle ends, you'll find all of that extra energy fading away.

However, there is one more benefit to this perk, one that only comes into effect if this final push isn't enough. Once per Jump, any time you would normally be killed, you'll instead somehow survive against all the odds in a near-death, but stable, state. For example, if you collapsed after using up all of your life energy, you'd somehow recover just enough at the last second to let you go on living. Even fates that, logically, no one should be able to survive, such as being decapitated or completely transfigured into a brainless plant, could somehow be escaped using this, whether that be through luck, a sudden surge of energy from within, or the unexpected intervention of an ally.

Asaemon

Tameshi Itto-ryu – 100 CP

As a samurai clan centred around being the shogunate's executioners and sword testers, it'd be strange if the Yamada clan didn't have a sword style of their own. However, the kenjutsu of the Asaemon, the Tameshi Itto-ryu style, takes on a greater importance than it would to many other clans. Indeed, it is one's skill in this school of swordsmanship that determines one's rank in the clan, with the first-ranked practitioner being considered worthy of becoming the next head.

As such, you've gained a great amount of skill in the Tameshi Itto-ryu school of swordsmanship, a style specialised for executing criminals. So skilled are you that you're more than capable of decapitating someone in a single blow, so cleanly and precisely that they feel no pain and likely won't even realise they've been beheaded. That's not to say your skills are useless in actual combat, though: far from it. While it's harder to achieve the flawless precision you're capable of in the chaos of battle, your swordsmanship is such that you could cut down small groups of regular soldiers with surprising swiftness, and you're even capable of harming a ninja whose skin is ordinarily tough enough to shatter swords through skill alone, though hitting him in the first place, let alone scoring a killing blow, would be difficult even for you.

Samurai Girls Are Cool Too – 100 CP

Seeing how the events of this story occur in 18th-century Japan, it's perhaps no surprise that the prevailing attitudes towards women and foreigners aren't particularly progressive. The Yamada clan is no exception: though a woman can become one of the Asaemon, she will find it much harder than her male counterparts, being the subject of constant scorn and derision both from inside and outside the clan. Such is the case of Yamada Asaemon Sagiri, the twelfth-ranked Asaemon who, despite being one of the most skilled in swordsmanship in the whole clan, is ranked lower than she otherwise should be due to her gender.

You, however, needn't concern yourself about such things, for regardless of where or when you may be, you won't be shunned or treated differently because of something that is outside of your control, such as your age, race, or gender. With this, you could rise to the top of any organisation that gives preferential treatment to a certain sex, be it a matriarchal clan or feudal system that gives preferential inheritance to men, just as easily as anyone else. Furthermore, age-based societal restrictions will also be conveniently ignored – you could become a full-fledged samurai as a mere child or, in another world, get a driver's license even before the age of ten. However, this perk does have its limitations: if you're obviously some kind of man-eating monster, you shouldn't expect others to treat you like they would a fellow human.

Drunken Samurai – 100 CP

In popular culture, samurai are often romanticised as proud, noble, and honourable warriors who would rather die than forsake their loyalty to their liege. While there

were certainly some who were like this, many others were far less moral in their dealings. Even among the members of the prestigious Yamada clan, there are those who don't live up to the lofty ideals one might expect of them, engaging in so many nights of drunken carousing and illicit affairs that many call into question their right to be samurai at all. However, for all the hedonistic leanings they might have, it is important to remember that each and every Asaemon earned their title through their skills with the blade, a fact that many forget before their untimely demise.

Like they do with these certain samurai, your enemies always seem to underestimate your abilities in combat, believing you to be much inept than you actually are. Any sort of foppish, lazy, or bumbling façade you might put on will, unless you're a supremely poor actor, always be taken at face value, and will always be believed right up until the moment you conspicuously act against this persona or put your true abilities on display. Of course, it helps that you have quite a bit of experience in playing the drunkard too, allowing you to fool people that much easier. Be warned, though: while this is useful for catching an unfamiliar enemy off-guard, they're unlikely to fall for the same trick twice.

Reality Reflected in the Sword – 200 CP

Though each and every Asaemon are undoubtedly masters of swordsmanship, to them the sword is not just a tool for dealing in death, but also a way of life too. Not only is each Asaemon's sword tailored to match the individual, it is also a source of truth. This isn't just metaphorical, either, but a well-known technique among certain members, who claim that the blade reflects the truth in all things, right down to reflecting their true mental state.

You, too, seem to be capable of this technique – by looking at your reflection in a sword or other bladed weapon, you'll be able to see the truth of your own mental state free from any self-deception, as it shows you all of your deepest-held fears, anxieties, and desires, even those you might not acknowledge or be consciously aware of. Likewise, by looking up the reflection of someone else in your sword, you can see their true nature reflected in it, regardless of how they present themselves. A truly good person will be reflected as a saint or bodhisattva, while a blood-drenched killer as a terrible monster.

Bad Medicine – 200 CP

While the Yamada clan is primarily focused on sword-testing and execution, they also ply their trades in other areas as well. Notably, they also produce medicines from the corpses of those they execute, which is sold to bolster the clan's funds. While such unsanitary work is normally carried out by the women and auxiliary members of the clan, there is the rare Asaemon who also partakes of such medicinal ventures, learning for themselves how to heal to supplement their skills at killing, and it seems you are one of them.

You have a nigh-encyclopaedic knowledge of human anatomy and physiology, understanding everything from the function and attachment points of every muscle to the paths of every nerve and blood vessel. For one, this makes you an excellent doctor, capable of quickly spotting any anomalies in the human body and coming up with procedures to fix them with ease, but this knowledge is equally applicable to the arts of killing, allowing you to far more easily target the stress points, specific internal organs, and other weak points of your foes. After all, why spend five strokes to down a foe when one precise blow can do?

This knowledge also applies to other creatures with an anatomy similar to humans, but will require some research of your own to apply it to those who are significantly different. Fortunately, this process shouldn't take long at all – your biological expertise is good enough that a good dissection of one or two specimens should be more than enough.

Not That Bad – 200 CP

Originally, the relationship between an Asaemon and the convict they were assigned to supervise was intended to be business only. The convict was a mere tool for obtaining the elixir of life, who could be executed should they disobey in the slightest. However, as time went on, many of the Asaemon – those who didn't kill their convict or let them die early on, that is – found something strange occurring: they began to form friendships with the very people they were assigned to watch over, some of them supposed monsters who had committed the most heinous of crimes.

You seem to possess the uncanny ability to replicate this phenomenon. For one, you're incredibly good at earning the trust and friendship of those who really should be opposed to you, such as those on the opposite side of a war or someone you'd usually be tasked to kill or vice versa. At the very least, they'll give you a chance to talk to them should their life not be in immediate danger, though this effect becomes much more pronounced if you fight alongside them against a common threat for whatever reason. If such a thing were to occur, someone who would ordinarily kill you on sight might be turned into a friend willing to risk their life to save you out of the selfless desire to see you live over the course of a few weeks of working together.

