



KEEP YOUR NINJAS IN THE CLOUD

An I.T. Fable by Natan Verkhovsky

Haru got dropped off at the Academy of Security just as his lessons were about to begin. He hurried along, yet seemed to glide across the floor while his face remained calm, almost blissful. His teacher was a large, densely-set, older man with kind, soft eyes hidden behind a mask of scars that riddled his face and upper body like train-tracks.

Yatori had been a front-line Security Warrior - First Class, for many a moon and now spent what little free time he had left, scouting for and hand-picking, the finest possible candidates for the Academy. Haru had caught his eye as a natural Master of Security.

‘Haru’, he thought, ‘has seen through the assassins’ disguised as farmers, with legitimate papers that were stolen to gain entrance through the Lord’s front, rear and even secret entrances to the Palace. He stored and secured his Lord’s most confidential papers and was able to bury – in crypts, the most ancient and sacred texts that must be preserved for all time; as per compliance to his Lord’s laws. While still a student he was the first to link the need to strategically secure all of his Lord’s papers and palace entrance points, all through a single vantage point; gaining full control over all the pieces of his security

force, interconnecting and networking within themselves to create an impenetrable shield over his Lord's Palace. He can see an entire Security Grid Multi-Matrix in his mind, and secure all 7 layers of it simultaneously, but I can't get him to stop being so damned obvious about it!' Yatori thought.

Haru smiled nervously as he approached his mentor, and one of the most legendary Security Guru's left alive today. Yatori smiled in return and gently squeezed his shoulder as he walked by. To Haru, it was as if vice-grips had momentarily clamped onto his shoulder and them mercifully been released. His instructor noticed the wince but hid this and said nothing.

"Unless you are first Haru, the view never changes." Yatori smiled as he said this old joke between them. "You are about to graduate and are the finest student and most gifted Security Master I have ever seen, yet you are too forgiving." Haru's smile faded and was replaced by a look of mild disappointment and curiosity. "You must not only capture an intruder; you must punish him and so as not to ever be victim to his malicious attacks again."

"Master, I have learned to place all levels of my security tools strategically, so as to secure the outer perimeter to the grounds, the inner courtyard's Palace walls and our Lord's sacred-most chambers. There are no holes, no gaps, no vulnerabilities." Haru stated, his chest puffing out with pride ever so slightly.

"The entire area you have spoken of may be secure - and with the newest and most powerful tools of the day, but

the hole in your security strategy is that you only look at your Palace and its surrounding grounds; you have forgotten about the rest of the outside world, Haru. There are new threats all around us and we are only meant to keep up at best?” Yatori smirked. “To secure yourself from the outside to in, is really a cage, and one that is better at keeping you in with its rules and restrictions, than at keeping the invaders out.

"Your most valued security resources, your most potent weapons against sabotage are your Ninjas. This is the pinnacle of your security efforts; they are few but mighty. They are also merciless. Any and all perceived threats will be eradicated. They do not capture. They do not quarantine. They delete the threat, permanently. Then, Haru, they go after the attackers themselves. Once the threat has been neutralized, they become hunters. Do you understand?” Yatori scanned the face of his prized pupil and saw what he was looking for. He relaxed a fraction, softening ever so slightly, and his ghost of a smile became as apparent to Haru as if it were painted on for the traditional *Kabuki* in town.

“Yes Master.” Haru smiled. He was familiar with this principle. “To hunt, one must have Insight. To know his prey and to know himself, so as to combine this with the lay of the land and capture an enemy before he even knows he is being hunted.

“Next you must hunt with Foresight, for a true hunter is a warrior and knowing what your enemy will do before they do it will ensure your victory. Lastly, you must develop Eagle Eye. You must see into your Security Matrix and

look through the eyes of an intruder; find the weaknesses and place your traps there. How many days would you allow your front door to remain open? Exactly zero - that is where your Ninjas must go – to cover your holes and close your doors.”

“Yes, Master, I will. I will crush all those that even dare to attempt to enter, without my Lord’s consent, his sacred sanctuary that I am guarding. Haru, you are the youngest Master of Security to ever guard our Lord and Palace. You are also one of the most brilliant tacticians and security strategists I’ve ever seen. Yet...”

