

NEON BLADES

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FADE IN:

EXT. HARBOUR - DAWN

Pink mist rises in a morning glaze as black MOTORBOAT docks at a shady harbor.

Tailor-suited TRIAD GANGSTERS help an older man, TRIAD LEADER (55) with a BRIEFCASE onto land and into the maze of shipping containers.

With a stern attitude, they step into...

INT. OFFICE

In the middle of a greasy tradesman office is a table with an OPENED BRIEFCASE FULL OF MONEY.

YAKUZA LEADER (55), a man of elegance and authority, moves from his posse to meet Triad Leader. They greet each other warmly and casually.

Triad Leader motions and man sets BRIEFCASE on the table.

Gangsters on both sides sweat bullets as BRIEFCASE claps open, revealing BAGS OF COKE. A Yakuza STABS one of the bags and inhales the stuff.

With a red face, he gives a thumb up.

A sigh of relief and men relax.

SUDDENLY A SMOKE BOMB EXPLODES IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROOM!

MEN PANIC! THEY FIRE UZIS AND KILL EACH OTHER AS THE LEADERS DIVE UNDERNEATH THE TABLE. ITS CHAOS!.....and silence.

It's raining shredded bills in cocaine mist.

Underneath the table; Leaders pull GUNS on each other BUT a gangster runs into the room.

SPLAT! Gangster falls dead, SHURIKEN lodged into his head.

With confusion and horror, the Leaders cock their weapons, but crawl together towards the harbor.

In the grave silence, boat rocks against the harbor. The distant sound of gunfire only briefly breaks the silence.

IN PANIC Yakuza Leader crawls outside the door.

SUDDENLY:

BLUE NINJA appears. He is tall, wearing a blue ninja uniform, his eyes are milky white.

With a single THRUSTING MOTION, he IMPALES Yakuza Leader to the floor as he releases a dying scream.

In b.g. We see ninjas in black, ready to strike. Blue Ninja makes a gesture and they begin to unload the BOAT.

TRIAD LEADER hears the scream and unloads his UZI into the doorway. CLICK CLICK CLICK! It's empty. His jaw drops with sheer disbelief and terror.

With cold, calm movement Blue Ninja enters the room and slowly unsheathes his katana while Triad Leader makes a futile attempt to crawl away.

Blue Ninja stands on top of him... raises the blade...

AND SLICES INTO THE OPENING CREDITS!

MAIN TITLES BEGIN. MUSIC STARTS.

MONTAGE - VARIOUS

ALEX, a half-Asian type, is watching Bruce Lee in "The Green Hornet" as his parents (White square-faced marine and Japanese escort type) fight in the background. He turns the volume up, but his face looks like he is about to cry.

JOHN, a blonde American-type, is fighting for his mother's attention inside a large mansion. She is peeking at a muscular gardener and chatting on the phone.

At junior school now. Alex is getting bullied, knocked to the ground while kids "slit-their-eyes" at him. His comic books are scattered beside him.

SUDDENLY John intervenes and fights the bullies off. He cleans up Alex's shirt a bit. It has Bruce Lee doing a flying kick. John shows he's wearing one too. They smile. This is the beginning of a friendship.

The boys are older now, caught sneaking into a theater to see "The Big Boss" (1971). As the ticket seller drives them out they see a poster for the Ninjutsu School Togakure-Ryu (School of Hidden Door).

The boys are wearing gi now and doing a belt test. Alex and his father are happy for John, who passed. John is happy with them, but he can't find his parents from the crowd. In the b.g We see a shadowy figure talking to the teachers. (Note: it should be ambiguous that both did pass)

A formal letter. Invitation for private teaching. Alex's father looks at it in worry. John is on the phone with his dad; he gives an agreeable nod.

They are now at a train station. Alex's father is hugging him until the last moment. He walks alongside the departing train. John watches them somberly from inside. Old Asian kung-fu master type man notices this.

The vast forests of Japan. Mount Fuji. Sun rising from the East. Blue sky. Greenfields. Osaka Castle. Pink cherry-trees. Osaka in motion.

MUSIC AND CREDITS END.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Cut bamboo whistles *wooh wooh* as we move through the forest towards the sound that grows LOUDER. They STRIKE.

ENTER Alex(19) (Who looks like young Brandon Lee)

and John(19) (Who looks like more blonde Don Johnson in his youth).

They are in the middle of a sparring session with bamboo sticks. Both are slim and muscular.

WHACK WHACK the sticks STRIKE as Alex tries to keep up with John's perfect offense.

MASTER

You can't defend forever.

MASTER is watching. He is an old Asian man with tails of white whiskers underneath his nose and speaks in broken English.

John disarms Alex and lands a blow, knocking him over.

MASTER (CONT'D)

Even the roughest rocks are smoothed by the wave.

John smugly helps Alex up.

ALEX

I can't find an opening.

JOHN

Well, sometimes offense is the best defense.

He winks at Alex, who is readying for the second round. He braces himself and steels his focus... only for John, half-trying, to hit the stick out of his hand.

All three of them begin to slowly walk towards the MASTER'S CABIN in the background while having a conversation.

JOHN (CONT'D)

When can we use real katanas?

Master is tired of this question.

MASTER

When you're BOTH ready.

JOHN

It's just a big knife.

ALEX

I'd rather stick with sticks. For now.

John smugly replies.

JOHN

While you're playing with sticks,
I'll master the blade

ALEX

There's one stick you master... and
it isn't a blade.

SUDDENLY:

A RADIO on the porch begins to blast

RADIO

Breaking news! Last night at Osaka
Harbor a drug deal has gone
brutally wro-

Master hits the radio off in pinpoint accuracy with his cane. Boys exchange looks.

Master releases a long sigh. (FINE!)

MASTER

Go to the graveyard tonight. Spend the night there and return to me in the morning.

Boys FIRE UP from excitement, truly this seems to be something they've waited for.

ALEX AND JOHN

Yes!

MASTER

But this is only the first part. There is more to come. And remember, don't fall asleep. Who knows what moves there at night.

JOHN

Yeah yeah, no one believes in ghosts any more gramps.

Alex looks at John with a straight face.

ALEX

Don't worry, I protect you. (to Master) See you at dawn!

Master, already leaving, waves his hand as if to say "yeah-what-ever".

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PLATEAU

Exhausted, Alex and John arrive at a plateau overlooking OSAKA AGAINST THE BLUEST OF SKYLINES in the distance; it is prosperous, growing, and glowing. Like another, pulsating world.

Boys glance back at the way they came; green forests and rocky hills. Not so tempting. It's like they are in the eye of the storm between two distant worlds.

With a longing look, Alex stares into the city.

ALEX

You ever scared John?

JOHN

Like what?

Alex exhales and thinks.

ALEX
Don't you think there is more in
the world?

John elbows Alex playfully.

JOHN
Getting homesick?

ALEX
Nah.

John takes a deep breath and joins sightseeing Alex.

JOHN
I know what you mean. I feel it
too.

Alex smiles.

ALEX
I wonder what our dads are doing.
This rubs John the wrong way. He turns away.

JOHN
Who cares.

He jogs away into the woods. Alex follows.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - NIGHT

An old Shinto graveyard basks in almost supernatural moonlight, where tombstones stick out from overgrown grass. In the midst of them is alone and forgotten CHAPEL with a small porch and sliding doors. It is silent.

INT. CHAPEL - NIGHT

Moonlight carves images into the worn straw mat inside. There is a small altar at the end of the room, decorated with melted old candles.

Alex and John sit on the floor restless.

JOHN
That old fossil thinks things are
like 500 years ago.

ALEX
For us it is.

JOHN

But why?

Alex doesn't know the answer.

JOHN (CONT'D)

You hear the radio earlier? We could do so much more with our skills.

ALEX

But we are not ready yet.

John exhales and calms himself down.

JOHN

And HOW long does that take?
Another 500 years?

Alex snickers.

ALEX

Maybe... What happened to the monthly visit to the city anyway?

JOHN

I don't know... Maybe he doesn't see so well anymore.

ALEX

A Blind Master?

JOHN

Sounds like a movie I know!

John jumps up like a cat and imitates Bruce Lee's maneuvers.

JOHN (CONT'D)

You can be Chuck Norris.

ALEX

Aww, not again.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - NIGHT

A bad imitation of Bruce Lee and "ka-pow" voices can be heard as the boys re-enact the climax of "The Way of the Dragon".

CUT TO:

EXT. MASTER'S CABIN - NIGHT

Masterfully built shack in the middle of the woods. Beside it, an old off-road Pajero car, underneath a tarp, sits at the end of a small and rocky driveway with tire tracks leading downhill. Light dimly shines from the cabin windows as smoke escapes from the chimney. On the shiny wooden porch, a cat sneaks inside...

INT. MASTER'S CABIN - NIGHT

It's a simple, nearly antique interior. Wooden floor with a fireplace in the middle. The bed and TV stick out for being modern. Walls are decorated in old memorabilia, photos, scrolls, and many, many books on the English language. Only the bed and TV stand out for being so modern.

The Master is having supper, while he focuses on TV.

TV REPORTER (V.O.)
Another brutal robbery has taken
place in Osaka...

TV shows footage of Osaka's harbor, where (earlier) Yakuza and Triad men were slaughtered. Bullet shells, magazines, and ponds of blood. It is very sensational and super-censored.

TV REPORTER (V.O.)
...as it seems a drug deal has gone
wrong. Police have no evidence
about the attack, but it seems like
YAKUZA AND TRIAD members were
caught by surprise... and red-
handed.

Censored footage of doctors, police, and firemen carrying the dismembered gang men from the building. Master is focused on the screen, as he recognizes this handwork.

INT. CHAPEL - DAWN

Master, carrying two katanas, slams the slide-door open, startling the boys awake. He moves respectfully inside, greeting the building as if boys did not even exist. They took him in silent awe.

He walks outside to sit on a small porch, gesturing for them to follow. They sit next to him, and he offers the katanas without ceremony. Alex runs his finger over the coarse, clothed handle of the katana; its scabbard is smooth aged leather.

Boys take a strap of cloth to carry the scabbard; John makes complex knots and hangs the blade from his back as ninjas do. Alex makes a crude belt, resting the scabbard on his side, like a samurai.

MASTER
(to Alex) Why did you do that?

ALEX
It feels more natural.

John is about to draw, but Master stops him, making a split-second judgment to not hit him in the face.

MASTER
Do NOT draw it! When you draw, you draw for the kill.

We see an unmarked gravestone. It's old and weary, standing alone like a dead tree.

MASTER (CONT'D)
There lies Shimura Gobei. He was one of the sensei of our school. He sacrificed his life to protect two orphans from the life of slavery in daimyo's service.

We see many like it. Each all alone, but also together. Graves of unknown warriors, whose names only a few know and remember.

MASTER (CONT'D)
Katana is the soul of a warrior. Warriors you see here. Great men. In times, times before you, even me, it was hard to come upon a good blade. It was a rite of passage to claim one, as it was only Samurai who had the luxury to wield one. You either snuck up and stole it.
(Pause)

Or if you bested someone in combat, you would claim his. It's not hard to steal from these men.

And you can't kill them either.

To samurai, their blade is their soul. To ninja, it is a tool. A tool to protect and to kill. The judgment of Life and Death. When you draw. Remember.

Master points at the graves surrounding the shrine.

MASTER (CONT'D)
 Enemies and friends. Murderer and
 saint. They all rest the same.

The Master turns and waddles back to his shack without looking back. John and Alex grip their tools with new determination.

INT. MASTER'S CABIN - MORNING

Everyone is eating breakfast. TV is running in the b.g.

MASTER
 You're going to the city tonight.

ALEX AND JOHN
 What?

MASTER
 It is your final test.

ALEX
 ...And we have to do what exactly?

MASTER
 Blend into the city. I'll drop you
 at the center of Osaka and you're
 to return to the Cabin before dawn.
 Unseen.