Guardian of the Blind – 400 CP

One would think that being blind would greatly hinder one's ability to be a samurai. After all, it's hard to cut something you can't see with the precision expected of an Asaemon. However, this needn't necessarily be true, as is shown by the case of Yamada Asaemon Shion. Despite being born without any sight, his skills are among the greatest in the Yamada clan, enough that he has become the 4th-ranked Asaemon. This is largely due to his ability to perceive the 'waves' that all things possess, unbeknownst to him, is actually the flow of Tao.

Now, much like Shion, you're able to function completely normally even if you're completely unable to use one or more of your senses. If you were rendered blind, for

example, one or more of your other senses would immediately become much sharper to compensate for it. You might gain superhuman hearing that allows you to perceive your surroundings for location, or perhaps a sense of touch so good you could detect the movements of others simply through how they displace the air around them.

In addition, your ability to use Tao to sense things has become much greater than it would usually be. While ordinarily you would be able to sense its presence around you, your ability is now great enough that you could use it to perfectly perceive your surroundings in even greater detail than your own sight, and in a 360-degree field of vision to boot. As such, you're effortlessly capable of defending against attacks from all angles and detecting those who would normally escape your vision. Be aware, though, that if someone is deliberately suppressing their Tao, they would become all but invisible to this second sight.

The Space Between – 400 CP

Among the Asaemon, there is a constant pressure to be free from emotions, to carry out their duty with only cold duty free from all doubts and fear. However, as many would later go on to learn, this attitude can actually be detrimental to one's Tao: instead, it is only by accepting one's weaknesses and strengths, both their pragmatism and sentimentality, to find a middle path that one can truly achieve their greatest potential.

It's good, then, that you are more than capable of reaching this potential. With but a thought, you're capable of entering a rather unique state, one in which you experience both the coolheaded logic of rationality and the greatest extremes of emotion simultaneously, blending together into a middle path. While in this state, not only do you become capable of flawlessly single-minded mental focus, unburdened by any unnecessary thoughts, but your attacks become more focused too, enough that you could fend off the attacks of a giant that would usually be able to snap your sword like a twig and pulverise you with a single blow, and possibly even knock it down if you were skilled enough. In addition, the power of your Tao is also significantly enhanced within this state, to a similar extent to the above.

Sword Artist – 400 CP

While swordsmanship is undoubtedly an important skill in these parts, there's only so far it alone can take someone, especially when they're facing off against regenerating immortals who can shoot invisible balls of force with their minds or stone-skinned ninja. As such, when mundane bladework no longer cut it against the world's more supernatural foes, many Asaemon turned to supernatural methods themselves to fight back, in particular enhancing their swords with Tao to devastating effects.

However, using Tao to enhance one's swordsmanship is something any practitioner can do with enough training. You, on the other hand, take it a step further: now, you're capable of effortlessly adapting any of your supernatural abilities to be used

with martial arts, swordsmanship, and other mundane combat techniques. For example, an ability that let you control electricity could allow you to coat your fists or blades in crackling lightning, while you could use a power to manipulate gravity to enhance the force of your blows. Not only this, but powers you channel in such a manner are empowered a fair deal compared to their ordinary counterparts too, perhaps to compensate for their somewhat lessened range or utility.

Learning is Fun – 600 CP

As the second-ranked among his peers, Yamada Asaemon Shugen is undoubtedly a powerful swordsman. He's strong enough to tear a man's head from his neck with his bare hands, and his skill in the Tameshi Itto-ryu style is second to none. However, neither of these are what make him a truly terrifying foe: no, that would be his truly prodigious ability to learn and incorporate ideas from the swordsmanship of others, and it is this ability that you share with him.

For one, your capacity for learning is unlimited, allowing you to continue acquiring new knowledge without ever growing tired or feeling like you know enough. However, this is only secondary to your true ability, which is the incredible speed at which you learn and the effectiveness to which you can apply your knowledge. It only takes watching someone fight briefly for you to understand their fighting style in incredible detail, perhaps more than they'd considered themselves, and copy it perfectly, right down to their individual techniques, even if you've only ever observed them once. So flawless are these imitations, when you use them, it can almost seem as if you temporarily become the person you copied them from.

This ability only allows you to copy other peoples' martial fighting styles or techniques, and does not extend to any other supernatural abilities they might possess, such as their ability to wield the Tao of this world or magic of others. Supernatural martial arts techniques can be copied, however, so long as you are capable of using them in the first place – you can't use a technique that imbues your blade with magical flame if you can't use magic, after all.

The Truth of Things – 600 CP

Though Yamada Asaemon Jikka may be the third-ranked among his peers, there are many who would question how he has earned such a ranking. After all, he seems far more interested in pursuing a lifestyle of hedonistic pleasures than carrying out his duties as an Asaemon, and even when he does perform them, he has been known to turn up to executions drunk. However, those who think of him as such know little of the terrifying intuition he possesses, an ability so strong that even immortals would be right to fear him. Previously thought to be unique to him, there now appears to be someone else capable of it: namely, you.

You possess the incredible ability to sense how things will move just by looking at them, or exactly how something will react if you applied a specific amount of force to it at a specific point. It's as if you're able to intuitively and instantly calculate the

effects that every single possible factor, from gravity to the wind, will have on an object, and act accordingly. The briefest glance at a falling cherry blossom petal will allow you to determine exactly where it will fall, while the same glance at a living organism would allow you to perceive exactly where to cut to kill it.

This in particular allows you to perform seemingly impossible deeds, such as using a sword made of bamboo to slice through flesh just as easily as if it were forged of steel. Even if a whole group of highly-trained shinobi surrounded you and threw kunai at you simultaneously, you could use your intuition to perfectly deflect each and every one with a single swing of your sword, hitting them with just the right force and at the perfect angle to send them flying back at their senders' necks.

But it's not just objects you can intuit the movements of, but people, too. The movements of living creatures are laid bare before you, your intuition so strong that you can predict exactly how they'll move several moments before they do just by looking at them. Even if you were up against an enormous monster with vines strong enough to shatter stone, so long as you maintained focus you could sidestep each and every one of its attacks as you approached, before slaying it with a single cut to its weakest point.

However, while this ability is strong, it can be hard to make the best use of it if you weren't a skilled combatant to begin with, and there may be some foes who can still overwhelm you. After all, if you can't see something, this sense can't predict how it'll move, and some foes may be so fast or strong compared to you that even knowing their moves can't help you escape their moves.

The Elements Shift – 600 CP

For millennia, it has long been believed that there are many immutable laws that govern the nature of Tao, one of which being that one cannot change the attribute they are born with. However, much to the surprise of even Rien, the millennia-old creator of the Tensen and likely the world's most powerful user of Tao, this supposedly concrete rule was shattered by Yamada Asaemon Shugen who, in replicating the fighting style of an ally, somehow also changed his attribute from his usual Water to Metal.