“What is it Master? What can I do?” Haru was genuinely concerned as he knew this would be his last chance to be alone with his mentor before the graduation ceremonies later that day.

Yatori sighed deeply. “What is the greatest weapon in your security arsenal?”

“It is the Ninjas, Master. You had just mentioned them.” Alarmed now by what obvious point he must have missed, Haru concentrated on the conversation even more now, quickly hearing his heart beat in his ear and a thin layer of sweat start to break out across his whole body.

“And what is your Ninjas’ single greatest strength? Their most potent and powerful tool?”

Haru thought about this. “Their stealth, Master. Their invisibility, their power to appear and disappear at will; to be everywhere and nowhere at all.” Proud of his answer, he smiled weakly.

“Well said, Haru. Now you are getting to the crux. While your Ninjas can never truly be invisible, they do have the ability to appear *dim* and hard to see at times. For them to appear, not at all, until it’s too late for your enemy to react, they must remain hidden from sight and thought until the very last possible moment. That will ensure the element of surprise, from which all the other nine arts of the Ninja flow from. In order to cloak them until they need to be unleashed; you must keep your Ninjas in the cloud, Haru. Haru was nodding unconsciously. Translating what his Master says is never as easy or straightforward as it appeared from the start - he’d learned that over the years. ‘How, exactly do I put Ninjas in the cloud?’ He thought. ‘They can’t fly and they’d be too high up in the clouds to drop down quickly enough, and even Ninjas wouldn’t survive the fall...so what does he mean?’

“Power perceived is power achieved, Haru.” Yatori said carefully. Painfully, he paused even longer, waiting for the moment and the pause to be fully impregnated and have just the right amount of importance given to it before he continued. “If you are seen as vast and mighty from afar, perceived as impenetrable; then no invader would dare attack you. So you must multiple your forces, either in real numbers or through magic so they appear to be ubiquitous.”

Haru thought about this for a moment. “How can I multiple my security force without increasing the number of men, Master?”

“Appearances can be deceiving, Haru. You learned that stopping thieves and assassins wearing many disguises at

the Palace gates. You too, have the power to deceive your enemies.

Puzzled, Haru frowned. ‘This is it. My final test. If I don’t get this right, I may not graduate today!’ Yatori had been known to do crazy things like give his graduating students ridiculous riddle-problems to solve, usually with no right answer that are centuries old. All the while, withholding graduation after years of painstaking work. Haru felt a chill run down his now-sweaty back and he shivered. Yatori waited patiently, with a curious twinkle in his eye, as he watched Haru wrestle with this. Suddenly, all was calm with Haru. It was as if a ripple went through him, relaxing his face and down. Haru stepped forward and smiled, beaming.

“Master, I would travel to all the tops of the mighty nearby mountains surrounding our Lord’s Palace and place the largest, roundest mirrors from the whole kingdom there. I would have our Lord’s Master Astronomer line them all up in such a way as to project the image of my Ninjas on the ground here, up into the mountaintops; then up into the clouds. So when an enemy would approach and see Ninjas waiting to drop onto them from the clouds; they might reconsider attacking. Either way, it’s too late for their mis-planned attack; and while their army is looking up, my real Ninjas would be on the ground, circling them and attacking mercilessly.” Haru practically burst with pride, his smile threatening to split his lips.

Yatori was silent as he listened; a single tear ran down his cheek. “That is a problem-riddle, a *Nazonazo* that my Master first put forth to me as a student. I was never able

to get to the solution as elegantly as you have just now. You truly have a gift, and already are a fine Master of Security.” Proud, like a parent, Yatori’s smile stretched from ear to ear and he had to restrain himself from more tears as he felt the pride swell in him like a wave.

“Thank you, Master. You have trained me well. I will guard our Lord and his Kingdom with my life and the lives of those in my service; and I will always keep my Ninjas in the cloud, Master, thanks to you.”

They walked off together; equals and friends. The way two people who share an impossible task, coupled with diminishing resources and a dangerous landscape ahead. While the burdens weighed heavily on their shoulders, they felt at peace, knowing the safety and strength that their security brings will always be in demand. As the day came to an end, Haru looked up to the mountaintops and smiled. The Ninjas he’s placed in the cloud seemed to almost smile back at him.

THE END