Boys high-five. SUDDENLY: Breaking News blast from the TV

TV REPORTER (V.O.)
 We have returned with breaking news
 from yesterday's murder spree at
 Osaka Harbour...

The TV runs through the same, brutal material as yesterday.

TV REPORTER (V.O.)
 ...as it seems Osaka Police
 Department has released a statement
 abo-

Master changes the channel. The boys react with awkward silence.

ALEX
 I'm going to load up our gear

JOHN
 Remember binoculars.

Alex unsheathes his blade and looks at it with fearful respect.

MASTER
Keep it hidden in the city.

JOHN
Don't worry paps, if I draw it
there will be no witnesses.

Master is not in a funny mood and approaches John.

MASTER
I guess you prefer a bamboo stick?

John FINALLY shows a bit of courtesy.

JOHN
No sir.

MASTER
Now go rest.

INT. ALEX'S AND JOHN'S BEDROOM - EVENING

Boys are sleeping in their futons, their gear ready, and black ninja-gis standing in their places. Some Bruce Lee memorabilia adorn the walls and shelves. The room is stuck in the time of childhood.

SUDDENLY: Master SLAMS the DOOR open.

MASTER
It's time.

EXT. OSAKA - NIGHT

WIDE view of Pajero leaving the mountains and heading into the big, colorful neon city of OSAKA.

MUSIC STARTS. Very slow, long shots of the city. People walking with umbrellas in the rain. Billboards in all colors. Blue steel. Neon lights. CRT-monitor City. Tightly-packed old streets. Plazas. Street lights. Masses of people. Tall advertisements. People smoking. The city is full of color; it's dim, it's wet, it's reflective and shiny. It's Neon City.

INT. PAJERO - NIGHT

A car stops at street lights. John rolls the window down to see a NEWS BOARD displaying an image of a CORRUPT MINISTER, TAKAHARA.

JOHN

Looks like the bad guys don't even bother to wear masks anymore.

MASTER

You're here to study people. There will be a time when they will.

JOHN

Sometimes I feel you should study how people work paps.

Master gives him the evil eye from the mirror. Alex is absorbed by the city through the blurry window.

JOHN (CONT'D)

We're the good guys and have to stay hidden. Why's that?

Master shuts off the radio, startling Alex from his hypnotic trip.

MASTER

This is important. If you get caught, I might not be able to help you.

ALEX

And if we see "bad guys"?

MASTER

Be just.

Pajero drives into:

INT. PARKING HALL - NIGHT

A dark parking hall with a lone EXIT sign in distance.

MASTER

Remember. Don't be seen. Be at the cabin at dawn. Understand?

Boys mask themselves and jump out.

ALEX AND JOHN

YES!

INT. STAIRWAY - NIGHT

They sneak to the top floor, picking the lock to the roof.

SOUNDS OF THE CITY HIT US WITH THE POURING RAIN.

We see the rainbow colors of the City.

John begins to strip his gear off.

JOHN

Okay, let's hide the gear.

Alex takes two long blinks.

ALEX

What the HELL are you talking about?

JOHN

Alex please, I know a quick route back to the cabin. We have hours to just mess around the city.

ALEX

And do what exactly? Sipping water in some pub? Gawking at shop windows? Yeah, these clothes really help man.

John stops.

ALEX (CONT'D)

It's night anyway, we can steal food from some street sellers if you think that's funny.

John scratches his head.

JOHN

Fuck.

It rains. There is a long pause.

ALEX

Do you know where the harbor is?

John looks at billboards like stars in the sky.

JOHN

I think it's that way. I like the idea. But it's gonna take a while to get there.

(b.g) Alex is already looking for a way to move to the next roof.

ALEX
We can make it.

They parkour through the roofs and shadows of Osaka.

EXT. CITY - NIGHT

They move like black silhouettes against the colors of the city.

Alex is sneaking past a window and accidentally breaks a plant-pot. He looks inside, checking if anyone is home.

There is an OTAKU inside with big round glasses watching "Hokuto No Ken". He's surprised by the ninja at his window.

Alex motions "shh" and slips back into the shadows.

EXT. HARBOUR - NIGHT

On a flat roof near the shady harbor building, the boys are monitoring the murder site with binoculars from a distance. Some police and TV-Vans are still near.

ALEX
So what do you see?

JOHN
It's like I'm watching TV.

ALEX
That doesn't make any sense.

JOHN
Can't see shit.

SUDDENLY, they hear glass SHATTERING and some yelling nearby, but give it no notice. John cleans binoculars and looks again.

JOHN (CONT'D)
They've shut it tight, I think
they're still investigating what
happ-

The yelling gets more aggressive. John notices Alex is now standing at the edge of the roof, looking down.

In the dark alley below, a YOUNG COUPLE is being chased by three GANG MEMBERS. John joins Alex, watching as the situation grows grimmer.

ALEX

We gotta do something.

JOHN

They'll just mug them and be done with it.

One gang member overpowers the girl while the others are hitting the male victim on the ground.

ALEX

What good is our training if we don't help?

JOHN

Yes...

John seems to remember something

JOHN (CONT'D)

This is a test.

ALEX

I'll sleep the leader, you lure the others out. Okay?

JOHN

Let's go.

Boys shake hands from the arm, giving the good-luck nod.

BACK TO SCENE:

The bleeding male victim gets kicked on the ground. From behind some dumpsters comes a muffled scream as the girl fights desperately against the gang leader. He flashes her a sadistic smile.

Alex sneaks up behind him and pacifies him with a lock-hold; as they grapple he notices a THREE-HEADED OUROBOROS TATTOO on the gang leader's arm. The girl screams louder and scrambles to run away. Two gang members notice and cautiously move towards the dumpster.

GANG MEMBER

Hoi!

The leader lets out a muffled scream. Alex locks eyes with the gang members. He's been noticed.

GANG MEMBER 2
OVER HERE!

John moves with steely determination towards the lone gang member(2) while the rest of the gang has frozen in confusion.

GANG MEMBER 2 (CONT'D)
Who are you!?

JOHN
No reason to introduce myself to
the dead.

Gang member 2 EXPLODES in gore and blood as lightning-fast beams of steel flash through him.

The rest of the gang, the male victim, and Alex; their eyes all widen in horror.

This makes Alex lose his grip on the gang leader, who slips away and escapes.

Gang member pulls a gun, but a knife thrown by John chokes the barrel and it EXPLODES in his hand.

John then kills both of the remaining gang members with cold-blooded and brutal efficiency, his sword leaving a trail of wet red blood in its path. He turns to look for Alex.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Alex?

Alex is gone. The male victim is in shock on the ground.

There is a long silence.

EXT. CABIN - DAWN

John arrives alone in the cabin. It emits welcoming warmth as the chimney spits at the dawning sky.

INT. CABIN - DAWN

Mist rises from KETTLES and pans as Master's cooking sits ready for feasting. John enters with unseen (and inconvenient) formality. Alex dines quietly with his chin to his chest as his CHOPSTICKS TINGLE.

MASTER
Ahh, Alex said you got lost.
Uncommon for you.

John avoids eye contact with Master.

JOHN
Y-yeah... I wanted to go my own way, y'know?

MASTER
Please, sit. You must be hungry.

With one swift motion, he directs John to his place and casually TAKES the SWORD from John's waist. This bothers John; he tries to hide it but WE NOTICE.

JOHN
I don't think anyone saw us either.

Master moves to his own 'spot' in the room, slyly looking into the SWORDS' GUARD. It has DRIED BLOOD. Alex's chopstick TINGLE LOUDER on the half-empty cup.

Master breaks the silence with fake casualness.

MASTER
So, did it go well?

JOHN
(to Alex) Why don't you talk for a moment?

MASTER
We talked. Saw any lovely sights? Boats perhaps?

KETTLES hiss and jump as ambiance grows more thick and dreadful.

MASTER (CONT'D)
MURDERER!

Alex's CHOPSTICKS ring the empty CUP. Jumping up, Master KICKS and PINS John to floor; he raises the SCABBARD to STRIKE.

MASTER (CONT'D)
Stupid American dog! I knew it was a mistake to train you.

He moves to ATTACK the cowering John, BUT SUDDENLY Alex's arm STOPS him. They look at each other, flabbergasted before Alex recomposes himself (for being surprised by what he did).

ALEX
They were armed! We couldn't just watch two people get killed!

MASTER

How do you know that?

Alex visibly swallows in the heat of a tantrum. Waiting for a response; Master pushes him off.

MASTER (CONT'D)

How do you know? That it was kill
or be killed?

Alex finds the last bits of courage and composure, he shakes in fear. John can't help but silently admire.

ALEX

There is a whole WORLD out there of
people we could HELP. OUR skills
could stop so many bad things and
people would find just-

Master, red-faced, cuts him off with a shout.

MASTER

Another bark from another pup! I
trained you to pacify, to subdue
without killing and the FIRST thing
you do is NEITHER. I just released
two murderers with no sense of
right OR wrong into the world...

Master rips the belt from John's waist.

ALEX

Master... don't do it...

Master begins to MAUL John, who curls into a sack of meat as Alex watches like a coward. (NOTE: This is a parallel of Alex getting beat at school when John came to help).

INT. ALEX'S AND JOHN'S BEDROOM - MIDNIGHT

Alex sits alone in the pitch-black bedroom. He looks behind him and sees movement; John's silhouette stands at the head of his bed.

ALEX

John?

Dead silence is soon broken by a FLASH OF REFLECTING STEEL AS JOHN SLICES ALEX THROUGH THE STOMACH, IMPALING HIM TO THE FLOOR.

ALEX STARTLES AWAKE, gasping for air. Eyes wild and teary, he leans towards John and takes a moment.

ALEX (CONT'D)
I'm sorry John.

JOHN
For what?

ALEX
He hit you.

John turns TOWARDS Alex; his FACE is hiding terror and tears beneath BRUISES and BLOOD.

JOHN
Who the fuck cares.

INT. OUROBOROS HIDEOUT - NIGHT

Antique interior of a classic dojo, with shiny black wooden surfaces. Blue Ninja trains in the middle of the room. He is interrupted as Gang Leader (from earlier) walks in, flanked by two ninjas in black.

BLUE NINJA
Explain.

Blue Ninja resumes training as he awaits a response. Gang Leader speaks with a voice full of apology and fear.

GANG LEADER
They were two ninjas, one had a katana. He killed two of us in flash.

Blue Ninja pauses his fisticuffs regime, trying to hide his surprise but we NOTICE. The energy in the room comes to a halt.

GANG LEADER (CONT'D)
They were both skilled warriors, I'm lucky to even be ali-

Blue Ninja interrupts; he has no patience for excuses.

BLUE NINJA
Why are you here?

GANG LEADER
What do you mean?

BLUE NINJA
Blades of the Night! What do you whisper in the dark?

ALL NINJAS
KILL OR BE KILLED!

BLUE NINJA
You possess no heart to be in
black.

He nods to ninjas behind Gang Leader and they VIOLENTLY pin him down and rip his shirt off. His bare arm bears a fully inked but finished gang tattoo.

GANG LEADER
What? NO! NO! I'm SORRY! I'm SORRY!

Blue Ninja draws his katana and SEVERs the arm from the gang leader's shoulder. With a scream and a gurgle, he dies, bleeding out onto the floor.

BLUE NINJA
Find the two and bring me their
heads!

Blue Ninja moves into a :

INT. GRANDEUR ROOM - NIGHT

The room is 'very' 80's feng-shui. The walls are decorated with ancient mementos. White marble floors and clean, shiny surfaces fill it with reflections. In the middle of the room is an ankle-deep pond with blossoming white lily pads.

WHITE NINJA is SCRYING into the BLADE of an ancient katana with snake decoration. Sinister eyes stare back at him and demonic voices whisper in his ears. The side of the blade glows with black smoke.

