

# True, False, Tidbits, and Tricks Search

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I hope the segment of you that actually got to play in a *Betrayers* prerelease this past weekend enjoyed it. I was planning to have a discussion with my brother (a relatively casual on-again, off-again player) about his experiences with the new set in this article, but because Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania was in the "blizzard zone," he didn't get to play. Maybe next time.

The good news is that there will be supplemental Prerelease events at several locations across the Northeast and Midwest this weekend! So if you didn't get to play the first time (heck, even if you did), check the schedule here then head out for a second chance! The ninjas await!

## Paul's Betrayers Tidbits

Two weeks ago, Paul Sottosanti put a list of "true or false" statements about the development of *Betrayers of Kamigawa* into his preview article. Let's take a look at them and see which were true and which were savage lies.

1) *A card nicknamed "Plan B" entered development at four mana and made brief stops at six, seven, and eight mana before going to ten due to the efforts of a couple determined playtesters.*

**True.** Paul and Mons Johnson (two of the more notorious Johnnies of the FFL) kept playing "Plan B"--now known as Sway of the Stars--and kept winning games with it. Most of their decks used Heartbeat of Spring and Sachi, Daughter of Seshiro to help generate tons of mana.

The problem wasn't that they'd start the game over fairly by playing Plan B--that would have merely been annoying, and not actually good. Their plan was to start the game *unfairly* by floating extra mana. For instance, when Plan B cost six, it was pretty easy for Paul to get 11 mana, play Plan B with five mana floating, draw his new hand and put a Molder Slug or some other nasty creature into play. That's hard to stop when you have no permanents and only 7 life. It was kind of like Tooth and Nail and Obliterate all rolled into one.

After much testing, the card was proving unsafe at any reasonable mana cost, but was still cool enough to make. So ten mana it was.

2) *For a time there was a Goblin Ninja that required you to sacrifice the attacking creature instead of bringing it back to your hand, but it was killed when Ninjas were removed from Red.*

**False.** Much like how Samurai were put only into certain colors (white, red, and black), Ninjas were conceptualized as only blue and black from the outset of design. The "Goblin Ninja" was always a joke around R&D, but never actually was in the set.

3) *Henry Stern predicted in a meeting, and then in the Multiverse comments, that a certain common 1/1 with an arguably mediocre ability would see play in Block Constructed.*

**True.** Henry, the set's lead developer, is known for taking bold stances on some pretty mediocre cards (he recently made a similar position on a card in *Ravnica* development, but the rest of us let him off the hook when we upped the card's cost).





The card in question here is Matsu-Tribe Sniper. The Sniper can keep a Dragon in lockdown pretty much permanently once the Dragon taps (which probably means it hit you once), but the Sniper is so frail that I can't imagine it making an actual impact. Hey, maybe one of you will prove Henry right. It'll be cool.

4) At one point, the Ninjutsu costs in the set were aggressive enough that a deck nicknamed "Ninfinity," combining an Ornithopter-based Affinity build with a number of cheap Ninjas, was the deck to beat in the FFL.

**Half-True**, which I guess means false. We did have a "Ninfinity" deck in-house. Ninja of the Deep Hours had Ninjutsu 1, and Okiba-Gang Shinobi was 2 to play and had Ninjutsu 2 for a good while. On top of that, Shuriken had an equip cost of 1 and was actually demolishing some of our other decks. But while cute and fun, the deck was not as

good as normal Ravager Affinity, which is, of course, a good thing. So while Ninfinity was a great deckbuilding exercise that made for some funny stories, it was never the deck to beat around here.

On that note, Shuriken is the only card in the set that I designed, as I was on neither the design team nor the development team. (I know Paul mentioned that he made a few cards, but he's in Japan right now in the Pro Tour, so I can't follow up with him on that. Maybe later.) Shuriken was made to be "top-down" based on what a throwing star would do in **Magic**. My initial version had the Shuriken going to the opponent no matter what each time it was used. Development added the "Ninja bonus clause," and that was an awesome tweak.

5) A creature that gave mana acceleration to Blue made it most of the way through development before being dropped in the final stages.

**True.** Teardrop Kami--known as Mistmaster in playtesting--used to have the ability "Sacrifice CARDNAME: Untap target permanent." Of course, "target permanent" was often one of your own lands, allowing you to play three-mana spells on turn 2.

Paul mentioned to me that, with the old ability, the dev team wondered if Mistmaster would have been the best one-mana blue creature of all time. I seem to remember hearing that conversation and vaguely agreeing with it, but now that I look back the answer is a little unclear. Sure, the card would have been somewhat versatile--making mana sometimes, tapping blockers sometimes, and so on--but if a slightly better Blood Pet is the best blue has gotten for one mana EVER, then... well... then blue's one-drops have been historically pretty darn bad. Right now, my vote goes to Flying Men.