Once a unique ability, it seems that you too are capable of the same feat, able to change the attribute of your Tao with only a moment's thought. Needless to say, this ability is incredibly useful when fighting the Tensen, seeing as they're incredibly difficult to kill except by someone whose Tao attribute hinders theirs. However, this ability also extends into other systems as well. In any kind of magic or power system where users naturally have some kind of elemental affinity, you're capable of altering your attribute at-will to any other, with all of the benefits or downsides that might entail.

Furthermore, just as being able to change one's attribute seemingly defies the natural laws of Tao, you're also capable of breaking the supposedly immutable laws that govern other power systems as well. Though it won't be easy and will almost definitely require a large amount of trial and error, eventually you'll be able to figure

out how to do what all others believe is impossible. In this world, perhaps you could find a way to subvert or completely ignore the cycle of strengthening and hindering that governs the interactions between the attributes, or maybe a way to manifest your Tao without achieving balance between the opposing forces in your spirit.

Immortal

Tensen Traits – (Free and Exclusive Immortal)

Despite how they may appear, the Tensens are not human, instead being a synthetic being created from the fusion of human and plant Tao. As such, they possess a number of significant advantages over regular humans, placing them heads and shoulders above all but the most exceptional of individuals. And now, by taking this perk and becoming one of the Tensen, you've come to share in these advantages, too.

Perhaps the most notable trait is your regeneration, which allows you to recover from almost any injury at incredible speeds. Anything from cuts and bruises to lost limbs, decapitation, and bisection can all be recovered from, any lost body parts growing back within a few seconds from the spherical, plant-like ovule located at your tanden (the area just below the navel) outwards. If not for the few limitations to this regeneration, you would be pretty much impossible to kill. One such limitation is that your ability to heal like this is reliant on your Tao reserves, though seeing as the drain is so little that you could recover from nigh-total destructions several hundred times without running dry, this is very unlikely to matter unless you somehow expend all your energy.

A second is that this regeneration is weakened greatly by attacks from Tao users with an attribute that hinders yours, causing you to heal far slower than normal. The aforementioned ovule is particularly weak to this – if such an attack were to destroy it, you would die just as surely as if a normal human had their heart or brain destroyed. However, this might well be the one of the only ways to truly kill you, for even if your entire body were to be destroyed and your Tao reserves entirely expended, so long as your ovule remained intact you would still survive, capable of extending vines to move about or fend off attackers, albeit only very weakly, until you can recover enough Tao to regenerate again.

Another trait you possess, and one that is almost as notable as your regeneration, is the ability to change your biological sex at-will. Simply by thinking about it, you can go from being male to female or vice versa. While this may not sound all that useful, by changing between the two sexes your Tao cycles from one extreme, be it Yin or Yang, to the other, causing you to rapidly recover expended Tao. This can be improved even further by taking a form that combines the two sexes, which uses the above principle to allow a constant regeneration of Tao, though learning to assume such a form is no easy feat.

On the topic of Tao, your abilities with it far outstrip that of any human. Owing to centuries of training, your reserves are absolutely immense, enough to fight continually for hours without running dry, and your ability to control and manipulate it is equally impressive, to the point that more superstitious individuals might see you as a god. As a result, you've gained the ability to use the Tōate technique, whereby you gather a sphere of Tao and emit it as a projectile, with its power and speed depending on how much Tao you invest into it. Such an attack is completely invisible to anyone who can't perceive Tao, making it impossible to dodge, and it's more than possible to create multiple spheres at once around your body and fire them off at once. Naturally, this is just one of many techniques in your arsenal

controlling the Tao in the air to levitate, manipulating the Tao of inanimate objects to move them from a distance, enhancing your physical abilities to become strong enough to punch through the stone-hard skin of an Iwagakure ninja or run faster than the eye can see, and more are all possible for you.

Finally, if all of this wasn't enough, you also possess one more ability of note: the ability to assume a powerful transformation known as a Kishikai. In this state, your body becomes far larger than normal, enough to dwarf a house, and takes on a monstrous, plant-like appearance reminiscent of your floral heritage, with everything from a four-armed giant whose body appears to be made of enormous petals to a massive flower with numerous limb-like vines in full bloom being possible. In this state, both your physical abilities and the strength of your Tao are enhanced by a tremendous amount, enough that you could completely overwhelm someone who stood a good chance of killing you in your normal form. However, this transformation is incredibly taxing on your Tao, and even with your massive reserves you might only be able to maintain it for about half an hour before running dry, at which point you are forced to return to your normal form, though noticeably weakened and possessing an almost corpse-like appearance until you can replenish your Tao.

Immortal Practitioner – 100 CP

As with all things on the island of Kotaku, the reason the Tensen were created was to further Xu Fu's research on creating the elixir of life as well to achieve immortality of their own through training in the ways of Tao. As such, each of the Tensen were made to specialise in one of the five methods of training Tao, so that they could achieve a mastery of their specific area beyond all others and teach what they had learned to their peers.

Like the other Tensen, you have achieved mastery in one of the five Tao training methods, as well as a good amount of practice in the others. The methods are as follows: Do'in, training through physical exercise; Taisoku, training through breathing techniques; Shu'itsu, training through meditation; Shuten, training through controlling the flow of Tao through your body; and Bochu Jutsu, training through sexual intimacy with a member of the opposite sex.

Whichever you choose, you're able to much more easily train in the arts of Tao by practicing it, increasing your reserves and control, while also gaining a slight boost to uses of Tao related to your speciality. A master of Do'in, for example, would be more effective at uses that strengthen the body, while a master of Shuten might find it easier to achieve effects that require fine control or a small scale.

To Your Eternity – 100 CP

If there's one personality trait all of the Tensen share, it's that none of them are entirely sane. It makes sense, after all – if one spent upwards of a thousand years doing nothing but practicing Tao in the specific training method assigned to them,

it's very unlikely that they'd have a healthy state of mind. It doesn't help that they've also been raised to view humans as nothing more than livestock, good for nothing more than being processed into the *tan* that grants them immortality, and as such receive very little social interaction outside of their equally-unstable kin.

Fortunately for you, this perk grants you a few benefits that should hopefully allow you to retain your sanity. First and foremost is the fact that, unless you choose to for some reason, you no longer feel boredom. As such, you could carry out the same mundane, repetitive task again and again, every day for years on end without ever tiring of it. Secondly, you also no longer need social interaction to retain a healthy state of mind, allowing you to spend as long as you like in total solitude without your sanity or interpersonal skills deteriorating in the slightest.

Mysterious Beauty – 100 CP

Without exception, each and every one of the Tensen, regardless of whether they take on a male or female form, have managed to retain an effortless youthful beauty despite likely being the oldest living beings in the world. And given how vain and arrogant some of them tend to be, why would they settle for anything less? While they might occasionally have to worry about showing their true age if something causes them to expend a large amount of Tao, they need only take a small drink of *tan*, their immortality elixir to regain their youth once again.