White Ninja, tall and lean, wears a full white ninja-suit. Only his blue eyes stick out of the whiteness.

He sheathes the blade and turns to Blue Ninja.

BLUE NINJA
There are still two.

LATER IN THE MORNING...

INT. ALEX'S AND JOHN'S BEDROOM - MORNING

The boys wake up and John notices his katana is missing, while his ninja-gi has been replaced with a RED GI and a WHITE BELT.

JOHN

FUCK!

John squeezes the white belt in his hand like a rag, showing it to Alex.

JOHN (CONT'D)

He demoted me to WHITE! He can't
fucking DO THAT!

There doesn't seem to be any problem for Alex.

ALEX

It's just a belt, John.

John looks at the belt, sneers, and throws it into the corner.

JOHN

I'm not wearing that.

EXT. FOREST

Fatigued, the boys get ready to spar with bamboo sticks in the bright autumn sun. Alex sees John's swollen face.

ALEX

You sure you can fight?

John suddenly unleashes a barrage of attacks on Alex, who defends flawlessly.

JOHN

Can you?

They FIGHT and Master notices Alex is holding back.

MASTER

One mistake Alex.

And not a moment goes by before John strikes him down.

MASTER (CONT'D)

One mistake and you're dead. The
offense just forces you to make it.
You can't defend forever.

They ready themselves for the second round. Alex SWALLOWS as his drained face is full of new, serious thirst for battle.

A light breeze touches his hair.

MASTER (CONT'D)

FIGHT!

Striking with unseen prowess Alex surprises John, forcing him to backpedal, and with glancing blows, John gets hit, outwitted, and tripped.

Alex smiles. He looks to Master for some compliments and receives a 'thumbs-up'. His red face full of rage, John throws his stick to the ground and storms off into the woods.

JOHN (O.S.)

FUCK!

ALEX

What was that?

MASTER

Defeat tastes most bitter the first time. Especially for him.

Master releases a long, long sigh...

Later...

INT. CABIN

Alex sits on his 'spot', eating like last night. John is nowhere to be seen. In the background, we hear Master rummaging in his room. He comes in with a letter in his hand and places it tidy on John's 'spot'.

Alex TRIES to mind his own business but his hopeful, puppy-dog eyes show that the letter was for him.

Muddy and bruised, John enters and instantly kicks the letter out of his way and begins to fill his cup.

ALEX

From your dad?

John begins to stuff his mouth with food while Alex stares longingly into his cup, then slowly starts to eat again.

INT. ALEX'S AND JOHN'S BEDROOM - MIDNIGHT

John slowly slumbers awake in the dark of the room. He glances over to Alex's bed; EMPTY. He looks again in a daze, then wakes up.

EXT. PLATEAU - MIDNIGHT

A calm, starry night sky hovers over the blazing city of OSAKA. A midnight breeze blows through the treetops.

Alex sits alone, with bitter tears in his eyes. John tiptoes towards him like his friend is a wounded animal.

JOHN
Alex? You OK?

Alex wipes his face and clears his throat.

ALEX
I'm fine.

He looks at John; his face still sore and swollen.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Are you?

JOHN
Yeah.

There's an awkward silence as they stare at Osaka.

ALEX
I feel... without purpose.

John sits next to him.

JOHN
But last night we saved lives. No matter what he says.

Alex swallows and looks John dead in the eye.

ALEX
I'm sure my dad is dead.

Grave moment.

ALEX (CONT'D)
No calls, letters, nothing... FOR YEARS.

John tries to sit still but keeps squirming. He places a hand over Alex's shoulder.

JOHN
He's not fair and I am sure your dad is out there somewhere.

John's bloated nose wheezes like a whistle as he takes a long breath in.

JOHN (CONT'D)
We should leave Alex.

ALEX
I... We have no place to go.

JOHN
Your dad is NOT dead, you have to go look for him...! You said it yourself.

Alex looks back at John.

JOHN (CONT'D)
"There's a world out there that needs our help" - Why not start from those yakuza? Or your dad?

For a brief moment, yet one lasting for eternity, Alex believes him.

ALEX
Maybe someday...

Alex stands up and walks away with his hands in his pockets. This rubs John the wrong way. He wants more PUSH.

JOHN
He's hiding something from you
ALEX. WE BOTH feel it! LOOK IN THE
DRAWER!

INT. CABIN - MORNING

A splash of water hits the wooden floorboards. Boys are mopping and cleaning the cabin. Master loads his pipe in the background as Alex and John exchange a look.

John motions towards Master's bedroom but Alex pretends not to notice.

MASTER
Finish before noon.

He lights his long pipe and puffs a happy mist of smoke.

MASTER (CONT'D)
It will be a fine fine day.

KLOP klop klop his wooden shoes carry him away as the boys continue the cleaning ritual. When they can't hear the sound anymore... they stop.

John gives Alex a "You gonna do it or am I?" look.

ALEX

Fuck it.

He jumps up and walks wetly footed to Master's "chambers."
John follows.

Alex takes a deep breath like he's about to dive into a pool of sharks. He opens the drawer.

WE SEE old Japanese war memorabilia, ancient texts, kukri, and other ninja weaponry and in THE LAST DRAWER; A HUGE BOOK with a BLACK TREE-HEADED OUROBOROS ON THE COVER.

Alex ignores the book and goes deeper, finding a white, WORN ENVELOPE with freshly written "For you Alex" on the front. HE STOPS.

JOHN

I told you.

Alex ignores him and shreds the letter open. Inside we see old, dirty letters with "YOKOHAMA - Wish you were here" on the front.

NOTE: Envelope being fresh and postcard being old is a gimmick to suggest that Master had hidden the postcards for years and was (maybe) about to give it to Alex.

SUDDENLY we hear the *klop klop* again. The boys PANIC and Alex stuffs the letter into his shirt.

MASTER (O.S.)

Forgot my hat.

They sigh in relief as we hear Master leaving.

Later:

INT. ALEX'S AND JOHN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

A lantern shines merciless white light into the bedroom. John lies on his back, staring at the ceiling. Alex, starry-eyed, opens the LETTER.

WE see YOKOHAMA text again and he flips it over. The stamp hangs on the stained corner like a crooked frame.

Text is written in either the wrong hand or a drunken haze.
Alex begins to read.

DAN (V.O.)

Son. I miss you I miss you I miss
you. I hope you are doing good
there with John. We have to talk
sometime. I'll send more later. I
miss you. Dad.

Eyes blurry with tears of rage, Alex sucks the life from his
face.

JOHN

You ok?

ALEX

Uh-huh.

He wipes the tears and calms down.

ALEX (CONT'D)

I get it now.

John comes over and sits next to him.

ALEX (CONT'D)

I get it. He's gonna be like this.
Always.

JOHN

He's always been an asshole.

ALEX

He's not gonna let us leave, we're
never gonna get any respe-

John cuts in.

JOHN

We don't have to care about that.
I've never cared.

ALEX

No I mean, we're gonna be training
here. He's lonely. He just keeps us
as a company. Forever.

John changes to a teasing tone.

JOHN

What would we even do if we left?
We don't have any money.

ALEX
Beat the bad guys.

John is getting into this but acts doubtful.

JOHN
And find your dad on the side?

Alex smiles.

ALEX
We are ready. Right now. Some
people are getting robbed like
those two.

JOHN
So are we just gonna leave?

Pause.

ALEX
Pack your stuff. We take the swords
and leave tonight.

JOHN
About time.

INT. MASTER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

John checks if the Master is in. The room is empty. He casually walks to a dresser, folds over some bedsheets and takes his sword, then walks out.

EXT. CABIN - MIDNIGHT

In the black of night, Alex and John meet underneath an old tree. They whisper:

ALEX
Where'd you get your sword?

JOHN
From the dresser...

ALEX
Why didn't you get mine?!

JOHN
I don't know where he keeps your
one!

ALEX
How about some fucking team play
here man?

Alex leans against the tree, looking at his feet.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Fuck. Okay, I know. Promise to kill
me if he wakes up though?

JOHN
Yea yea, what's the plan?

MOMENTS LATER...

INT. MASTER'S BEDROOM

We hear the rain dripping on the cabin roof.

In full ninja gear, Alex nears the sleeping Master like a thief in the night.

WE SEE Alex's katana underneath Master's PILLOW. Alex visibly swallows as he stares wide-eyed at the SNORING old man who possesses a fury like no other.

John sits on the cabin roof, throwing rice-grain (this makes the raining sound).

Alex squeezes a few drops of water on the Master's forehead, causing him to stir. He rises slightly and with lightning-fast movement, Alex snatches the blade.

He exists outside to...

EXT. MASTER'S CABIN

Alex mimics a bird and John answers. They meet in the shadows and slip into the blackness of night.

EXT. CITY STREETS - DAWN

The boys walk among the early morning crowd of a busy city street.

ALEX
We need a place to sleep and stash
our stuff.

They come upon a NEWSPAPER STAND. Alex empties his pockets to buy a paper, but John is more interested in the headline with TAKAHARA'S PICTURE.

JOHN
So what did he do?

ALEX
Some corruption stuff with ships or something.

He skims through the paper.

ALEX (CONT'D)
But now we need a job and a place.

JOHN
No no, tell me what he did.

Alex sighs and skims back (John can't read Japanese).

ALEX
Connections to yakuza, dirty mone-

JOHN
Yakuza? THAT'S what I'm talking about.

ALEX
Those guys earlier? Might've been yakuza too.

Their walk and talk get interrupted by the general sounds of the crowd.

They come upon an old building in the middle of the modern city block; it's a restaurant, overflowing with customers. A glance inside shows the staff has their hands full.

ALEX (CONT'D)
I got an idea.

INT. RESTAURANT

As they enter, MORIMOTO comes to stop them; he is a clean, small and sturdy Japanese man with a round mustached face.

He lowers his eyebrows and examines the boys.

MORIMOTO
No room!

ALEX
How about room for work?

Morimoto looks at the chaos behind him.

MORIMOTO
From the back.

Moments later...

As they walk to the storage room, the sounds of the crowd change to the hectic chopping and hissing of a kitchen.

MORIMOTO (CONT'D)
You boys new here?

ALEX
Yeah... we could use a job for some time, I handle Japanese and English very well.

Morimoto is on the edge and doesn't 'acknowledge' John. An employee taps him to shoulder, but he sends him away.

MORIMOTO
(To John) You American?

JOHN
Yeah.

MORIMOTO
You stay in the kitchen, customers can't see you. Understand?

JOHN
Okay.

Morimoto shifts his focus on Alex.

MORIMOTO
I pay you at the end of the day.
You can keep your stuff here.

Gestures to the storage room.

ALEX
Thank you! But, could we sleep here too?

Morimoto releases a small sigh.

MORIMOTO

Sure, why not. But use the back door. I expect you to work this week then.

ALEX AND JOHN

YES!

MORIMOTO

Now let's get to work!

Moving through the restaurant, cooks give John the evil eye, and Morimoto motions for him to start cleaning the dishes.

Time goes.

Alex spies on customers for the Ouroboros gang tattoo he saw in the back alley earlier.

Some employees give John a hard time, elbowing him and spitting on clean dishes. Alex notices this and looks at Morimoto so he would 'act', but he pretends not to see him.

In boredom and frustration, Alex twiddles his thumbs as there is no sign of the tattoos. John cleans the kitchen with ultimate efficiency, but co-workers still shun him.

The week has gone and on Friday night, the restaurant closes its doors for the day.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Morimoto counts money behind a counter as the boys tidy the place up. They're the only ones in the restaurant.

MORIMOTO

We made it through the week. Here is your part.

He hands Japanese bills from the cash register to Alex.

MORIMOTO (CONT'D)

And your part American.

He takes the tip cup and empties it onto the table for John to pick up. It's a few dollars and cents (Japan doesn't have tip culture). With dry, 'not-so-surprised' tone;

JOHN

Arigatou.

