

"SAMURAI"

written by

Fernley Phillips

NOVEMBER 4TH, 2007

FADE IN:

EXT. AN EERIE, WHITE MIST - DAY

We're moving through it, unable to see clearly, our ears telling us we're in A LAND FAVORED BY CICADAS. All of a sudden we leave the mist behind, bursting into daylight:

EXT. LAKE - DAY

KOI glide gracefully through the tranquil waters. You'll find the CICADAS in the surrounding trees. They sound louder now. *Strange, the mist hugs only the perimeter of the lake, as if concealing something.*

There in the center, a WALL OF ROCKS -- a formidable MAN-MADE ISLAND. A CENTURIES-OLD TEMPLE crowns it.

EXT. TEMPLE - DAY

MESMERIZING STONE LANTERNS dot the MANICURED PEBBLE GARDENS, each with mystical creature carved into its stonework. It's an enchanting place. Indeed, for there's magic here.

INT. TEMPLE - DAY

Silent. The cicadas cannot be heard inside.

AT THE END OF A DARK CORRIDOR: a GLOW spills out from open shoji (sliding doors).

THROUGH THE SHOJI: a MONK kneels on the tatami in front of an EASEL, paintbrush in hand. Many CANDLES light the room but we do not see what he is painting. Yet.

ON THE WALLS: paintings -- oil renderings of violent scenes. The CAMERA HOLDS on one image. Almost post-apocalyptic.

MONK (V.O.)

"Anyone who thought the end of The Onin War would see a period of calm descend over the Land of the Rising Sun was badly mistaken.

EXT. KYOTO - DAY

It's the 15th century and Kyoto is the imperial city of Japan. A thriving, jaw-droppingly beautiful metropolis. GEISHA walk below cherry blossoms. SAMURAI resplendent in their kimonos.

TEMPLES only one facet of many ornate architectural wonders.

SCREAMS, WAR CRIES, EXPLOSIONS fade in.

MONK (V.O.)

The war began in 1467 as a dispute over who should succeed the Shogun, general of the military and true leader of Japan.

TIME-LAPSE SEQUENCE:

Days become nights and seasons change as we witness the brutal transformation of a city before our very eyes!

A BUILDING BECOMES NOTHING BUT DUST. CORPSES CHOKE THE STREETS. RIVAL SAMURAI FIGHT IN FRESHLY DUG TRENCHES. A CRATE FULL OF HEADS APPEARS ON A STREET CORNER. ANARCHY PREVAILS. ANOTHER BUILDING GOES UP IN FLAMES. THEN ANOTHER AND ANOTHER UNTIL FINALLY WE ARE LEFT WITH JUST SMOLDERING RUBBLE.

MONK (V.O.)

It ended ten years later with the imperial city of Kyoto reduced to a charred wasteland and the military disgraced.

It is now nothing but the ghost of a city -- the image we saw in the Monk's painting.

MONK (V.O.)

To all the feudal lords spread across Japan -- of whom there numbered approximately two hundred and sixty -- this meant only one thing:

EXT. CASTLE - NIGHT

BLACK SHADOWS drift towards the castle, becoming...

...NINJA scaling its walls under the cloak of darkness.

INT. CASTLE - NIGHT

A POISON DART flies through the air --

MONK (V.O.)

Opportunity.

-- striking the neck of a DAIMYO (feudal lord). Dead within seconds!

WE HEAR: the sound of a THOUSAND GALLOPING HORSES!

MONK (V.O.)
Control of the country was up for
grabs. Neighbors became enemies. And
so, the end of one war...

(NB: WE ARE ABOUT TO WITNESS DIFFERENT SAMURAI ARMIES IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF JAPAN. OPPOSING SAMURAI WEAR ARMOR/HEADDRESS OF DIFFERENT COLORS/DESIGN AND IN EACH OF THESE SCENES NO COLOR/DESIGN IS REPEATED.)

