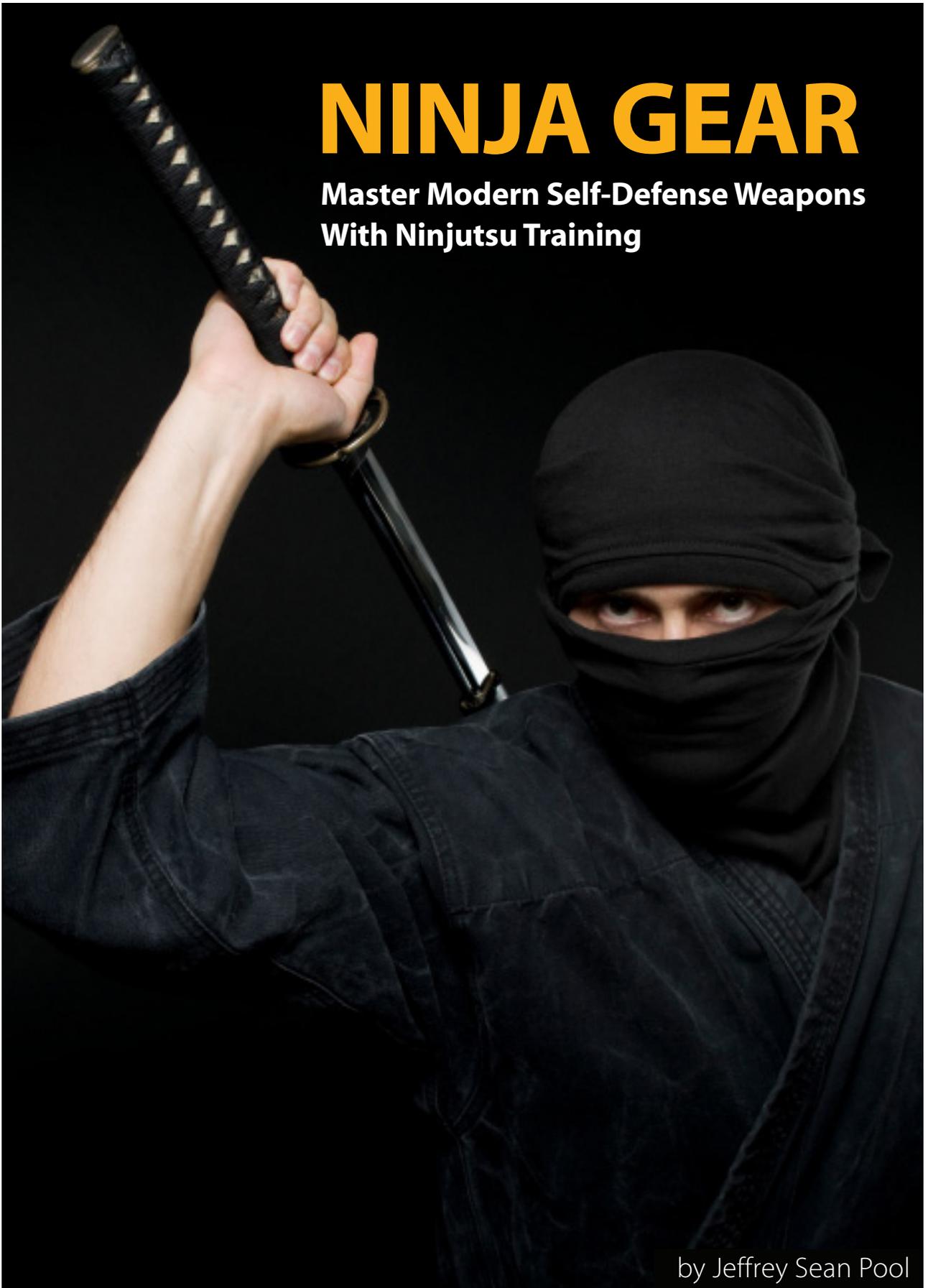


NINJA GEAR

Master Modern Self-Defense Weapons
With Ninjutsu Training



by Jeffrey Sean Pool

It is unfortunate that we live in

a world where criminals seem to have the upper hand in the legal system. It's also unfortunate that we live in a world where ordinary citizens have been sued for protecting their own home. Because of instances like these, many people would say that the time for some creative thinking is at hand. Practitioners of the art of *ninjutsu* are taught to defend themselves against anything that would do them harm. This includes, but is not limited to, some of the less-logical laws of the penal code.

LAWS AND WEAPONS

Ninjutsu students refer to any piece of equipment they must use in self-defense as a tool rather than a weapon. That's because a tool is used to accomplish a goal, whereas a weapon is used to hurt someone. In a society that sometimes forgets that the law is an instrument for justice, it is wise to know the difference.

The law differs from time to time and state to state. For example, in Florida, residents can carry a concealed weapon after taking the authorized training course, but in California, it is a misdemeanor in many circumstances to conceal a loaded gun. This is very interesting, especially when one considers that possessing a *nunchaku* is a felony. Using a *nunchaku* requires a tremendous amount of skill — for even the most basic movements — whereas a gun can be used by anyone who happens to pick it up. Go figure.

Certain items, such as a *nunchaku*, seem to set off alarm bells for most people, including law-enforcement personnel. Other weapons in this category include guns, knives and clubs. But with a little imagination, you can avoid these emotional triggers by selecting a self-defense tool that does not sound quite so deadly.