The boys head for the storage room.

MORIMOTO (O.S.)
I wake you up in the morning! Don't
forget the keys!

Alex notices John being down.

ALEX
Don't worry, we'll find a
pawnbroker or something.

This sudden optimism fires John up.

JOHN
It might be even more than yen!
Let's be rich! Tonight!

They open the back door and NIGHTLY CITY LIGHTS AND SOUNDS
HIT US WITH BEATS AND LIFE.

ALEX
Hell. Let's be FREE for a night.

MONTAGE - MUSIC STARTS.

They explore the young night time of Osaka. They visit food
stands and some landmarks like Osaka Castle. In a bar, John
downs some beers until a bouncer pokes his shoulder and kicks
them out. They then go into an arcade with (then) new game
machines. They are laughing and smiling like we've not seen
before.

MUSIC ENDS.

INT. ARCADE

A (then) brand new arcade with a smoky interior and games
screaming to eat your coins. John notices an AMERICAN IMPORT
of a Pinball machine in the corner and goes over. Alex goes
to the cashier to break a bill.

ALEX
I'll break this.

He leans against a glass booth.

JOHN (O.S.)
This eats quarters!?

Alex turns away from the glass booth counting his money but SUDDENLY CRASHES INTO A SCHOOL-GIRL. With a mix of dexterity and clumsiness, he keeps the coins in his palm and NOTICES the beautiful girl.

ALEX
Oh shit, I'm sor-

They stare for eternity.

JOHN (O.S.)
It gave back YENS what the hell?

The schoolgirl is gone as John arrives.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Look! It gave me change from the dime, holy shit I could be so rich right now.

He notices Alex's somber face.

JOHN (CONT'D)
You okay dude?

Alex returns to this planet.

ALEX
Yeah, I'm fine. Should we head back?

JOHN
One more?

LATER...

EXT. RESTAURANT

They approach the Restaurant in a good mood.

ALEX
...And then she was gone! You scared her away.

JOHN
She was just clumsy, you like to make it a big deal.

They stop.

THREE BLACK Honda Preludes are parked in front of the Restaurant while the sounds of wrecking come from inside.

ALEX

Back door!

INT. RESTAURANT

Alex peeks through a door crack and sees a handful of gangsters breaking furniture and hitting Morimoto.

GANGSTER LEADER (O.S.)

We expected money a week ago
grams.

Inside the Storage Room, Alex whispers to John.

ALEX

Wait here. If they see you, there
will be more trouble.

JOHN

The fuck am I supposed to do?

Alex takes a sack of rice from a shelf and walks into the room, his eyes wide with "surprise".

GANGSTER LEADER

Who's this? You want everyone to be
part of your problems?

ALEX

It will just be harder to pay if
you break things.

The Leader menacingly turns to Alex.

GANGSTER LEADER

No one was talking to you.

He walks up to Alex with his 'muscle' line behind him. He tries to sucker punch, but Alex dodges effortlessly.

MORIMOTO

Please! He's just a kid! I have the
money next week!

Alex's dodging just forces the Leader to try harder to land a hit, but none do and the Gangsters crack up at their leader.

GANGSTER LEADER

Shut the fuck up!

Exhausted and sweaty, he turns his aggression to his lackeys and punches one in the stomach.

GANGSTER LEADER (CONT'D)
Next week or you're dead!

WE SEE John, grip ready to draw his sword.

BACK TO SCENE:

MORIMOTO
Thanks, I guess.

ALEX
It's nothing.

MORIMOTO
Where's your American friend?

ALEX
John! Come to help us. John? JOHN?

They go back into the storage room. John is gone.

CUT TO:

EXT. RESTAURANT

As the cars speed into the night, we see JOHN hiding in the open trunk. He closes it.

CUT TO:

INT. RESTAURANT

PHONE RINGS. Morimoto and Alex are in the middle of cleaning the restaurant. Pissed off, Alex answers.

ALEX
We're closed.

JOHN (O.S.)
Dude, it's me.

CUT TO:

EXT. HARBOUR STREET - NIGHT

John is calling from a phone booth in a black wet street. He fiddles with a yellow phone book.

ALEX (O.S.)
John? What the fuck? We open in
FIVE hours and the place is a MESS.
You better get your ass IN here!

John double checks gangster cars that are parked nearby.

JOHN
Calm down! I think I found
something and I need your help
here. This might be the THING!

Alex tilts his head.

ALEX
The thing?

JOHN
Dude, I'm at the harbor. Like ten
minutes away.

ALEX
Hey, "dude"? Morimoto sushis our
ASS if I leave.

Morimoto looks to Alex and raises a knife and a weird smile.
Alex turns away.

John rubs his forehead and spits the words through his teeth.

JOHN
I'll take the blame. He hates me
anyway.

Moment of silence.

ALEX
What do we need?

CUT TO:

EXT. HARBOUR STREET

Alex startles John by sneakily coming up behind him in the
street.

ALEX
So I guess you have a plan?

JOHN
Let's get to the roof.

He points to a tall building nearby.

JOHN (CONT'D)
We'll take a closer look from
there.

Alex takes out grappling claws (shuko) and an iron gauntlet with spikes. He ties a belt tightly to his hands.

ALEX
Uh-huh.

Like, two trapeze acrobats, John boosts Alex high and scales the straight brick wall up. They help each other to the roof.

BENEATH THEM are the three CARS from before and in the dock is a BIG WHITE BOAT, shimmering in the city lit waves. Yakuza Guards patrol the area.

JOHN
Binos?

Alex hands him binoculars from his bag, John peeks in and...

On the DECK of the BOAT, we see BLUE NINJA in the middle of a conversation with TAKAHARA who hesitantly takes a BRIEFCASE from a table.

JOHN (CONT'D)
What the?

He hands binoculars to Alex, who takes a look.

ALEX
A Blue Ninja?

JOHN (O.S.)
There's that guy from the news too.

ALEX (O.S.)
Why don't the police do anything?

SUDDENLY Blue Ninja turns and stares right INTO Alex, who ducks down in panic.

ALEX (CONT'D)
SHIT!

JOHN
What?

ALEX
I think the Doraemon saw me. What we gonna do?

JOHN
You're the planning type!

Alex's eyes bounce in confusion.

ALEX
Okay... Okay... Follow the
briefcase.

JOHN
I left the trunk open. Let's get
back in and see where it goes?

ALEX
Why is there a ninja on a boat?

John grabs an empty bottle from nearby.

JOHN
My turn to plan.

Alex gets a sudden burst of energy.

ALEX
Into trunk. Follow briefcase.

His energy spreads to John and they get in the same mindset.

JOHN
Beat the bad guys.

BOTH
And serve sushi at eight.

They do a handshake (like we saw in the back alley) and climb
back down to the dark alley.

A GUARD is having a cigarette near a CAR. He hears a ROLLING
BOTTLE coming from the dark alley and approaches. In the b.g
We see boys silently moving in the trunk.

INT. CAR'S TRUNK

ALEX
How do you know this is the right
one?

JOHN
It has the most foot space.

EXT. HARBOUR STREET

Humbly, Takahara takes ten bows before leaving with a guard carrying the BRIEFCASE. They get into the car and depart.

EXT. OSAKA

A lone luxurious black car moves in the districts of Osaka.

EXT. OUROBOROS HIDEOUT

White plaza shines in the night like a lighthouse of glass and the car is making its way towards it.

It begins to slow down...

INT. CAR'S TRUNK

JOHN

You hear that..? We're slowing down. We have to bail.

Alex cracks the trunk open and looks out.

We see cars parked under streetlights in endless rows.

JOHN (CONT'D)

You first.

Without a second thought, Alex rolls out. *DING* CLAWS hit the asphalt. John makes a "he-really-did-it" face before following him.

We see the driver looking at the rear window, but notices nothing unusual. Takahara sits sternly.

As the boys regroup Alex rolls a long sleeve over his claws. In the background we see gangsters help Takahara out.

ALEX

I guess we're going in?

John peers with binoculars.

Through the BINOCULARS we SEE Takahara entering the building with the BRIEFCASE. A lone guard is watching a baseball match on TV.

JOHN

One guard. We have to roll. Now.

Alex nods and, under the harsh light of the street lamps, they jog inside...

INT. LOBBY

White, 80's new wave deco. Plastic light with plastic trees in the middle of symmetrical art-pieces. An excited sports narrator screams as the baseball game reaches climax.

Boys walk over the reflecting floors and try to ACT casual. They notice an ELEVATOR DOOR CLOSING.

ALEX

That way.

Alex calls the elevator as they stare at the NUMBER of the FLOOR where Takahara is about to get off.

With brief excitement, John accidentally raises his voice.

JOHN

Did you see th-

ALEX

Yes.

BING Elevator doors open and they step in.

We see Alex's finger running over the panels. 9 is missing.

ALEX (CONT'D)

That's weird.

JOHN

Maybe it's not 'feng-shui'.

He presses number 10, the boys almost hold their breath as doors slowly begin to close.

SUDDENLY GUARD'S ARM blocks the doors.

Guard looks at the dirty, tired, and worn boys. They look more like bums than martial artists.

GUARD

Ten seconds.

Saying nothing, they run out of the elevator and out of the building.

EXT. CITY STREETS

Boys walk through the night breeze towards Morimoto's Restaurant.

JOHN
I wonder what was up with that
floor number.

ALEX
I guess it's bad luck? Like 13.

JOHN
It was like a dog chasing a car.

Alex gives him a quizzical look.

JOHN (CONT'D)
You know. What're we even gonna do
with the briefcase? Or the guy?

ALEX
Give it to the cops.

JOHN
That's not gonna do anything. They
already know the guy is full of
shit.

They walk among billboards and newspapers with headlines of
"Cults in government?" - "Corrupt congressmen" and the like.

ALEX
But we must do something. Maybe
Master could help us out?

John releases a short and dry laugh.

JOHN
He's gonna beat both our asses if
we return, besides... it was your
idea we leave in the first place,
remember? Your dad?

ALEX
Maybe we made a mistake.

JOHN
Speak for yourself.

They turn into the back alley of the Restaurant.

EXT. RESTAURANT BACK ALLEY

A dim, wet street that bathes in lights of rainbow-colored neon signs. It's like Pollock had painted this street with light.

The door to the Storage Room is open slightly, but no light comes out.

Alex moves towards the door.

ALEX
This feels like an amb-

SUDDENLY THE DOOR SLAMS OPEN. FROM THE BLACKNESS A DAGGER IS THROWN STRIKING JOHN IN THE CHEST.

A SLASHING KATANA STRIKES FROM THE DOORWAY, BUT ALEX CATCHES IT WITH HIS PALMS, DISARMING THE ATTACKER AND IMPALING HIM WITH HIS SWORD, KILLING HIM INSTANTLY.

John cringes at the knife sticking out of him.

JOHN
FUCK.

Alex, shaking with adrenaline, gives the katana to John. They both back into the wet and reflective street. A ninja wearing a black suit is bleeding in the doorway. Two blades hover in the dark and follow the stiff, battle-ready boys.

John and Alex stand back to back, with their ninja opponents facing them.

Alex is shaking in fear; he can't keep his form.

John stands firm and ready to strike.

ALEX
(Stuttering in fear) Kill
or be killed(?)

JOHN
Kill or be killed.

They fight.

John strikes with grace and skill, his opponent struggling to deflect attacks but soon John finds an opening. He quickly chops off the ninja's hand, kicks him in the chest, and decapitates him.

With clumsy form, Alex defends, nearly cowering. His opponent uses the length of his blade to his advantage. Alex steels his eyes on the slashing pattern and

PARRIES THE BLADE WITH ONE HAND.

Blade cuts between his FINGERS to halfway of his palm stopped only by the iron climbing claw.

Alex kicks his enemy down and readies himself for the KILLING BLOW.

BUT HE CAN'T DO IT.

The enemy looks coldly into Alex's eyes as if taunting him to finish the job.