Now, you've managed to achieve a truly stunning appearance of such good looks that it transcends gender, causing even those who would normally not be attracted to you to look your way and appreciate your countenance. The nature of these looks is up to you, whether it be that of a masculine handsomeness, feminine beauty, or something more androgynous. No matter what form you take on, you'll never look anything less than your absolute best, even if you changed sex entirely like the Tensen so often do. As an added bonus, age no longer causes your looks to deteriorate either – whether you're 20 or 2,000, you'll still look as good as you always did.

Manufactured Immortality – 200 CP

Contrary to popular belief among those who visit Kotaku, the Tensen are not truly immortal. True, they have lived for many centuries beyond what any normal human could, but that is only through the use of a prototype elixir of life known as *tan*. Produced from the arborified corpses of humans lured to the island in hopes of attaining life eternal, this miraculous liquid functions by extending the lifespan of the imbibers, with the benefits it bestows proportional to the quality of the Tao of the sacrifices used to create it.

By taking this perk, you've become well-versed in the art of creating *tan*, possessing a comprehensive knowledge of the processes and tools required to refine human beings into elixirs that can extend the lives of others. Unlike the original *tan* however, which kills any imbibers who lack plant Tao, you're capable of adapting these methods to create new elixirs, ones that can bestow their benefits upon regular

humans or sapient beings of other worlds. With further research, you may even be able to figure out a way to create a version of *tan* that doesn't require the sacrifice of sapient lives, perhaps being formed out of other non-human animals or even entirely from plants. While this probably won't provide any additional benefits as far as its effects are concerned, such an elixir would certainly be far less morally objectionable to certain individuals.

The Long Con – 200 CP

In their pursuit of immortality, the Tensen are nothing if not patient. Aside from their dutiful adherence to the Inner Path, which involved training their Tao to attain eternal life, for centuries on end they have manipulated both the natives of the island and those beyond, creating false gods and rumours all in pursuit of attaining more ingredients and experimental subjects for creating the perfect elixir of life. It is only now, centuries after they started, that their plan is finally beginning to bear fruit. Though such plans would usually only be the brainchild of Rien, the leader of the Tensen, it seems there is now someone else capable of weaving such plots: you.

You're a master of scheming and manipulation, the likes of whom would feel more than at place at any shogun's court. With your honeyed words, you're capable of deceiving entire villages into believing that you're a god with a few small displays of unusual power, even being able to get them to buy into any fabricated religions or mythologies you present to them wholeheartedly. Likewise, you're also more than capable of using your skills at manipulation to spin plots that can lie hidden in the background, unnoticed by those it'll affect for centuries until they finally come to fruition, at which point it'll be far too late.

The Seed of Strength – 200 CP

Tao is, in ways, a rather unusual power system, in that it inherently relies on what seem to be contradictions in order to function. Where one might expect that either suppressing one's feelings to achieve perfect tranquillity or fully giving into their strongest emotions would be the path to power, a Taoist instead embraces both and balance them to achieve a middle path. In fact, the greater the disparity between these supposedly opposing, contradictory forces in one's heart, the greater the power one can bring to bear.

It seems that this trait of Tao can now be applied to other abilities of yours, too. Powers, magic systems, abilities and the like that would normally be incompatible or mutually-exclusive with each other are now entirely compatible for you, allowing you to use both at full strength without any harm or detriment to yourself. Not only this, but such contradictory abilities, when used in tandem, also now seem to synergise with each other too, boosting each others' power a fair bit as their forces that would usually oppose each other come together to form a balanced whole, slightly stronger than the sum of its parts.

Lord of the Butterflies – 400 CP

The Doshi are the immortal soldiers of the Tensen, intelligent beings with the body of a human but insectoid or floral heads. Though they do not possess anywhere near their master's powers and mainly carry out the role of servants, that does not mean that they are weak. They too have spent countless years practicing in the arts of Tao, enough that no regular warrior would have any hope in overcoming them, and with their studies they have learned how to use a number of unique abilities, one of which you, too, are now capable of.

By taking this perk, you've become capable of controlling insects, arthropods, and the like with your mind. With but a thought, you're able to compel any non-sapient bugs, be they mundane or supernatural in origin, within a rather large radius of you to do your bidding, commanding enormous swarms to descend upon your foes or act as scouts for you. However, while this is useful against some weaker foes, a horde of bugs is not too great a threat to some of the stronger individuals in this world, which is why you've developed this ability further.

By gathering a large number of a certain type of insect and having them surround your body, you're able to enter a symbiotic transformation that varies in appearance and effects depending on the species you use. Using centipedes, for example, could give you a hard, chitinous armour capable of warding off sword strikes, whereas using butterflies could give you a pair of wings that allow you to soar through the skies with surprising ease. Be careful, though, if your foes manage to destroy enough of the insects surrounding you, it might well cause your transformation to end early.

I Am Accustomed – 400 CP

As one gets older, one tends to find that less and less surprises them as their accumulated experiences let them notice the patterns in life. This is just as true for the Tensen if not more so, for not only do they have more life experience than anyone else on the planet by a vast margin, their ability with Tao is such that they can quite easily read peoples' intentions to predict how they'll move. As such, unless a fighter is truly extraordinary, very little will faze them, for it will never be long until their moves become predictable.

You are no exception to this, as your ability to analyse the fighting styles of others is truly incredible. Within seconds of fighting someone, you begin to pick up on how they move right down to the individual muscle movements and flows of Tao that prelude an attack, and the longer you fight someone, the more predictable they become to you. It wouldn't even take a minute for you to have fully figured out a master samurai's movements, able to precisely dodge and weave through a hail of rapid sword strokes, each of which a normal man would have no chance of dodging, and close in completely unharmed.

Even if a certain technique takes you completely off-guard, it'll never surprise you again, and if you manage to survive it, you'll have a pretty good idea of how to dodge

or counter it. Of course, if someone is too fast for you to actually see, or their fighting style is unusually broad or unpredictable, this ability may not be as effective as it would usually be.

Unreadable – 400 CP

Whenever someone first faces off against one of the Tensen, their reactions are almost invariably the same: confusion and terror. To those who oppose them, it might well seem like the Tensen are gods, for what other kind of being could recover from decapitation without flinching, blow a hole through someone from a distance with just a flick of the wrist, or utterly crush their internal organs with a simple poke? With such awe-inspiring powers, it is only natural that the uninformed may believe that they are entirely unassailable.

It is this aura of unassailability that you exude at all times. Whenever someone faces off against you for the first time, they are prone to viewing you as some sort of unknowable or mysterious power. As such, they tend towards being much more cautious when fighting you, with even experienced fighters unable to get an idea of how to approach or attack you. Your movements, too, are seemingly incredibly unpredictable, with your attacks able to somehow maintain their element of surprise against your foes even after you've used them several times. As such, it becomes easy to overwhelm your enemies, as all but the canniest of foes are constantly left wondering how you're going to strike next instead of attacking themselves. The more someone fights you, however, the less prominent this effect becomes as they come to understand you more and more.

