

GOKUROJI UNASHI, OR ROJI THE DAMNED

History

Rokusabura Unashi was raised under the tutelage of the famed warrior Gokuroji Kenichi, more commonly known as Roji the Wanderer or Roji the Penniless. Roji taught Unashi everything he knew and Unashi excelled in his training. However, a few months after Unashi's thirteenth birthday, Roji fell ill and the fortunes took him from the world. Before he went, however, Roji told Unashi of the boy's true heritage. That Unashi was one of five children; all of whom had been spread from one shore to the other. The fortunes, Unashi was told, predicted that great turmoil would result should the children ever band together. Unashi, it seems, and his siblings have become a bit of folklore amongst the superstitious. That is why, Roji told his student, Unashi was brought out to the fringes. That is also why, Roji smiled, he taught his charge so well.

Unashi, not caring what the fortunes foresaw or what the commoners think, has set out to find his siblings. Taking his teacher's name, and wearing his curse with pride, Unashi wanders in search of his brothers and sisters.

Elements

Earth: 3

Wind: 2

Fire: 4

Water: 4

Honor

Feared by my pursuers, revered by my victims.

Spirit

The mightiest storm is preceded by the greatest calm.

Talents

Bushido: 4

Horse Riding: 3

Herbalism: 2

Folklore: 2

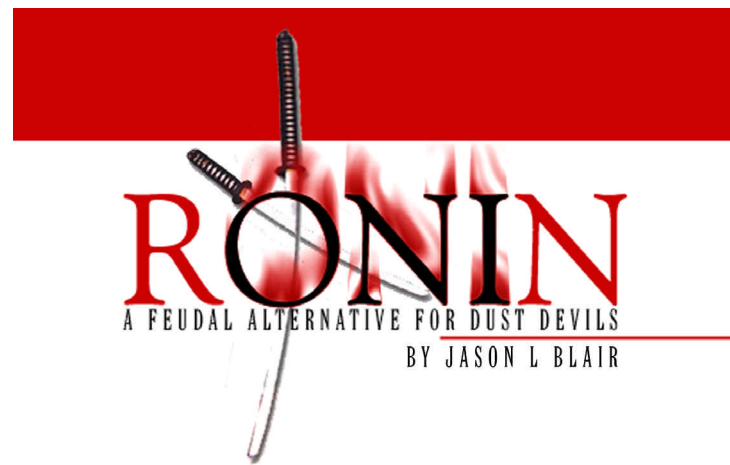
Duty

My dearest siblings,

I do not know if you are aware of the truth, nor do I know where you reside. But I have sworn to the spirit of our mother and father, and my teacher Roji, that I will reunite us. Let not prejudice or superstition keep us apart.

Running RONIN

RONIN tales can scale from bloody revenge fantasies to epic passion plays to anything in between. The history and mythology of feudal Japan is rich with political and familial intrigue, betrayal, forbidden love, brave warriors cast out, and long-lost sons finding their way home. These hooks should not be reserved to the history of the character but should come up in play as well. A game of non-stop duels will get old after awhile (not to mention fatal) and the sword is often the last tool with which the characters will want to negotiate. The mystery of feudal Japan has a lot to offer the players, so treat it well.



Introduction

RONIN is an alternate setting for Chimera Creative's Dust Devils RPG. Where Dust Devils was a take on the gritty old west of film and folklore, RONIN is set in a feudal Japan that reinterprets Dust Devils' core theme. Instead of a devil that the characters must eventually face, the characters in RONIN are serving out a duty to someone (or something) else. Some examples of this can be found in Akira Kurosawa's Seven Samurai (and most of Kurosawa's films, actually, as duty was one of the director's central themes). In Seven Samurai in particular, however, each samurai takes the task of protecting the village for a different reason. This should be kept in mind when creating a RONIN character: Even though duties may be similar, motives rarely are. RONIN assumes the reader has a basic knowledge of feudal Japanese history, society, and belief. There are many wonderful books, films, and games that supply an in-depth look at the day-to-day life and workings of feudal Japan and the recitation of such information is, unfortunately, out of the scope of this supplement. As recommendations, however, I suggest Gold Rush Games' Sengoku, Alderac Entertainment's Legend of the Five Rings (a good resource for the implementation of mythology into a feudal setting), and the aforementioned works of Akira Kurosawa. There are countless other resources that cover the historical, mythological, martial, and social aspects of the feudal era, and you are encouraged to study them but, as with most great works, do not feel obligated to be a slave to the facts. Whatever works dramatically is what's important here.