BLACK NINJA
The Three-Headed Ouroboros devou-

SLASH! John impales the ninja's throat, killing him instantly.

Pale-faced, Alex sits still in shock. He releases a strong sigh and would nearly fall limp onto the bloody street if not for John being there to catch him.

JOHN
Alex? You okay dude?

He NOTICES Alex's arm hanging limp like a wet sock.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Oh fuck. We gotta fix you, man.

Alex groans in pain and for the first time, we see John; SCARED with worry.

ALEX
We're doing good John. EVEN GREAT.

John sustains Alex as they walk towards the back door.

Alex casts the claw from his bleeding arm *CLING CLING*

MORIMOTO (O.S.)
What the hell?

Morimoto holds his head like it's about to explode, then sees Alex, white as a cloth, and helps him inside.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Puddles of bloodstain the shiny kitchen as Alex lays on a table.

On the verge of panic, Morimoto shuffles through the cabinets for a medkit.

MORIMOTO (O.S.)
 Why can't you find it when you need
 it?!

John presses Alex's arm and pats him on the shoulder.

JOHN
 You fought well. It's just a
 scratch.

Morimoto arrives and is about to clean the split palm.

JOHN (CONT'D)
 The fuck you gonna do with that?

Morimoto shows a CONTAINER of SUPER-GLUE.

MORIMOTO
 It will hurt like hell. But he will
 survive.

Alex raises his head.

ALEX
 Do it.

They share a silent moment.

John puts pressure on the arm and the bleeding halts as Alex gasps loudly.

Morimoto wipes the blood, pops the cap, and GLUES THE FLESH.

John holds the squirming Alex while he kicks the air.

ALEX (CONT'D)

He tries to speak but no words come out.

Morimoto crudely bandages the hand and turns to John.

MORIMOTO
 Now you.

He grabs the dagger, still sticking out of John's chest. John takes a deep breath.

MORIMOTO (CONT'D)

On three.

John prepares himself and TRIES to relax.

MORIMOTO (CONT'D)

One. Two. Four.

JOHN

What happened to thr-?

With a violent pull, the dagger dislodges from his chest.

John whimpers.

JOHN (CONT'D)

You bastard.

Morimoto examines the wound as blood bubbles from it.

MORIMOTO

It's deep. I don't think this helps.

JOHN

Do it anyway.

John bites his arm and releases a silent scream as Morimoto SQUEEZES GLUE into the WOUND.

When he's done, John struggles to stand.

Morimoto looks at the mess in brief silence.

A DEAD NINJA bleeding in the doorway.

His kitchen is covered in blood.

And two pale, wounded boys.

MORIMOTO

You both have to go.

ALEX

We can hide the bodies.

MORIMOTO

IDIOT! If I don't call the cops soon I go to prison WITH you.

ALEX

Tattoos. Look if they have ones.

Morimoto releases a heavy sigh (what has he got himself into?) while John turns a body over, revealing his SKIN to be COVERED IN BLACK SNAKE TATTOOS. They depict a menacing tale from folklore, featuring a Mountain Witch, Orochi, etc. But only painted with black.

Morimoto freezes.

MORIMOTO

Oh no.

This doesn't mean anything to John.

JOHN

I guess we found the killers from the harbor.

Alex wipes blood from his mouth.

ALEX

I *feel* they found us.

JOHN

How?

John collects the swords from the bodies. It's almost like he doesn't trust that these people are dead.

Morimoto opens up.

MORIMOTO (O.S.)

You've been marked for death. It's a cult. A death cult. They are after you.

John packs the blades but hands one to Morimoto.

MORIMOTO (CONT'D)

I'm dead if I take that.

He's starting to sweat bullets.

MORIMOTO (CONT'D)

You have to go! NOW! I'm calling the cops.

There's a brief silence as Morimoto leaves the room. Boys look at each other as if to say "who's gonna say it?"

ALEX

We have to return to the Master.

John gives the eye roll of the century.

JOHN

Here we go...

ALEX

He knows the tattoos, I'm sure of it! We nearly got KILLED, JOHN!

John has had enough.

JOHN

Fuck you!

ALEX

What?

JOHN

We ain't dying here! We were outnumbered and outgunned and STILL WON. We could just wait right here and kill them all until the last man.

Alex stares at John in disbelief. He's acting like a rabid dog.

ALEX

You're so fucking stupid.

JOHN

No. We got INTO this and we are finishing it. It was your idea to leave in the first place!

Alex shells up and swallows, but John doesn't give him a break.

JOHN (CONT'D)

You HAD to find that fucking postcard, just could not keep your nose out of Master's stuff huh? If you're gonna pussy out and run to your dad, I'm gonna find their leader and kill him myself!

ALEX

You think so? We have no idea what we are IN but YOU are so SURE that you're gonna wage some Ninja War?

John, threateningly, moves closer.

JOHN
It's kill or be killed, Alex.

He pushes Alex's chest.

JOHN (CONT'D)
And you know who made sure you're
not the latter.

Alex shoots an intense stare back at him and this brings him to his limits.

He gets his gear and walks out (with one of the looted swords) into the wet, raining Osaka.

MONTAGE - VARIOUS

EXT. RESTAURANT BACK ALLEY - NIGHT

Alex walks alone. It's dripping wet. The puddles look like rainbow vomit of neon light as he steps on them. His face and stature; heart-broken as he escapes into the night.

EXT. CITY - NIGHT

Alex is eating some street food. Some drunkard business men yell at him; "OKAMI ITTO WENT THAT WAY," they laugh. He leaves.

NOTE: Okami Itto is a Japanese literary character from "Lone Wolf and the Cub", who was often shadowed by assassins.

EXT. ROADSIDE - DAWN

Alex walks through the countryside, hands up for hitchhiking. A lone small red Toyota picks him up.

He sits inside and sees an old lady with tea-plate sized eyeglasses giving him the widest, toothless smile.

INT. CAR - DAY

POSTCARD from YOKOHAMA; Alex turns it over and sees a drop of blood staining it. His HAND is bleeding. Wiping the blood away, he hides the postcard and looks out the window at YOKOHAMA.

EXT. YOKOHAMA - DAY

Alex waves the lone Toyota goodbye.

EXT. VARIOUS STREETS OF YOKOHAMA - DAY

Alex asks for directions in different bars, clubs, etc. We see the POSTCARD again, with the ZIPCODE, 220-0062, inked over the stamp.

He exits a station (hinting he has found the area of the zip code) and we follow him into the suburban streets...

EXT. STREET OF YOKOHAMA - DAY

Feeling down and fatigued, Alex sighs and walks down the street. Fresh blood seeps from his bandaged arm.

WHEN SUDDENLY: Rambling is heard from down the street. Baffled and giggling Japanese people pass Alex. They are coming from the direction of the noise.

Intrigued, Alex follows the sounds and sees...

DAN(45); a square-faced, wide-shouldered American who has probably seen better days in self-hygiene, ranting loudly.

A few youthful HOOLIGANS in leather jackets have cornered him next to a vending machine.

DAN
I've done nothing. I just wanna
live my life (hic), that's all.

HOOLIGAN

GAIJIN! GO! LEAVE GAIJIN!

The situation grows more threatening but Alex arrives...

ALEX
(To Hooligans) I'll take care of
him.

He helps Dan, who, in a drunken stupor, can barely stand. Hooligans look at each other and begin to disperse...

ALEX (CONT'D)
Come on mister, I'll get you home.

DAN
Christ, you stink. Thanks, by the way, I live just nearby.

ALEX
What was all that about?

DAN
Where'd you learn to speak such good English?

ALEX
Oh, I had a Japanese mother and an American father. She left when I was little.

DAN
Yeah... they tend to do that when you fuck up enough...

They arrive at a tidy, iron-gated rowhouse with overgrown grass out front.

DAN (CONT'D)
Here's my stop. Want a cup of coffee?

Alex looks around, searching for a way he could somehow escape this conversation, but even his ninja skills are not enough to help him.

ALEX
Naaaah, no thanks.

But he still pulls the postcard from his sleeve and shows it.

ALEX (CONT'D)
I don't know how this helps but, do you know where they sell postcards like this?

Dan looks at the postcard with odd curiosity.

DAN
This looks familiar...

ALEX
Does it?

DAN
Yeah, I think I need my glasses to read this.

ALEX
Well, I guess I'll have that coffee
then.

They move inside...-

INT. DAN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Orange sun rays slice through dust as they enter a trashed apartment.

DAN
Sorry it's a bit messy, I've been
moving in

ALEX
When?

DAN
About 10 years now.

Dan releases a dry laugh.

DAN (CONT'D)
Now, where are my glasses?

As Alex moves into the mess of an apartment, Dan's rummaging through his piles of stuff grows more and more distant. Alex arrives at the door to a lone room, different from others, and is filled with cardboard boxes.

Out of curiosity or forgotten nostalgia, he steps in and sees a BOX with a PIECE OF CLOTHING STICKING OUT.

DAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
(Muffled) A-ha found them!

He pulls the T-SHIRT out as if it's something fragile.

IT'S HIS SHIRT WITH BRUCE LEE DOING THE FLYING KICK.

With confusing joy, tears streaming down his face.

He turns to Dan.

Buried somewhere in that dirty beard is a man whose eyes are full of long-lost hope.

Dan takes Alex into his greedy, devouring clutch of a hug.

DAN
I'm sorry.

ALEX

Things have changed, haven't they?

plop *plop* *plop* in silence, Alex's blood drips onto the floor.

Dan notices this, triggering some fatherly instinct.

DAN

What happened? Did *HE* kick you out?

Alex grows weary and sighs in frustration.

ALEX

No! It was just an accident, but it's okay now. We're both fine.

DAN

"Both"?

Alex pulls his hand away.

ALEX

Look. I'm done now. I'm not going back.

Dan nods in compromise.

DAN

And it's good to have you back, son. Make yourself... at home, I guess. God, I missed you so much.

He hugs Alex again. Then turns to the dumpster that is his house.

DAN (CONT'D)

GOD! How *could* I LIVE LIKE THIS?! Well, let's get that coffee.

LATER...

Two big cups of coffee steam on the "quarantined" table that seems to be the only clean part of the whole place.

Alex grips the cup and grits his teeth in pain as the wound impresses a bloody handprint on the side.

Dan hovers over a pan, cooking some eggs and bacon.

DAN

You have to get that fixed. If you want to wield the sword that is.

Alex hides his hand and takes an eyebrow-raising sip. Yuck.

DAN (CONT'D)

Do you know why the yakuza asks you to cut off your pinkie? So you can't defend yourself with a sword anymore.

He brings some charred eggs and bacon to Alex

DAN (CONT'D)

Then you have to rely on your sworn-brother and the clan to defend yourself.

Alex looks at the plate.

ALEX

For me?

DAN

I guess he only fed you with rice and fish? Even though we are in Japan, we can eat like Americans.

Alex digs in as Dan stares at his son.

LATER...

Alex channel hops on the old TV. There's much going on; Baseball game, karaoke-show, Godzilla, documentary... etc. Soon he finds a NEWS channel and locks his eyes on it.

It runs footage of violence, the Iran-Iraq War, Guatemala Civil War, Kokkilai Massacres... He waits for something related to Takahara to come out but...

INT. DAN'S APARTMENT - MORNING

TV is still showing the NEWS. Alex, sleeping on the sofa, is startled awake by loud snoring from another room.

We follow him to the sound...

Dan is sleeping like some trash-angel in the middle of the litter.

ALEX
(Commanding) Wake up.

DAN
Huh?

ALEX
It's been three days Dad. When are you going to clean this mess? I told you I'll help.

DAN
I'm not much of a morning person

Dan tries to ignore the talk and turns his side.

ALEX
What's the point of living like this?

DAN
You're not my dad.

ALEX
Fine. I'll do it myself.

We hear him walking outside and coming back in with a crude street brush.