Tao Specialist – 600 CP

With over a thousand years to do nothing but hone their abilities, it is perhaps no surprise that some among the Tensen have come to develop Tao abilities of immense power that can greatly augment their combat prowess. However, there are an equal number among them who have displayed no such abilities. Perhaps out of confidence in their own natural abilities, they merely rely on their regeneration, simple Toate blasts, and Tao-enhanced physique to take on their foes. However, such arrogance would soon be revealed to be improperly placed, for though they are few in number, there are some exceptional humans who can overcome this natural gap with sheer skill and tactics.

Fortunately for you, you happen to be the master of a rather unusual Tao technique that, even if you were a normal human, would by itself allow you to fight on even footing with the Tensen, at least for a time. Though it can't overlap with the benefits offered by other perks, the nature of this technique is up to you. Perhaps you specialise in the art of illusion, able to pull those around you into an empty void or a scene indistinguishable from reality with the wave of your hand.

Maybe instead you've gained mastery of the Tao of inorganic objects, able to cause stone pillars to crumble with a touch, cause enormous fields of spikes to sprout from

any surface you can see with a thought, or even, with a little concentration, completely alter the architecture and layout of an entire palace complex within a few minutes.

If you'd rather something more straightforward, it could even be that you've learned how to achieve harmony between Tao and your muscles, coating you in a tough yet flexible cloak of Tao from head to toe that not only enhances your strength and speed, but also blocks attacks even from those with an attribute that would normally hinder your own.

Whatever ability you choose, be it something of your own creation or otherwise, it cannot exceed the power of the examples listed above. In addition, by taking this perk your knowledge of Tao has expanded enough that you can spread its usage to future worlds, allowing you to teach those around you how to gain access to and control it. Though anyone can theoretically learn how to manipulate Tao, their overall aptitude will still be dependent on whether they can balance the forces in their heart.

Transformer – 600 CP

As powerful as the Tensen's kishikai transformation is, enough to make them a nigh-insurmountable threat to even some of the greatest ninjas and samurai, it does not come without risk. To maintain such a form, one must constantly expend large amounts of Tao, and when these reserves are finally expended the Tensen is left far weaker than normal, since without Tao they become unable to regenerate or use any of their abilities until some is recovered. It is in this state that they are most vulnerable, with little way to defend themselves from any attacks to the tanden.

Though you may not have found a way to neutralise this weakness entirely yet, this perk will let you mitigate it, since transformations or other similar types of power now require far less energy to initiate and maintain than normal, allowing you to remain transformed for several times longer than normal. With this, so long as they didn't continuously fling their most powerful attacks around, a Tensen would be able to remain in their kishikai form for hours instead of barely half of one. Furthermore, you're also able to reduce the consumption transformations place upon your reserves through training until, eventually, there is none at all, although this will not be easy in the slightest.

As an added bonus, you're also capable of controlling the extent to which you transform, allowing you to enter partial transformations which have a reduced power or utility compared to the full state in exchange for being much less taxing upon your energies. Similarly, you're also able to apply this effect to your alternate forms too, allowing you to use one form's power while in another, albeit at a lessened effectiveness.

Spiritual Surgeon – 600 CP

While the beings that inhabit Kotaku may seem otherworldly and bizarre, from the giant, human-faced centipedes that crawl along the forest floor to the godlike Tensen themselves, perhaps the most surprising thing about all of them is that they were designed and created by humans. Through esoteric rituals involving modifying human Tao and blending it with that of other creatures, Xu Fu, the island's original ruler, and his wife Rien were able to create many beings that seemingly defy the laws of nature, primarily for the purposes of furthering their research into immortality and protecting the island from intruders.

While ordinarily they would take this knowledge with them to the grave, by taking this perk it seems that is no longer the case, for you have mastered the art of modifying and manipulating the Tao (or souls, in other worlds) of others to create new forms of life. Using this knowledge, you're more than capable of replicating any of the creatures found on this supposed paradise, from the mindless, tree-sized mockeries of Shinto deities known as Soshin to the Hoko, immortal humans with that, instead of dying, slowly begin turning into unthinking, immobile tree-like constructs. With enough effort, even creating new Tensen is possible for you, though growing them is likely to be a fair bit more costly in both time and resources than the above.

It's not just unusual lifeforms you can create, either, but perfect biological clones of yourself. While these clones lack any intelligence, you're capable of projecting your consciousness to remotely control them as puppets, though your main body will be comatose while you do this. You don't suffer in the slightest if one of your puppets are injured, and if that body happens to be killed your consciousness is instantly transferred to either another clone or your main body, and returning to your real body is as simple as willing it. Though you're currently limited to only controlling one clone at a time, with training of your Tao you'll eventually be able to puppet multiple at once, each acting independently of each other. It's worth noting, too, that any severe fluctuations in your Tao, such as from the forces in your soul becoming unbalanced, could cause your control over your puppet to be disrupted, and if your real body dies, you die too even if your consciousness resides in a clone.

Equipment

Ninja

Memento Glasses – 100 CP

This pair of glasses with large, circular frames may not have originally been made for you, given how big they always seem to appear on your face, but for some reason they suit you perfectly. Not only do you always look good while wearing them, but they also perfectly correct any near- or long-sightedness you may suffer from, are durable enough to stand up to blows that could snap trees in two without shattering, and never seem to fall off your face unless someone makes a deliberate effort to remove them.

On top of all this, while worn these glasses give you a rather scholarly air about you, making you a notably better teacher than you are normally. With these on, explaining difficult concepts, such as how Tao works, to others in a way they can understand becomes that much easier, and as such they tend to learn a lot faster than they otherwise would.

Two Nevers – 200 CP

By purchasing this option, you receive two drawstring pouches, both of which contain a different drug of terrifying potency used in training the ninjas of Iwagakure. The first pouch contains a drug known as neverbliss which, when ingested, causes the person it's used on to become wracked with blissful sensations as their brain's pleasure centre is overwhelmed. While useful for torture, its full effectiveness only becomes known when combined with this item's other half.

The second pouch contains a drug referred to as either neverfear powder or corpse tang that, when inhaled, stimulates the nociceptive pathways of the body's nervous system, causing the afflicted individual to be filled with such pain that it feels as if they're being skewered alive. The pain is so intense that, after three days and nights of being exposed to it, fewer than one in ten of Iwagakure's recruits survive. When used in conjunction with neverbliss, the body is filled with excruciating levels of both pleasure and pain at once, evoking the sense of being violated that can debilitate all but the hardest of individuals.

Ninja Celebrity – 400 CP

You're not like most ninjas, a nameless and shadowy killer. No, just like Gabimaru the Hollow, you have gained a reputation for being a master ninja and assassin. Your name, or whatever pseudonym you choose to go by, is spoken of in hushed whispers wherever you go, filling those who hear it with fear. So synonymous with terror is your name that parents might use it to scare children into behaving, and just by announcing who you are many men would turn tail and flee rather than risk fighting you.

However, your reputation isn't just good for scaring people, but for attracting employment opportunities as well. Should you be willing to get your hands dirty, there'll be no lack of clients wishing to make use of your skills, and the jobs they offer tend to pay pretty well too. They might not always be easy, but so long as your skills live up to the infamy you've built for yourself, you'll be able to get it done.