Keep in mind that anytime you use an object in a conflict, the court can consider it a use of deadly force. You are allowed to meet an opposing force only with equal force — and no more. Oftentimes, it's hard to prove exactly what your intent was in a self-defense encounter, so if you use anything to protect yourself, remember to cover your butt legally.

In a court of law, the circumstances that surround an incident can count for a lot. If you are watering your lawn with a garden hose and someone attacks you with a knife, you should be well within your rights to protect yourself. If the attacker doesn't have a weapon, he may have other advantages that could justify defending yourself with whatever tool is at your disposal. For example, he could be accompanied by other assailants or be physically larger than you. There are no guarantees, but any tool



you pick up could give you just enough of an edge to help you avoid serious injury.

HIDDEN TOOLS

When you really think about it, there isn't much that you can't use to defend yourself. All it takes is a little training and knowledge. Cellphones are a great example. Many Americans own one. They are quite inexpensive, and they don't attract attention. Yet they can be used in many ways during an unexpected conflict. Of course, you could throw one either to distract or to injure your assailant. You could cup one in your hand for use as a striking tool while standing or on the ground. I have even used mine as a flashlight on occasion. That is the purpose of a tool: to achieve a goal. A tool allows you to overcome obstacles that would otherwise prevent you from achieving your aims.

In ninjutsu training, tools are used to teach the foundation of larger life concepts. Training with a particular item — perhaps a *bo* (staff) — can clue you in on how to use the weapon, how to do the related footwork and even how to better understand the universe. These concepts then can be applied to other common objects, such as a broom or a pool cue.

This principle of improvisation covers just about every type of tool you can imagine: A pen becomes a knife, a pillow becomes a shield, a blanket becomes a net, and a phone receiver and cord become a *kusari fundo* (weighted chain). Ninjutsu even has techniques for rolling up a piece of paper into a tight little spike.

PERSONAL ITEMS

Most people carry numerous personal items that can be used as self-defense tools. For example, spare change can be used as blinding powder if it is thrown into the eyes of an attacker. A wallet can be a great distraction, too; you can drop or throw one to make your assailant take his eyes off you. Some people even carry a "dummy wallet" filled with old identification cards, a few random business cards and a couple of dollars.

Tools can even exist within your wallet. Take an old credit card and sharpen one edge. As with anything, the possibilities are limited only by the confines you put on them.

The same strategy can be applied to a purse, which could double as a shield or striking instrument. Keys can be used as claws. A belt can be used instead of a short chain, especially if it has a heavy buckle attached. Shoes, especially boots and high heels, have many possibilities for today's creative warrior.

The way you live your life can affect the number and type of potential tools available to you. For instance, if you enjoy Asian culture, you may carry one of those small paper fans with a wood spine, a set of chopsticks or steel exercise balls. Of course, the self-defense applications for these items are clear.

Other belongings may be used as tools in any number of cir-





cumstances if you just take a little time to explore them. A great exercise to develop your ability to see the potential of a tool is the “what if” drill. Ask yourself: What if a conflict with three men armed with sticks occurred? Would I hide? Run? Fight? How would I go about the task of surviving and defending others if they were present?

What might I use as a tool?

This “game” is a great way to condition yourself to respond more effectively to whatever situation you are in because you probably won't have time to think if something does happen. Most martial artists can assimilate this concept into their normal way of thinking within a few weeks. Soon it becomes second nature.

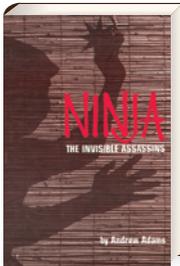


FINAL THOUGHTS

Remember that if you do not know how to use a tool properly, you won't know how to use its counterparts, either. You could very well hurt yourself, which would serve only your opponents. Learning how to use a tool under the supervision of a qualified instructor is crucial for acquiring higher-level skills. Although you may be able to develop some basic techniques to the level of a novice, you probably won't be able to acquire true martial proficiency, and you will be more likely to miss those other benefits that you would get through formal training: discipline, concentration and spirituality.

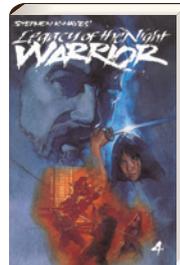
Note: This article was written with the assumption that you are defending yourself in a reasonable situation in which you are not highly outnumbered or outclassed. It is intended to help in the event of an attack from a person with a weapon or a group with or without weapons. It is not for some minor altercation concerning a parking spot, however. This is extremely important to understand — legally, as well as spiritually. ✂

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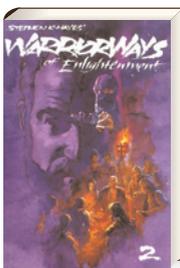
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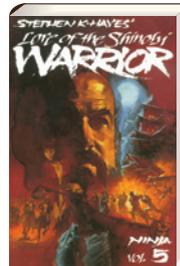
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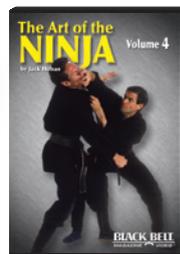
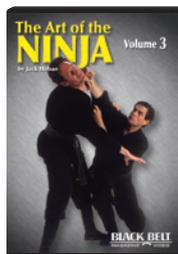
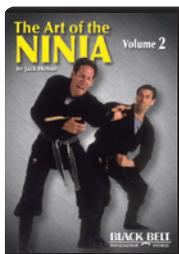
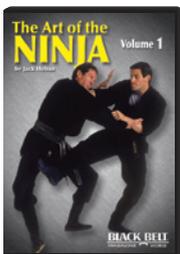
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