We see his wounded hand gripping the handle; he squeezes and winces in pain.

But somewhere between the bleeding fist and pained eyes, a new iron will is forged.

A cacophony of rattling cans is heard as Alex, with a single tear of blood seeping onto the handle, pushes the mess into the corner.

Moments later he goes through his old box of stuff, and in there... he finds an OLD PHOTOGRAPH OF DAN. He moves his arm and we can see his BUM DAD sleeping.

LATER...

Mounds of black garbage bags are all around the room. Alex is tying the last one when Dan walks from the (still messy) room to the fridge and opens it. He slams it with frustration.

DAN
Where's the beer?

ALEX
Dad... you're not like this.

DAN
Like what?

ALEX
Father.

DAN
What the fuck do you know, you've
not been... AROUND.

ALEX
Why'd you let yourself go?

Dan ignores this and kicks some of the bags, spilling their contents on the floor.

Alex approaches Dan and shows him a picture.

ALEX (CONT'D)
This is the man I remember.

Dan looks at the picture; an old army photo where he is young, leaning against an F-86 Sabre with some of his flyboys.

There is some writing on the picture:

See you later Flyboys - Dan O'Hara

This brings Dan to tears...

Alex doesn't know what to say.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Why don't I have your last name?

DAN
I dunno. You're more like HER I
guess...

This hits Dan somewhere deep and he tries to hide it but we NOTICE. He gazes at Alex.

DAN (CONT'D)
Look at you. No one would know.

No one makes Alex lower his eyebrows.

DAN (CONT'D)
 You're like some spy or
 something... You look nothing like
 me. Just your mom.

ALEX
 Yeah, where are the pictures of
 her?

DAN
 She was a... "burn the bridges"-
 type.

Dan shakes his head and walks into another room.

Alex stares through the window into the radiant daylight.

BWRRRRRRRRRRRRRZZZZZZZZzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz

We follow Alex into the bathroom where...

DAN IS SHAVING HIS HEAD.

DAN
 Time to man up.

They share a smile through the mirror.

LATER, IN A MUCH LESS TRASHY APARTMENT...

Dan, looking like a new person, sits down with two cups of
 coffee at the dinner table.

DAN
 He just killed them all?

ALEX
 Yeah...

DAN
 Sheesh... I've had this 'Psycho'
 feel of him...

ALEX
 But isn't that what we are trained
 to do?

Dan pushes the old photo away.

DAN
 I guess... but it's the intention.

ALEX
Intention?

DAN
Is it duty? Or a lust to kill?

Alex takes a sip and looks at the BLACK coffee.

ALEX
Or survival?

There is a moment of silence.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Is it fair to give mercy?

DAN
To the enemy?... Never.

EXT. DAN'S HOUSE - NEXT DAY

Alex is practicing with his sword outside. He grasps the handle in pain. But forces himself to strengthen his grip.

Dan arrives, hands in his pockets, looking at his toes. He's not sure if he's interrupting.

DAN
Hey.

ALEX
Hey.

DAN
You're pretty good with that thing.

Alex ignores the remark.

DAN (CONT'D)
You know, I thought we should have a beer together. Have you ever tasted beer?

ALEX
No...

Dan is about to leave.

DAN
Yeah, thought so... so uhh, I'll be back in an hour okay?

ALEX

See ya!

He SQUEEZES the GRIP again. No wince.

LATER...

INT. DAN'S APARTMENT - DUSK

Alex is startled awake by the BOOM of the NEWS coming onto the TV. The last rays of sunlight fade away into the dusk, while a rainstorm looms in the air.

He gets up and looks at the CLOCK; 23:33. He looks around the house for Dan.

ALEX

Dad?

He pauses, puts his slippers on, and ventures outside...

EXT. YOKOHAMA - NIGHT

We follow Alex back to the street where he found his father a few days prior... but he is nowhere to be seen.

He continues up the street and comes to a crossroads with masses of people going about their business.

Dan stands at a food vendor with a 40-YEAR-OLD BAR FLOWER. They're having a good time and hugging each other while waiting for their food.

IT NOW HITS ALEX; Dan is drunk as a sailor.

ALEX

Dad?

No reaction.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Dan?

Dan turns to Alex.

DAN

Who the fuck are you?

Alex just stands in shock and disappointment as Dan's eyes him but soon forgets about his existence and gets back to his "lady".

INT. DAN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

With a cold face, Alex begins to pack his stuff up. He readies himself to leave, putting on his shoes and adjusting his backpack one last time.

A sudden burst of anger seizes him. He grabs the old photo and scribbles something on the back.

He stands in front of the front door.

He stands as dusk fades into night.

He stands as the morning sun shines from the window.

He stands, waiting, as the sun reaches its zenith.

He leaves.

WE SEE the PHOTOGRAPH on the kitchen table with one of the swords, which Alex stole from one of the ninjas.

MONTAGE

EXT. VARIOUS

ALEX (V.O.)
Fuck you dad. You piece of shit.

Alex walking through rural areas.

ALEX
But you did open my eyes; I am not
you and never will be.

Alex hitch-hiking.

ALEX (V.O.)
I asked for nothing and you gave me
nothing in return.

Alex entering Osaka.

ALEX
I don't remember her (mother), but
I'd rather be her than you, you
fucking life wasting loser.

Alex walking onto the rooftop which faces the Grand Plaza.

ALEX (CONT'D)
 I left a sword for you, pawn it.
 It's valuable. Use the money and
 drink yourself to death or
 something, I don't care. Goodbye, -
 Alex.

EXT. ROOFTOP - DAY

We follow Alex as he walks across the rooftop to John, who is sleeping next to a pile of trash. Stray cats are sleeping next to him as he snores in the daylight. His red-gi is tattered and dirty; it's more brown than red.

ALEX
 I see you're getting comfortable.

John startles awake.

JOHN
 FUCK.

John looks at the mess he is and wipes his cloths in a useless gesture.

JOHN (CONT'D)
 It's a day?

Alex looks into a CAT'S EYE.

ALEX
 Twelve.

Awkward silence. Alex turns to the PLAZA that is just across the street. The one they "infiltrated" some days ago.

ALEX (CONT'D)
 So uhh, this is what you've been up
 to?

JOHN
 Yeah... and let me tell you.

John jumps up.

JOHN (CONT'D)
 Something fishy is going on there.

But he can't hide his feelings anymore. With a wide smile, he hugs Alex.

JOHN (CONT'D)
 Damn, I missed you, you fuck.

ALEX

Me too.

JOHN

So the Master didn't kill you?

ALEX

I went home.

JOHN

Oh... How did Dan take it?

Alex looks into the distance.

ALEX

So, you've been watching the Plaza?

John leans against a wall, facing the Plaza.

JOHN

Yeah, some important looking people are going there at weird times.

ALEX

U-huh?

JOHN

And, I noticed that the 9th floor is always empty. There's never lights or anything. Like some ghost floor.

ALEX

So? Maybe it's only this side.

JOHN

I've checked all the sides, man. And no one builds that shit and "misses" a floor.

Alex rubs his head.

ALEX

Do you have a plan?

JOHN

We go to the 10th floor and extort a confession from Takahara.

They exchange looks.

ALEX

So what does the "empty floor" have to do with this?

John releases a long sigh.

JOHN
I don't fucking KNOW. MAYBE it's
just empty, MAYBE someone forgot it
and it's some feng-shui bullshit
thing these people do.

ALEX
Okay.

JOHN
"Okay"?

ALEX
Yeah. Let's do it. But first, we
get you clean, you reek.

John looks at Alex's ARM.

JOHN
But can you fight with that?

Alex imitates Bruce Lee. BADLY.

ALEX
Why? You expect him to fight?

JOHN
Maybe the ninjas-

Alex kicks him lightly in the side.

ALEX
WA-TAA!!

John is about to crack up.

JOHN
Stop.

He continues to goof around and they both laugh.

INT. LAUNDRY SHOP - NIGHT

Alex and John are the only people around. Walls of chrome
laundry machines rhythmically hum with the city's neon
lights.

Alex kicks John a bag of fresh clothes as he undresses...

WE see a BLACK ROTTING WOUND on his chest.

ALEX
You're fucking rotting!

JOHN
Nah, it's ok. This Chinese dude
says it's getting better.

Alex scoffs.

ALEX
We HAVE to get you to a doctor.

JOHN
It doesn't even hurt!

Alex cools down.

ALEX
Fine.

JOHN
So the Master didn't send you?

ALEX
Nah, I told you I went home.

John sits down and breaths heavy out.

JOHN
I don't think we should do this.

Alex is surprised by the sudden change of attitude.

ALEX
Why?

JOHN
I've not been myself.

Momentary pause.

JOHN (CONT'D)
After the last trip to Osaka.

ALEX
What's changed?

JOHN
I don't know anything anymore.

ALEX
Well, I know something, John.

John raises his face from his hands.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Master is not gonna take us back,
and right now we can make the
difference. . . And I'd not take
anyone else with me than you.

He offers his hand. They do the "handshake" we saw earlier.

JOHN

Let's kick some ass.

EXT. OUROBOROS HIDEOUT - NIGHT

Two black silhouettes move against the bright radiant plaza.

Moments later...

Inside the lobby. The same guard from a few days ago is
watching some Japanese game-show. The night is still and
uneventful, except for the boys who hide nearby.

ALEX

OK, so unseen in, unseen out.

John takes a blowpipe from his sleeve and nods.

They look around and sneak to the other front door. They
check the guard, who is still watching TV. John shoots a
tranquilizing dart into his neck.

He doesn't even twitch, just begins to snore loudly.

Alex goes first to the elevator and hits the button.

Moments later it arrives and they board, sneakily.

INSIDE WE SEE LEVELS TO 10... again skipping 9.

INT. 10TH FLOOR - NIGHT

In a dark 80's office block, a handful of people are still
working in front of their monitors, bathed in dark green
light. No heads turn as the elevator *BINGS* in the silence.

The elevator lights the corridor. The boys move swiftly to
the end of the hall, where a now-empty secretary's table
stands next to the double doors to Takahara's office.

Silently, Alex tries to open the door. But it won't budge.
John takes a lockpick from his sleeve and picks it open.

Alex narrowly opens it up and peeks INSIDE.

A massive office room with walls of binders and files at the sides. In the end, a hidden safe is open. Takahara sits at his king-sized desk, handling money and files.

Boys move in and lock the door without a sound behind them.

BUT TAKAHARA IS ON EDGE.

He speaks in a very short-tempered tone.

TAKAHARA

You again? I told you everything is under control.

JOHN RUNS SILENTLY FROM THE SHADOWS AND KICKS HIM TO THE GROUND.

TAKAHARA

W-what is this!?! Who are you?

Alex steps out of the dark.

ALEX

We know what you've done Mr. Takahara.

Takahara, holding his side, climbs to his feet and stands next to the table. He straightens his tie.

John begins to skim the files on the table and the racks.

TAKAHARA

Well, what **have** I done?

John opens some of the files as their plan begins to unfold.

ALEX (O.S)

Working with the yakuza...

John looks at some government papers. It's all in hiragana.

ALEX (O.S) (CONT'D)

... and well, the rest we're going to find out.

John can't read that stuff. He releases a loud sigh.

CUT TO:

INT. LOBBY - NIGHT

We see a businessman trying to wake the sleeping guard up while a young secretary behind him hides her laughter. When he notices the needle in the guard's neck, he dives for the phone.

CUT TO:

ALEX

We'll give you a chance to write a confess-

Takahara releases a loud laugh.

TAKAHARA

Every day I hear these claims and threats. If you're here to take my life, get on with it. If you want to leave this place with your life... just walk away.

The boys look at each other. Alex points at the safe, which is still open.

John begins to unload papers and envelopes from the safe into his gi with theatrical clumsiness.

TAKAHARA (CONT'D)

Okay, look. Take the money and go.