Hidden Village – 600 CP

No longer content to serve another or go it alone, you've become the chief of a ninja clan of your own, and one that rivals Iwagakure in its manpower and influence to boot. Headquartered in a village hidden far away from any prying eyes, all of those who live in your village are unwaveringly loyal to you, to the point that they would end their own lives without hesitation should you give the order.

At present, your village is home to around a hundred ninjas under your command. Though they vary in skill, even the least among them possesses strength and speed on beyond the normal human limit as well as enough skill in both the martial arts and supernatural ninjutsu to make best use of it, allowing them to take on small groups of regular samurai without issue and infiltrate all but the most highly-guarded compounds undetected. Among these shinobi, though, there are perhaps ten elite jonin, whose abilities are such that even those of the regular ninja mentioned above pale in comparison, and one true prodigy, powerful enough that they could go toe-to-toe with one of the Tensen for a time even if they were completely unaware of Tao.

Aside from those mentioned above, your village is also home to a rather sizeable number of other inhabitants, who serve to ensure that the village remains self-sufficient and well-maintained even in your absence. Furthermore, the large numbers of child recruits ensure that even if one of your shinobi die, they'll soon be replaced by someone just as strong.

Convict

Pouch of a Thousand Weapons – 100 CP

Just like Warped Keiun, a battle-obsessed sohei who carried over a hundred blades taken from the opponents he slew, you've taken a quantity over quality approach to your weaponry. However, since porting around so many weapons on your body at once can be a bit cumbersome, you've instead managed to obtain this special sack. Though unassuming in appearance, by simply reaching into it you'll find your hand enclosed around a random weapon appropriate for the setting you're in. In this world, you might find swords, axes, staves, bows, or the occasional early firearm, though in the future other weapons might become available, too.

Though none of the weapons found in here are of exceptional quality, they'll at least be good enough to hold up for a fight or two without blunting or breaking, and the sack is notable in that it seems to contain an endless supply. However, since which weapon you receive each time you reach in is essentially random, it might not always give you what you need when you need it.

A Royal Pardon – 200 CP

Instead of going to some dangerous island and risking your own life in order to receive the shogunate's mercy, by taking this you receive a much safer path to freedom. This item takes the form of a letter, marked with the seal of the highest legal power of whatever land you might find yourself in, that when presented to any relevant authority grants you a complete pardon for any crimes you may have committed. With this, even a mass murderer known for their brutal methods of killing could walk free, no matter how much evidence there might be against them.

However, this pardon does have its limits. For one, it can only be used either once per Jump or once per ten years, whichever comes first. Secondly, it only absolves one of the legal ramifications of their crimes. If you were publicly known for committing some sort of heinous act, people won't stop reviling you just because you escaped punishment for it.

Whistle of Mounts – 400 CP

While this simple metal tube may appear to be a rather standard dog whistle, it is in fact an item of great power used by the doshi to supplement their combat abilities. When blown, it allows you to call and control the Monshin, emaciated, towering giants with dark skin, hands in place of eyes, an abnormally elongated tongue, and a great khakkhara piercing straight through its neck. Despite possessing great power, being capable of smashing through the stone walls surrounding a palace or eliminating small groups of highly-trained ninjas, they are completely lacking in intelligence, instead only obeying the commands of whoever summoned them, that person likely being you.

However, even in future worlds or locations that completely lack Monshin this particular whistle is still of use, for it also allows you to summon them, too. Simply by blowing it, a small group of up to a half dozen Monshin will appear nearby, ready and waiting for your commands, though the whistle will not function again until all of the ones that you have summoned are dead.

True Immortality Elixir – 600 CP

Somehow, the result of thousands of years of patient research has fallen into your hands. This isn't the imperfect *tan* that the Tensen use, but a true elixir of life stored within a small flask. So potent is this liquid that even drinking a tiny sip and immediately spitting it out will grant you a small regenerative factor, causing wounds that would normally take days to heal to close up in minutes as well as greatly increasing your pain tolerance.

By drinking the whole thing, you become truly immortal. Not only will your body be restored to its prime and remain that way for all eternity, no longer aging in the slightest, but you'll also be totally freed from many other mortal constraints, such as the needs to eat, drink, sleep, and breathe. Furthermore, it grants you even more potent regenerative capabilities than those described above, allowing you to recover from wounds even as severe as decapitation or dismemberment in mere seconds so long as you still have some Tao remaining.

You receive one flask of this elixir per Jump or decade, whichever comes first. What you decide to do with it is up to you, though it is worth noting that it isn't only useful to the living. If given to the deceased, it is even capable of resurrecting them so long as their death only occurred recently.

Asaemon

A Good Sword – 100 CP

Since a samurai must live and die by their sword, it only makes sense that they'd try to use the best swords they possibly could. As such, by taking this you have received a rather exceptional weapon yourself. While not supernaturally sharp, you'll find that its blade is completely unbreakable even from the strongest of forces and will never dull in the slightest, forever cutting as if it were fresh off the forge.

What's more, this sword also seems to be perfectly suited for you and your fighting style, allowing you to decide exactly what it looks like. Perhaps it possesses a saw-like blade specialised for tearing horrific wounds through flesh, or maybe it's so big that it seems to be more of an oversized hunk of metal than a sword, requiring unnatural strength to even wield efficiently. It doesn't even have to conform to the traditional structure of a katana, either – you could choose to have it be a double-bladed sword that can split apart into a pair of katanas, or possibly even something that's better suited for accurate thrusting attacks rather than cutting, as is standard.

Asaemon's Book of Criminals – 200 CP

While the Asaemon are expected to carry out their duty as executioners without question regardless of what the condemned crimes are, those who are a little less dogmatic may prefer to know who the people they are beheading are. As such, you've come into possession of this rather unusual leather-bound book, dedicated to recording the details of the most notorious criminals around.

For each criminal detailed in this book, a vast amount of useful information will be included, including a short biography, a full list of their crimes, a comprehensive catalogue of their known skills and abilities, a picture (or physical description, if such a thing wouldn't be available), and more. Somehow, your book even manages to record these details even if they should, by all accounts, be a secret to all but the criminal themselves and their most trusted allies, making it a useful tool for any would-be bounty hunters. In addition, whenever you travel to a new land or nation, this book will automatically update itself to include the most wanted individuals of that area, too.

Masterwork Manacles – 400 CP

While regular shackles are perfectly serviceable for restraining the overwhelming majority of criminals, in this world there are plenty of individuals whose strength and flexibility far exceed that which could be considered human, to the point that they could burst or slip out of regular restraints with ease. However, with this set of five rather ordinary looking steel manacles, you need not worry such a thing.

When both cuffs are enclosed around an individual's wrists, all of their supernatural abilities will be inaccessible, and their physical abilities will be reduced to that of the human norm. As such, someone who would normally be able to break out of such

chains with ease would find it completely impossible to do on their own with these ones. Furthermore, as their owner, only you are able to open or close these manacles, preventing anyone else from being able to use them against you. Lastly, while they can be broken by a sufficiently powerful external force, they far stronger than their ostensibly steel composition would suggest, and repair themselves a day after being damaged.