In any event, Teardrop Kami is still strictly better than his sad little brothers the Wandering Ones. And while I may not agree that letting him untap anything would have made him the premier blue one-mana creature, I agree with the decision to not give cheap acceleration to that color.

6) The development team, having decided to commit to actually making White Weenie good, added Armageddon as a White rare, but it only lasted a week and a half before negative feedback from playtesters forced it out of the set.

**False.** While we will always keep making good white weenies (someday the deck will be good again, really... statistically it has to happen, right?), we're still not at the point where we're ready to bring back the big ka-boom. It was never in the set.

7) *There's a card in the set that almost died at numerous points because it carried with it the possibility of first turn kills in Standard, but it narrowly survived and still exists today.*

**True.** An easy one. Lots of people have figured out that an opening hand of 2x Blazing Shoal (the card in question), 2x Myojin of Infinite Rage, Mountain, and Raging Goblin can end the game on turn 1. We're okay with that, as it just isn't reliable enough to be scary.

I was and still am scared of Blazing Shoal, however, as I can't shake the feeling that we missed some awesome combo with it in Extended. I hope I'm wrong!

There you have it. Thanks again to Paul for giving me such interesting content!

## Things to Know

I've played a bunch of games with *Betrayers* cards recently, and some common game situations have come up that may be a little counterintuitive. I'd like to share a couple of my "play secrets" with you to help you use the new cards to their fullest.

The first one involves the card I previewed last week, Shining Shoal. The interesting thing about the Shoal is that it only has one target--the thing you are redirecting the damage to. What it prevents the damage to is chosen on resolution. Plus, if one source is dealing damage to multiple creatures (or a creature and you), you can prevent the damage in whichever way is most beneficial to you.



For example, let's say you have the strong opening of Isamaru, Hound of Konda and Eight-and-a-Half-Tails. Your opponent was ready for your weenie assault, however, and plays a turn-2 Pyroclasm. How can you use your Shoal best? Say you have the Shoal in hand along with an extra copy of Eight-and-a-Half-Tails (how convenient!). You can remove the Tails in your hand from the game to play the Shoal for free, setting X to 2. You choose your opponent as the target and the Pyroclasm as the source. Upon resolution, you can choose to prevent any two of the damage that the Pyroclasm is dealing to your creatures (or you, if it could). You would wisely choose to prevent one damage to each of your guys, allowing them both to survive, and dealing two damage to your very sad opponent. Tricky and powerful--what's not to love?

The other tidbits I have to share involve the Genju, which have a lot going on even though they seem simple.

A Genju played on a land that has been in play since the beginning of your turn can be activated and attack right away. The land is becoming a creature, and it will not have summoning sickness since it began the turn in play, even though it was just a land at that point.

Conversely, if you play a Genju on a land you just put out earlier in the turn, that land will not be able to attack even if you animate it. Things that came into play this turn cannot attack.

If someone is attacking you with an animated Genju land and you Naturalize the Genju in the middle of combat, the land is still a creature until end of turn and is still attacking you (unlike, say, Living Terrain. The Genju is activated and lasts until end of turn no matter what, whereas Living Terrain is static and lasts only as long as the land is enchanted). The same thing happens if you Naturalize the Genju in response to your opponent activating it. The best thing to do is to destroy the enchantment while your opponent is tapped out, or at the very least on your turn.

The last note on the Genju involves a specific interaction--that between a Genju and Kiki-Jiki, Mirror Breaker. Say you activate Genju of the Spires, making a Mountain into a 6/1. You then copy that Mountain with Kiki-Jiki's ability. Is the token a 6/1 creature with haste? No.

The token is a copy of Mountain, with haste. It is a land and can be tapped for mana, but it is not a creature and cannot attack. "Copy effects" copy cards as they are printed. Things like +1/+1 counters, type-changing effects (like the Genju), or temporary effects (like Jump) are not copied. So if you target a Mountain with Kiki-Jiki, regardless of what cool modifications you have made to that Mountain, you will get a token copy of a boring old Mountain, and you'll still have to sacrifice it at the end of the turn.



**Last Week's Poll:**

Which group of cards from <i>Betrayers of Kamigawa</i> has you most excited?		
Ninja	8974	56.0%
Shoals	2793	17.4%
Genju	2485	15.5%
Patron Kami	1776	11.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>16028</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

**This Week's Poll:**

**Did you already know the correct interaction between Kiki-Jiki and Genju?**

Yes.

No, I never thought about it.

No, I was playing it wrong/would have played it wrong.