It's a standstill. John rummages through the safe.

Takahara changes to an ass-kissing tone.

TAKAHARA (CONT'D)

Very interesting dialect, where are you fro-

LIGHTS CUT OUT.

It's dead silent.

Through the windows, the city paints the room with black and venom green stripes.

A GLIMMER IN THE DARKNESS.

WITH LIGHTNING FAST MOVES, JOHN, AND ALEX DODGE THROWN DAGGERS.

GLING GLING

TAKAHARA GURGLES. HE IS DEAD.

SLOWLY, FIVE KATANA BLADES ARE DRAWN IN THE DARK; THEIR BLUE STEEL SHIMMERS IN THE BLACK ROOM.

They fight.

Five ninjas attack relentlessly, turning the fight into a cat and mouse act, as the boys deflect the blows.

They move along the binders and the enemies hack at them with their swords, filled the air with chopped paper.

Alex gets an opening and kicks one of the attackers down. John goes in and finishes him.

It's raining white paper with marks of blood.

Alex is about to get hit, but John blocks the attack.

With teamwork and coordination, they kill two more.

BUT SUDDENLY THE DOOR OPENS AND BLUE NINJA ENTERS.

JOHN
Can you handle these two?

ALEX
Yeah.

John engages Blue Ninja and strikes. He dodges and grazes John's knee.

We see a hint of panic in John's eyes.

Alex fights two of the black ninjas. He dodges blows at a hairs-length, then manages to kill the first. But he's wounded and bleeding heavily.

With the elegant and unorthodox technique, Blue Ninja deflects most of John's attacks. But it soon becomes clear that he is only playing with him.

Alex notices that JOHN is in trouble, but his opponent strikes, piercing his side and pulling Alex back to his combat.

John is backpedaling in a way we have not seen him before. His eyes are filled with fear.

Alex tries to move in to help but his opponent blocks him.

Blue Ninja finds an opening AND SLASHES JOHN'S ARM AND LEG OFF, THEN IMPALES HIM THROUGH THE LUNG.

ALEX (CONT'D)
JOHN!!! NOOO!!

Alex gets a second wind and unleashes determined blows on his opponent, slicing and dicing him into the air.

John is bleeding on the floor.

Blue Ninja, wipes his sword on the fallen John and faces Alex.

SUDDENLY:

We hear shouts of "POLICE!" and the screams of the office workers from the other room.

Blue Ninja waves his hand ("Sayonara") and disappears from the doorway.

Alex runs to the bleeding John and embraces him.

ALEX (CONT'D)
No-no-no.

Alex, shocked and eyes full of tears, looks at John, who is turning pale.

ALEX (CONT'D)
You can't die. You're my only friend.

John vomits blood.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Don't die. Please. John. Don't die.

Death embraces John like a child.

Alex releases a bitter cry full of rage. He takes John's sword and his white belt, now soaked in his blood.

BACK TO SCENE:

Policemen break the door and gasp at the carnage inside. Alex throws a smoke bomb into the middle of the crowd.

While they are coughing, he escapes into the night.

INT. OUROBOROS HIDEOUT - DAY

In a room full of TV-screens, Blue Ninja and White Ninja are watching the news of last night's attack.

The news anchor narrates the story as "tastefully" as he can.

NEWS-ANCHOR

Last night's terrorist attack on
Mr. Takahara's office took at least
5 lives...

We see John's body being carried out as news reporters devour the tragedy with their cameras and microphones. They take pictures of John's face.

NEWS-ANCHOR (V.O) (CONT'D)

...while the reasons for the hit
remain uncovered, it seems that one
of the deceased was the son of the
American Corporation's founder,
Eric Parker...

We see Eric Parker ambushed by cameras and paparazzi as he tries to hide his face.

As the news run in the background, White Ninja turns to Blue Ninja.

WHITE NINJA

Find the dojo where they met. Kill
everyone.

Blue Ninja bows.

We slowly dive back INTO the TV-NEWS Screen...

INT. MASTER'S CABIN - DAY

...and slowly out. As the news continues...

We see Master watching the news, indifferent. He's drinking his tea.

SUDDENLY: We hear loud sounds from the porch.

Master, indifferent, watching the news.

MORE NOISE and RUMMAGING.

Still no reaction from Master.

We hear Alex groaning in heavy pain.

MASTER

Go away.

WE SEE someone struggling to open the door, but it doesn't budge.

Master, with slow graceful movement, opens it.

We see Alex, pale as a sheet, bleeding on the porch. His face is beaten and his clothes in tatters.

Master, without even wincing, coldly shuts the door.

BUT Alex jams John's sword's scabbard in the way.

Alex speaks through the two-inch gap.

ALEX

Master. I've come to finish the training.

Master peeks from the doorway.

MASTER

You're not welcome here. Go away.

ALEX

It was foolish to leave. I'm sorry.

Master slams the door wide open.

MASTER

"Sorry?" You got your friend killed, and yourself. There is no 'sorry' for you. Only death. And now you see it.

This leaves Alex speechless, but he grudgingly nods in agreement.

He moves his injured arm to his side and places his SWORD NEXT TO JOHN'S at Masters feet.

While doing so he accidentally pulls out John's BELT. He firmly grasps it and looks up to Master one last time.

ALEX

Goodbye Master.

No reaction.

He helps himself up and begins to shamle away from the way he came as Master watches from the porch.

HE SLAMS THE DOOR SHUT.

Later...

EXT. GRAVEYARD - DAY

In a half-meditating state, Master enters the graveyard, which is bathed in the bright red light of the sunset.

He moves among the tombstones and enters the chapel.

He meditates briefly and claps twice at the old altar.

And leaves...

And spots Alex lying between the tombstones.

Master hovers over Alex like a statue and looks down at him with indifference.

NEXT TO ALEX IS A SMALL SHALLOW GRAVE, DUG BY HAND.

JOHN'S SWORD STICKS OUT OF A MOUND OF DIRT, LIKE A WARRIOR'S TOMBSTONE.

Alex gurgles and breathes heavy. He is dying.

MASTER
What's your name?

Alex doesn't understand and looks at Master in confusion.

ALEX
Alex.

MASTER
What a lousy name for a warrior.

Master reaches into his cape, pulls out a bottle of sake, and "waters" the shallow grave.

MASTER (CONT'D)
You will now be known as Yuudai.

NOTE: Yuudai is a male name that means Hero/Excellence.

INT. ALEX'S AND JOHN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Alex, patched, bandaged, feverish and suffering, mutters in his sleep.

ALEX

Master. Come here. I have something to tell you.

Master arrives with a tray of medicine.

MASTER

Yes?

ALEX

The tattoos. They were black snakes. Three-headed... eating itself.

Master leans forward, intrigued.

MASTER

Ouroboros? With three heads?

ALEX

Y-yes.

With a prowess we have not seen before, Master jumps up and goes to rummage around his boxes, shelves, etc. He hastily pulls out an ancient text and is about to discard it, but halts himself.

He returns to Alex and opens up the text...

We see the words "Yato-no-kami" (Gods of the Night-sword) in kanji.

MASTER (V.O)

Gods of the Night-Sword.

We see black, snake-man demons in the high grass and men worshipping them from the shadows.

MASTER (V.O) (CONT'D)

Demons of the past. Worshipped by the unruly.

We see the snake-men striking a family down.

MASTER (V.O) (CONT'D)

Whoever crosses paths with them are cursed to be afraid of the shadows...

We see the snake-men killing infants.

MASTER (CONT'D)

And face the extermination of the family bloodline.

It's now morning as Master closes the book. He sits next to Alex, who's well enough to worry.

ALEX
I have to call dad.

Master helps him to the car.

INT. PAJERO - DAY

On a warm day, they drive towards a nearby town with a telephone booth.

MASTER
It might be too late. You slept for days.

Alex firms himself.

ALEX
They can't be that quick.

They arrive at a phone booth next to a shop.

EXT. TOWN STREET - DAY

MASTER
I'll get some aspirin.

But Alex is already running to the booth.

He hastily inserts the coins and hits the numbers.

INTERCUT BETWEEN DAN'S HOUSE AND TOWN STREET

INT. DAN'S HOUSE

Phone rings.

EXT. TOWN STREET

Alex taps the phone nervously.

Phone rings. And again. And again.

A hand comes over and picks it up.

DAN
Hello?

We see that the letters are gone and Dan is more colorful.

ALEX
Dad! How are you?

DAN
I'm fine, fine. Son, I sold the
sword an-

ALEX (O.S)
(Sighs loudly)

DAN
And I want to thank you fo-

ALEX
Dad. You have to leave Japan, you
might be in danger.

DAN
Well, I was going to ask you about
that... what the hell is going on?
I've seen some weird people follow
me lately and John was in the news.
Are you A-OK?

Alex's face looks pained. Red. It hits him again; John is
dead. He fights the sorrow.

ALEX
I'm OK. But Dad, I don't want to
lose you too. You have to go. I
will find you OK?

DAN (O.S)
I understand.

ALEX
And I mean you have to go NOW. OK,
dad? NOW.

DAN (O.S)
I take the next plane to San
Francisco. I love you son.

ALEX
I love you, dad.

INT. DAN'S HOUSE

Dan hangs up the phone.

In the b.g, we see White Ninja and his henchmen waiting for a moment to strike.

CUT TO:

INT. MASTER'S CABIN - DAY

Alex's body is covered in bandages and wounds.

He takes a firm grip on John's sword, trying to hide how much his palm hurts him but WE NOTICE.

MASTER (O.S)
Are you ready to finish what you started?

Brief silence. Alex's eyes are full of devouring fury and determination.

ALEX
Kill or be killed.

MUSIC STARTS.

MONTAGE - VARIOUS

Alex sword-fights Master, who disarms Alex with one swift and elegant stroke.

Alex runs in the woods. Master watches him go and, unimpressed shakes his head.

Alex carrying two huge jerrycans. He smiles confidently as he picks them up. Master points to the well at the top of the hill. Alex's face falls.

Alex is hitting a sturdy tree with a wooden stick. He instantly loses his grip as the shockwave hurts. Master kicks him for it. He picks up the stick and tries again.

Master dismantles a sword as Alex watches and learns.

Alex hitting the sturdy tree again. He grits his teeth with pain and looks at his hand. It's swollen and red.

Alex looking at a sunrise, exhausted but smiling.

Alex is doing a sword-stance form. He performs a few attack moves in slow motion. Master walks and corrects him. He mimics it.

Alex is again hitting the tree with the stick. He is in pain but does not stop. The scars on the side of the tree grow more numerous.

Alex dismantling the sword piece by piece.

Alex fighting Master. He stands his ground but loses.

Alex running next to green fields. Some old women wave and greet him. They giggle as he greets them back.

Alex hitting the tree again. He strikes faster and stronger as the bark keeps flying off.

Alex chopping wood in the night.

Alex hitting the tree again. He grows faster, more strong, more determined.

Master going through ancient manuscripts while sipping tea. Alex is struggling to carry two jerrycans in the background.

We see Alex hitting the tree again. It's even more intense. Momentum builds; faster and faster the bark flies into the air until the wooden stick is destroyed with a booming SNAP! He throws the half stick aside. With a relieved sense of victory, he turns around... Master is already handing him the next one.

CUT TO:

EXT. GRAVEYARD - DAY

Alex and Master are sitting at the Chapel's porch in the graveyard.

ALEX

What is our purpose?

MASTER

What is the purpose of anything?
Why did you run from me? Why did I
take you back? What is the purpose
of a swordsman? To kill a million,
to save a few?

Moment of silence.

MASTER (CONT'D)

It would be fitting for us to die.

ALEX

So why won't we?

Master grins.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Why did you choose us?

WE SEE the boys, young again. Back at the belt-test from the beginning.

MASTER (V.O)
You were the best.

We see John waving his green-belt and holding it up like a trophy. Alone.

ALEX (V.O)
John was.