Sword House – 600 CP

Perhaps you've taken over the Yamada clan or broken off from them entirely to found one of your own, but by taking this you've become the head of your own clan of ronin. As you may expect, the backbone of this clan consists of about two-dozen expert samurai, each one a master of your clan's signature sword style. What this sword style is, exactly, is up to you: perhaps it emphasises overwhelming one's foe with rapid cuts, or maybe it values precise strikes to vital regions over raw strength. Regardless, each samurai is strong enough in it that they could easily rival those of the Yamada clan, able to fight off individuals far superior to them physically with skill alone, with the greatest among them even able to threaten the Tensen.

Aside from just the samurai, your clan has numerous other members too, from the servants who take care of the clan's dojos and mansions to the family of the ronin, who do work such as manufacturing medicine or textiles to help provide extra funds. Furthermore, any of the samurai who somehow die will quickly be replaced by one of the many apprentices who train under the clan's guidance in the way of the sword. Each and every member of your clan is completely loyal to you and your leadership, though not fanatically so, and so will not hesitate to carry out any orders you give them that aren't utterly suicidal.

Immortal

Tan – 100 CP

Though not a true elixir of life per se, within this flask you'll find the next best thing: the prototype known as *tan*. While usually rather costly to make, involving a complex procedure of processing living humans, you need not worry about this, for the flask you receive from this will completely refill at the beginning of each week. Imbibing the nectar-like liquid found within bestows a number of benefits upon you. First and foremost is that it extends your natural lifespan by a significant amount, restoring you to the height of your youth and potentially allowing you to live forever so long as you keep partaking of it regularly. Additionally, drinking *tan* also serves to replenish your Tao reserves, allowing you to go from completely empty to your maximum just by downing the flask.

Ordinarily, imbibing *tan* is almost guaranteed to be fatal to anyone other than a Tensen. Fortunately, however, the contents of this flask are slightly different, in that anyone can drink it and benefit from its effects without fear of such a fate.

Taolismans – 200 CP

A small kit used to carry out the art of I Ching, a method of divination used by Taoists to tell an individual's fortune, consisting of five bottles of Tao-infused spirits, one for each attribute, and a limitless supply of paper talismans. To tell someone's fortune using these, one must only know a person's name, the process being as simple as soaking a talisman in one of the spirits to infuse it with Tao before writing the target's name upon it.

A wide variety of information can then be divined depending on what happens to the talisman next., including the subject's elemental attribute, whether they can use Tao, whether their near future holds auspicious or ill omens, the general state of their health, and more. For example, if the talisman begins burning away it indicates that the subject is injured in some way, with death being indicated by it completely burning up. What's more, the fortunes given by these talismans are never wrong, though their results can oftentimes be vague or open to interpretation.

Tao Ship – 400 CP

If you want to get around in style in this era, accept no substitute. This vessel appears more like a floating palace than anything else, with a palatial pagoda stocked with luxuries and towering statue standing atop its lofty hull, and its sheer size is enough that it dwarfs even the greatest of contemporary ships, who appear like rowboats before it. Seeing how it lacks any oars, masts, or even a wheel, one might wonder how this thing even gets around. The answer to this, as is often the case in such parts, is Tao.

Simply by standing aboard this ship, you are able to make use of the great amounts of Tao it is imbued it to control it with your mind. With a thought, you can direct it to

move at incredible speeds in any direction you wish, enough to cross the widest oceans in hours, and likewise if you commanded it to remain still, it would do so during even the most tumultuous storms. Similarly, the Tao suffusing this entire vessel have also increased its durability significantly, to the point that an attack that could split a normal ship in two wouldn't even scratch it.

If somehow destroyed, this ship will repair itself anew within a week, including any further modifications you may have made to it. Furthermore, such additions will merge perfectly with the ship, gaining both the enhanced durability and ability to be controlled through will alone mentioned above.

Pleasure Palace – 600 CP

At the very centre of Kotaku, beyond all of the enormous Monshin and forests of arborified humans, is Horai, the home of the Tensen. Luxurious beyond compare, it is a palace complex fit for a god, unparalleled in its craftsmanship throughout the world. That is until now, for you seem to have come into possession of your own fortress that is perhaps Horai's only rival in its grandeur.

So large is this complex that it's more akin to a small town in its own right than a normal fortress. Aside from the palace proper at the centre of the complex, a towering castle built with traditional Chinese imperial architecture and filled with every luxury you could ever hope for, a number of other, smaller buildings, each the size of mansions in their own right, can be found within its great walls. Among these buildings are warehouses, lodgings for servants, and even temples dedicated to each of the five methods for training Tao, within carrying out such exercises becomes much more efficient than normal. There's even a laboratory dedicated to Tao experimentation, which comes fully stocked with all the resources one might need to conduct research on the elixir of immortality or produce new forms of life entirely.

However, it's not just the individual buildings that have been masterfully built, but the complex as a whole has been designed very deliberately too. The positioning of its many buildings and streets lined with archways and golden statues have been made just so to follow the principles of Feng Shui as perfectly as possible, maximising the flow of Tao within its grounds. As such, whenever you are in the palace, you'll find that your Tao abilities are notably stronger than normal, as the heightened flow of environmental Tao supplements your power.

Since such a large palace would be rather difficult to maintain on your lonesome, it comes with a full staff of Doshi – intelligent immortal beings with the bodies of humans but heads resembling plants or those of insects. These beings act as both servants and guards in equal capacity, each one possessing the capability to wield Tao and a limited capacity for regeneration. While not much of a match for any experienced Tao user or some of the greater ninjas and samurai of the world, their ability to shoot powerful blasts of Tao, enhance their physical abilities to superhuman levels, and recover from any injury short of decapitation makes each one a dangerous threat to ordinary individuals.

Companions

New Faces – 50 CP each/300 CP

You may bring one of your current companions into this world. They gain 600 CP to spend on backgrounds and perks, benefitting from all of the usual free stuff and discounts their background would usually bestow. Alternatively, you may instead create a new companion. They gain all the benefits an existing companion does, but you also get to decide their appearance, personality, and Tao attribute.

If you wish to import a full cohort of eight companions, it costs a discounted price of 300 CP.

Canon – 100 CP

You get the chance to make any one character that appeared in the Jigokuraku manga, be they human, Tensen, or even a cabbage-headed doshi. Though you will have to convince them to accompany you, they will be naturally predisposed to like you and you will be guaranteed to have several opportunities to do this.

A Friendly God – 200 CP

While it is believed that there are only eight Tensen in existence, by taking this option it seems that this was a mistake: there were, in fact, nine. Not long after arriving in this world you'll encounter this strange new Tensen who, unlike the overwhelming majority of their kin, actually has a relatively positive view of humanity, at least to the point that they view them as actual people instead of mere ingredients for *tan*. Despite any differences you may have, will soon take a liking to you, quickly forming a bond strong enough that they'll be willing to accompany you to future worlds as a companion.

