

Cryptosaurus

—Howard Tang

You are happy to return the piece of paper back to its original place, and remind yourself not to touch any part of your face with your fingers. Further investigations of the room turn up nothing particularly significant: you find a torn up copy of Wednesday's Age, a picture of the Queen, a magazine on marathon training, and a few assorted cook books.

Suddenly, you hear a door swing wide open. It's the emergency exit at the end of the passageway. As the sound of footsteps approaches the door to the dressing room, your heart skips a beat. However, the footsteps fade as quickly as they started — the mysterious stranger, in an apparent rush, has scampered right past the dressing room, straight into the main arena. Could it be the Iron Chef? Your suspicions are confirmed as you carefully ease the door open, and catch a glimpse of a figure in a brand-new, snow-white ninja suit.

Now, exercising extreme caution, you inch your way, slow as *l'escargot*, into the main arena. Employing skills that even professional ninjas from Japan would be envious of, you hide behind a conveniently-placed pot plant, and are pleased to find that your vantage point is a particularly pleasing one. You are positioned right behind the Iron Chef's kitchen.

"Lights, camera, action!"

As you watch on, the contestants line up and are given their first task: to cook a chicken-themed dish. While the contestants make their way back to their benches, ready to do battle, you sit back and admire the Iron Chef's new costume. Even though you have a strange suspicion that something is not quite right about him, you have to admit — he does look quite dashing in that ninja suit: a tall, broad-shouldered figure, dressed in a pure white gown, emblazoned with nonsensical Japanese phrases and garnished with enough bling to make your eyes see double.

Then, you notice that the Iron Chef, in a rare moment of carelessness, has dropped what appeared to be recipe instructions near your hiding spot. Hungry for more clues, you pick it up and examine it.

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