We see Alex running to John, he is happy FOR HIM. He didn't win anything.

ALEX (V.O) (CONT'D)
I didn't even pass the belt-test.

BACK TO SCENE:

MASTER
Not all things are measured with
the color of your belt.

He looks at Alex with a dry face. Alex is about to burst out laughing.

ALEX
You sound so phony.

They laugh together.

Silent pause. Alex points to an unmarked gravestone.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Who was that?

MASTER
It was Muto Toshi. He was only a
trainee, but full of fire and fury.
He died in a battle against a
secret cult to protect his friend.
Now he rests here.

Alex releases a long lost smile. He understands.

Now Master points to a gravestone.

MASTER (CONT'D)
Who was that?

ALEX
That was...uhh... Yuudai Toyota. He
was never really a good student...

We slowly see the blue, blue sky.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MASTER'S CABIN - DAWN

Sunrises again.

Master drinks his tea at the porch and watches as Alex jogs
with empty jerrycans towards the woods.

MASTER
Yuudai! Come back before the tea
gets cold!

Alex winks back and disappears into the forest.

Master takes a sip.

We hear the distant noise of motors.

Master stands up.

The noise grows closer.

He goes in and closes the door.

CUT TO:

INT. MASTER'S CABIN

The door is opened with force. A handful of black ninjas make
room for Blue Ninja as they intrude.

Master, sitting with bad posture and his eyes closed, holds
his teacup with fragility.

Master ACTS senile.

MASTER
W-who are you? W-what are you doing
in my home?

Ninjas look to Blue Ninja. What to do?

BLUE NINJA
Where is he?

MASTER
Who? I'm just an old man. (Squints
his eyes) What in the world are you
wearing? Are those swords?

Blue Ninja poses firmly for an answer.

One of the black ninjas grips his blade.

BLACK NINJA
I'll kill him and we'll find the
boy.

He and another black ninja draw their blades and go in for
the kill as Master falls onto his back in despair and panic.

MASTER
No! No! NOOO!

SUDDENLY A SMOKE BOMB EXPLODES!

BEAMS OF STEEL CUT THROUGH THE BLACK NINJAS. THEY EXPLODE IN
THE SMOKE AS RED MIST.

Three of the henchmen look to Blue Ninja for an order, but he
still stands firm.

As the smoke clears off...

We see two black ninjas in formless piles of gore AROUND THE
APARTMENT; their swords are in clean-cut pieces.

Master, his old-man image in the distant past, wields a sword
in both hands. He stands still, an ancient god of war. Full
of fiery determination.

BLUE NINJA
Where is the boy old man?

MASTER
Gone. This ends today.

BLUE NINJA
It will.

Blue Ninja moves his hand to his SWORD'S GRIP.

We see a white-sleeved arm come from behind to stop him.

WHITE NINJA

He is too strong for you.

Ninjas make room for White Ninja. He pompously moves to the middle of the room.

WHITE NINJA (CONT'D)

Give us the boy and you can train a new generation for us to kill.

MASTER

NO!

Master strikes with his twin-blades.

White Ninja uses a scabbard and sword to block, then kicks Master back.

They fight!

Master ambidextrously wields both swords as he attacks White Ninja. He cuts down a few of the Black Ninjas on the side as White Ninja fluidly escapes and dodges the attacks.

Master strikes, but White Ninja blocks with the scabbard then strike the back of Master's blade with his BLACK KATANA. It releases high-pitched *GLING* and Master's sword disintegrates into shrapnel.

White Ninja guts him straight through the stomach, his insides instantly flooding out.

Master falls to the floor, bleeding heavily.

WHITE NINJA

Your trainees are dead. Your clan is dead. You... Are already dead.

The Master's mouth and whiskers are red with blood.

MASTER

Really?

As White Ninja pompously walks around him, he slyly moves his hands to a gap in the floor.

MASTER (CONT'D)

What makes you think so?

Brief pause. Master grins and looks up at White Ninja.

The moment of surprise is his. He pulls rope from underneath the floorboard, releasing a loud *CLICK*

CUT TO:

EXT. WELL - DAY

A loud boom rumbles in the distance. Alex turns towards the cabin.

ALEX

Master!

He drops the jerrycans and hurries back.

CUT TO:

EXT. MASTER'S CABIN

THE CABIN EXPLODES IN BLACK SMOKE!

A shower of rubble hits the ground as Blue Ninja and White Ninja emerge from the disaster. Blue Ninja is torn and dirty, but White Ninja glows like a white ghost in the grey fog.

CUT TO:

EXT MASTER'S CABIN - DAY

Blue and White Ninja are moving back to the car...

BLUE NINJA

What about the boy?

WHITE NINJA

He will come to us.

He takes a dripping sack from the car and throws it into the middle of the yard.

Dan's dead eyes look up from inside the sack. Number Nine is carved on his forehead.

Both cars sped off, back to the city.

A moment passes.

EXT. MASTER'S CABIN - DAY

Alex somberly stops at the edge of the yard. He sees the cabin in ruins, some parts of it still burning.

Dan's head sticks out of the debris like the cherry on top of a cake.

He walks up to it, looking at his dead father in the eyes. He coughs and covers his face, but he is calm. He tucks the head back in and takes it with him.

He walks among the rubble, scavenging for anything useful.

He comes across tattooed pieces of flesh and occasional guts in the debris.

He turns some trash over and finds a piece of Master's robe.

He goes behind the cabin's ruins to a clothesline where his ninja-gi is hanging. He takes it.

With bare hands, he digs a hole next to the tree where he spent time training and buries his father's head. As he digs, he keeps turning to look the bloody bag. He fights back tears and buries what is left of his father.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROOFTOP - NIGHT

Alex digs under the TRASH PILE where John slept.

Beneath it is JOHN'S BAG.

We see ninja equipment inside. He takes the bag.

EXT. OUROBOROS HIDEOUT - NIGHT

Alex sneaks to the side of the building and peeks in.

We see more guards inside the lobby than usual, they are chatting.

He casually walks in with his bag, the guards don't notice.

He calls down the elevator.

it's a long wait.

He tightens up.

DING He hurries inside.

We see the elevator's control panel; he presses number 3, three times. The doors close and the elevator begins to hum.

He throws the bag on the floor and unloads it...

GEAR UP MONTAGE:

He dresses up.

Covers his face.

Tightens his ninja boots.

Puts shurikens in his sleeve.

Kunais on his boots.

Brown powder bags inside his jacket.

And JOHN'S WHITE BELT around his waist.

HE IS READY. It's kill or be killed.

INT. OUROBOROS HIDEOUT

DING Doors open.

The hum of throat singers fills the air.

It's almost like Alex has entered a different world. Rock-like humidity welcomes him as he moves into the dark.

The singing grows louder.

We see light escaping at the end of the hall, revealing a door.

He peeks in.

A brightly lit room with dark textures. Black tapestry covers the walls. In the middle of the room is a black coffin where an initiate is laying down while two old men tattoo him.

Muffled screams of pain can be heard from inside accompanied by the sickly sound of needles piercing flesh.

Rows of tattooed, half-naked men surround the room. The men in the front have more tattoos than the ones in the back.

The ninjas seem to be in a trance-like state as Alex sneaks in and draws his blade.

Massacre begins.

He decapitates a handful of men before the others notice the choir growing thinner.

TATTOOER

Assassin!

Some of the cultists try to fight back; some even have swords with them. But he cuts them down, right to the last man, with determination and no remorse.

Tattooers run to a door at the end of the room but Alex impales them with a thrown kunai.

Blue Ninja enters.

BLUE NINJA

You've grown quite skillful.

Alex, with one swift motion, throws a handful of shuriken at him.

Blue Ninja deflects them all with accurate swordplay.

BLUE NINJA (CONT'D)

Such tricks won't work here.

They tensely move into the middle of the room.

They ready themselves.

They fight.

The blood on the floor makes a sickly squelch as they step over it to engage each other.

Alex gets cut, but it only steels his resolve.

He attacks but Blue Ninja soon ripostes and wounds him again.

We see some surviving cultists crawling in the b.g

Alex can't find an opening and Blue Ninja carves a chunk out of his shoulder with a surgical strike.

Alex quivers in pain. A LUMP OF FLESH falls to his feet.

BLUE NINJA (CONT'D)

Tokagure-Ryu is inferior to Shin-Jiutsu.

ALEX
There is only one style. (Spits
blood) Kill...

Blue Ninja smiles underneath his mask.

BLUE NINJA
Or be killed.

Alex raises his sword.

Blue Ninja moves in.

Alex feigns his attack. He changes from a striking move to a blocking one and turns backward.

Blue Ninja is not quick enough to understand what is about to happen.

Alex blocks his attack and gives him a back-kick to the chest, then with one smooth motion, his SWORD DRAWS SPARKS FROM THE FLOOR AS IT SPLITS BLUE NINJA IN HALF FROM THE GROIN TO THE SHOULDER.

With a spray of blood, Blue Ninja is dead.

Alex wipes his sword on his body. He is bleeding heavily.

He turns to two shining white doors.

He enters...

INT. GRANDEUR ROOM

White Ninja respectfully greets him. He moves to the other end of the ankle-deep pond with white lily pads.

He bows deeply, then walks into the pond, which is about to become their arena of life and death.

Alex, beaten, bleeding, and hard standing, tries to bow. His white belt, now soaked in blood, keeps the torn ninja-gi somehow on him. (It's very "The Good, The Bad and The Ugly".)

He steps in, coloring the pond with his blood.

White lily pads sail in blood.

They draw, but it's a battle, unlike anything we've seen before.

Neither move their feet, neither refuse to give ground.

They release a barrage of attacks. *CLING CLING*

Pause.

They attack. *CLING CLING*

Pause.

As neither can find an opening, with the swordsmen being evenly matched...

Both ninjas GRIP their blades, their KNUCKLES WHITE.

Alex drips blood, painting the pond sickly red, but he stands firm, as unmoving as a mountain.

White Ninja's murderous GAZE.

Alex's determined LOOK.

Blood swishes around their FEET.

MUSIC GROWS MORE INTENSE. We see the men's FACES again.

THEY BOTH STRIKE!

A white lily pad gets SPLATTERED with blood.

A BLADE STICKS OUT OF ALEX'S BACK!

The moment lingers for eons... IS OUR HERO DEAD?

ALEX SLASHES; WHITE NINJAS HEAD FLIES OFF, RELEASING A GEYSER OF BLOOD!

WHITE NINJA CRASHES DEAD INTO THE POND.

Alex falls to his knees with White Ninja's sword still sticking out of him.

The moment lingers.

INT. LOBBY/VARIOUS

The elevator doors open and a blast of light and police sirens hit us. Alex crawls out, bleeding heavily and leaning on his sword. He lets his sword go and goes limp as police and paramedics come to take him to an ambulance. The sword still sticks out of his chest as he lays on a trolley.

The medic puts an oxygen mask on his face as the ambulance speeds towards the hospital. Inside; doctors and nurses accompany him and push him to the operation room.

Surgeons surround him. He lays white and lifeless, gripping John's white belt as they prepare for the operation.

One of the surgeons grips and pulls the sword out of him, releasing a gush of blood from both wounds.

SURGEON

Ouch! It cut me!

He looks at his hands. Tiny, needle-like bitemarks are on his rubber gloves. Another surgeon pushes him to the side.

SURGEON 2

I'll handle this.

They begin to patch him up.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - LATER

Sun warms the white hospital cubicle, where an oxygen mask pumps life into Alex. He hazily looks around the room.

A nurse notices he is awake and leaves. We follow her into the small reception area, where she notifies a doctor and he accompanies her back...

Alex's bed is empty. The nurse drops her folder and the doctor runs outside.

CUT TO:

EXT. OSAKA - NIGHT

In a black ninja-suit. Alex stands at the edge of a wall, observing the city of Osaka with his arms crossed.

THE END