Apart from what has been stated above, their appearance, personality, preferred gender (if they have one at all), and history are all up to you. Perhaps they were created by Rien like the rest of their kind but promptly abandoned for some reason, or maybe they were born from an entirely independent creator. Whatever the case, they gain the Immortal background for free, with all the benefits that would entail, along with 600 CP to spend as they please.

Drawbacks

There's no limit to the number of drawbacks you may take, and all are removed at the end of this jump.

Unbending Ideals – +100 CP

To say you're a dogmatic one would be an understatement. The faith you have in your ideals is entirely unflinching, unbreaking, and uncompromising. No matter the situation or experiences you face, no matter how much they may challenge what you believe, you'll stubbornly stick to your worldview and way of doing things in spite of it all, even if it puts you or others through unnecessary pain or suffering. Such is the unavoidable cost of staying true to what you believe.

Truly Obsessed – +100 CP

Unfortunately, you've developed a twisted, unhealthy obsession with a certain character of this world that you wholeheartedly believe is love. You'd more than willingly do almost anything short of killing yourself to ensure that they remain happy and successfully, trying to off anyone who might become their rival without a second thought. And should anyone other than yourself receive the attention of the target of your affections, it'd take all the willpower you have not to give that person a slow and painful death. Just be careful you don't bite off more than you can chew when trying to display your love.

Getting in the Groove – +100 CP

For some unknown and bizarre reason, it seems that you can only exercise your full power when naked. When clad in anything more than a loincloth, you find it much more difficult to focus and accurately use any supernatural powers you might possess, effectively limiting you to a small fraction of your true might so long as you remain clothed. To make matters worse, armour also counts as clothing for the purposes of this drawback. Try not to get hit.

Introvert Immortal – +100 CP

There's preferring one's own company, and then there's you: you're incredibly shy around others to a rather pitiful extent. Merely talking to others normally is terribly difficult for you, and there are very few lengths you wouldn't go to prevent people from seeing your face or merely making eye contact with you, even against those you should by all means be fighting. Unless you have something truly important to say, you'll likely be spending a lot of your time alone or hiding from the sight of others.

Armless – +100 CP

After a particularly severe accident or battlefield mishap, you've lost the entirety one of your limbs. You can choose which limb it is, be it an arm or a leg, but no matter what you do or what powers you have, you won't be able to replace or recover it. Healing abilities that should normally be able to repair such an injury will fail, and even the most advanced prosthetics will simply refuse to function. Naturally, this will make certain tasks a lot more difficult at first, but you should be able to adjust with time.

An Immortal Mindset – +200 CP

Whether it be due to an incredibly torturous childhood or extensive isolation, your mindset is incredibly warped. Your sense of empathy is completely non-existent, leading you to view almost everyone who isn't a companion of yours as little more than an insect who you have no problem squashing for the slightest inconvenience. Needless to say, this cold and ruthless personality will make it almost impossible to make friends at best, with many likely viewing you as a monster who has to be killed at worst.

Little Jumper – +200 CP

Maybe it was due to a powerful individual altering your Tao or perhaps it's merely a quirk of your genes, but whatever the reason may be, you seem to possess the body of a small child no matter how old you may be. While this will obviously affect the way people treat you as well as significantly reducing the extent of your physical abilities, it seems that this condition has also affected your ability to communicate. You find it almost impossible to speak in sentences longer than three or so words, and trying to convey complex ideas, whether through speech or writing, results in only a string of apparently unconnected words that require a great deal of interpretation for others to even try to understand the meaning of.

Tarrare of the East – +200 CP

Ever since you were born, you've felt a constant, agonising hunger within your gut, one that remained no matter how much or what you ate. Despite knowing that it'll never go away, however, your insatiable appetite drives you to keep on eating in the vain hope of relief. As such, you tend to eat many times the amount of food a normal person would. However, in places where such sustenance isn't available, you'll turn to anything else that is even remotely edible to fill the void. In such circumstances, it'd take an inordinate amount of willpower just to resist killing and eating the very people around you.

Butterfly Heaven - +200 CP

While ordinarily the paradise butterflies would be a species endemic to Kotaku, it seems that your presence has changed that. From now on, no matter where you go these lovely little insects can be found, and what's worse is that they seem to have an odd fondness for you, swarming from miles around to try and sting you as a sign of their affections. While each individual butterfly is about as difficult to kill as any normal insect, the real danger lies in their sting, which can turn a man into a brain-dead tree person in a matter of seconds. This effect seems to bypass any normal protections you'd have against such things, and the only known way to prevent total arborification is cutting off the infected body parts before it can spread.

I Am Hoko - +300 CP

Once you were just a normal person of flesh and bone like anyone else, but that was a long time ago. For a long time, you have slowly been undergoing arborification, resulting in your current form, in which your body is a mass of tree branches vaguely twisted into a humanoid form. Despite already greatly reducing your speed, agility, and fine motor control, as well as making you rather vulnerable to fire, your arborification is not yet complete, and will continue to progress until you turn into an unthinking, unmoving construct of plant matter. Though, fortunately, you would not ordinarily succumb to this during your ten years here, any time you heal from an injury you sustain or use a supernatural ability will lead to the rate of arborification greatly increasing, to the point that such a fate is certain unless you use your abilities only sparingly.

Prime Specimen – +300 CP

Somehow, the Tensen themselves seem to have become aware of your otherworldly nature, and as such they have become incredibly interested in you, convinced that you hold the keys to eternal life. As a result, they will stop at nothing to see you captured and brought before them so that they can perform their terrible experiments on you, to the point that they'd be willing to lay waste to entire countries just to obtain your corpse. Furthermore, instead of merely residing on Kotaku as they normally might, they're more than willing to go out and pursue you themselves, no matter how far you might go, and will have no hesitation in using their full might to bring you in. Good luck.

Powerless - +300 CP

It seems you're the type that enjoys a good challenge. For the duration of your stay here, all of your abilities, perks, and equipment from other jumps will be inaccessible to you, including any access to your Cosmic Warehouse. This drawback can't be taken if this is your first Jump.

Ending

Having successfully survived this world of superhuman ninjas and immortal genocidal plant people, your ten years here are over. What will you do next?

Go Home

Perhaps the events that occurred here were too much for you, for you've decided to retire from your chain and return to where it all started – your home universe – with everything you gained along your journeys.

Stay Here

For whatever reason, something about this place must have truly appealed to you. You've decided to end your travels and live out the rest of your days here.

Carry On

This world was just one stop among many. You're continuing on to the future, to wherever your next Jump might take you.

Notes

- For convenience, a diagram illustrating the interactions between Tao attributes has been included. A purple arrow indicates that one element bolsters another, whereas a black one indicates that it hinders instead. The elements are, from the top of the circle going clockwise, Wood, Fire, Earth, Metal, and Water.
- **Imports:** If you'd rather import an existing item you already possess instead of getting a new one for any of the equipment options, you may do so for free.