Characters

The characters in RONIN are all bushi, warriors trained in the art of bushido (a discipline usually reserved for those of the samurai caste). These warriors are burdened by an obligation they must honor-or die trying. These characters may be noble or ignoble, honorable or dishonorable, blessed by the fortunes or cursed, but these warriors will serve as the protagonists of tales that will unfold so, above all else, they must be interesting. They should be motivated, active, and driven. They should NOT be passive, non-committal, and lazy. RONIN, in its heart, is about conflict both internal and external and characters who do not respond to dramatic stimuli are not good characters for this setting.

History

The first thing you should do is write up a brief summary of the character's history. This should allude to (if not outright state) aspects of the character that are detailed in their Honor, Spirit, and Duty. A short paragraph or two is sufficient. Included in this write-up should be your character's name, familial house, and anything important that is not covered mechanically. What should not be in this history are dramatic dead-ends. Your character's history should bring out more controversy that it resolves.

Elements

RONIN characters eschew the standard Dust Devils attributes in favor of elements. The point allotments and rules from Dust Devils remain the same.

Elements

RONIN characters eschew the standard Dust Devils attributes in favor of elements. The point allotments and rules from Dust Devils remain the same.

Earth represents the physical nature of the character. This is the character's brawn, strength, and endurance. Whenever a character needs to do something physical (save combat), use Earth. Earth is associated with the suit of Clubs.

Wind represents the character's intellectual nature. This is the character's intelligence, wit, and charisma. Wind is associated with Diamonds.

Fire represents the character's passion and aggression. Whenever something the character truly cares about is put into play, Fire is used. It is quite common for one's Fire and Duty to be linked. Fire is associated with the suit of Hearts.

Water represents the character's martial and strategic ability. This includes the use of any and all weapons. Most RONIN characters disassociate themselves from combat, emotionally, so this will be used most of the time. However, if they are fighting to protect something they love or are driven to fight by some other passionate or aggressive impetus, Fire should be used. Water is associated with Spades.

Honor & Spirit

Instead of picking two Traits, RONIN characters choose a descriptor that details their Honor and one that evokes their Spirit. One's Honor describes the character's standing in feudal society whereas their Spirit details their general demeanor. Try to write these descriptors in a style that captures the feel of the RONIN setting. Mechanically, these act the same as Traits.

Talents

Talents are the same as Knacks in Dust Devils. All RONIN characters have the Talent Bushido which is

the training given to bushi and is also the code by which they live. This talent covers how to properly handle, use, and maintain their daisho (the pairing of the katana and wakizashi), so those need not be taken as separate Talents. The total number of Talents a character has may not exceed the sum of their Earth plus Wind.

Duty

This is the most important thematic aspect of a RONIN character. This is what will drive the character forward in the narrative. The character's Duty may be to protect and train a child, honor the spirit of a fallen family member, find an ancient ancestral weapon, or anything that will push the character into dramatic situations and add meat to the story. Duties can be sworn to a house, a daimyo, a lover, a teacher, one's self, or anybody (or anything). Duties can be sworn against someone else, as well.

One's Duty should be written as a short letter to whoever the Duty was sworn. The same rules as the Devil are used for Duty.

Sample Ronin

Included below are two sample RONIN characters to give you an idea of what the end result looks like.

MASAGUME HIROSHI

History

Masagume Hiroshi is a samurai from the house Ogani. Nahu, the daimyo's nephew, set Hiroshi up for the murder of the daimyo's favorite geisha. The daimyo knew Hiroshi was not to blame and chose not to execute the bushi. However, he could not sentence the true culprit, so he opted to banish Hiroshi. Stripped of his heritage, Hiroshi travels the countryside, longing for the day when he shall reap vengeance.

Elements

Earth: 2

Wind: 3

Fire: 5

Water: 3

Honor

Cast from the waters of my father.

Spirit

Once calm, my soul now rages.

Talents

Bushido: 3

Horse Riding: 2

Meditation: 2

Heraldry: 2

Bow & Arrow: 2

Duty

Masimo Nahu,

Your treachery shall be exposed in the face of your father and the mark of your house. Your skin shall sheathe my steel; your blood shall feed my children's children. Make peace with the spirits, for your time is short.