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - DAY

The ground shakes as TWO SAMURAI ARMIES collide on HORSEBACK!

MONK (V.O.)
...spawned the beginning of another.
But this war was to prove unlike any
other in the history of Japan. Indeed,
it was to prove unlike any war in
the history of man.

SCREAMS OF AGONY swirl in the wind. They continue into --

EXT. SNOW-COVERED REGION - DAY

-- where another ferocious battle rages.

MONK (V.O.)
Historians call it Sengoku Jidai...

TIME SLOWS: TWO SAMURAI exchange heavy sword blows. BLOOD sprays from the loser's wounds, staining the virgin snow.

MONK (V.O.)
...The Period of Warring States.

TIME QUICKENS: A SPEAR OUT OF NOWHERE RIPS THROUGH THE VICTOR'S CHEST!

EXT. RIVER - DAY

MOUNTED SAMURAI attempt to cross the turbulent waters. They raise their SHIELDS to the Heavens --

MONK (V.O.)
It raged across the entire country.

-- as AN AVALANCHE OF ARROWS RAINS DOWN ON THEM!

EXT. HILLTOP CASTLE - DAY

SAMURAI lay siege to it.

MONK (V.O.)
And it lasted for more than 150 years.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

A DAIMYO is buried in the sand up to his neck.

MONK (V.O.)
It was brutal.

A RIVAL DAIMYO begins TO SAW OFF HIS HEAD!

EXT. ONSEN (JAPANESE HOT SPRING) - DAY

A DAIMYO soaks his battle-scarred body in the hot waters.
It's a beautiful bamboo setting.

MONK (V.O.)
It was treacherous.

BEHIND THE LORD: a SHORT, BAMBOO TUBE moves his way. The Lord grimaces. The water turns red. A (previously submersed) NINJA climbs out of the water and disappears into the scenery.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - DAY

A SAMURAI kills his OPPONENT and pauses. He looks about and...

MONK (V.O.)
It was exciting.

...TIME SLOWS: all around him warriors ROAR. Swords CLASH.

EXT. ROCKY PLATEAU - DAY

A SAMURAI battles FIVE WARRIOR MONKS under a blazing sun.

MONK (V.O.)

Never had there been a better time
to be a Samurai -- fearless warriors
for whom death on the battlefield...

The Samurai's plight is never in doubt and although his death
is horrific and bloody he does not succumb easily.

EXT. RICE FIELD - EVENING

MONK (V.O.)

...was the ultimate honor.

The BLOODYED HEADS OF WARRIORS SKEWERED ON STAKES glisten in
the setting sun.

INT. JAPANESE ROOM - DAY

A group of SAMURAI kneel on tatami drinking tea.

MONK (V.O.)

They lived their lives by the Bushido,
a code of conduct stressing simple
living, bravery and loyalty to one's
Lord.

The CAMERA PULLS BACK revealing...

MONK (V.O.)

The Ninja were different. They served
no Lord.

...a NINJA hiding in the shadows outside the room.

EXT. VILLAGE - DAY

NINJA defend VILLAGERS from a BAND OF ARMED ROBBERS.

MONK (V.O.)

Villages sometimes hired them for
protection.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

A FEUDAL LORD waits beneath the moonlight.

MONK (V.O.)

Their loyalty was anyone's for a
silver coin or bag of rice.

A NINJA slivers down a tree beside him and unwraps a bloody dagger. The Lord hands him a coin.

MONK (V.O.)

Perhaps.

As the Lord leaves the Ninja throws the dagger at his back!

EXT. MONASTERY - DAY

HUNDREDS OF NINJA TRAINEES practice martial arts.

MONK (V.O.)

Unscrupulous assassins, they thrived
in these dark times...

INT. MONASTERY - DAY

More NINJA TRAINEES study poisons and how to make explosives.

MONK (V.O.)

...for while the Samurai code forbade
guerrilla warfare...

INT. BANQUET HALL - EVENING

A celebration is in progress. A SERVANT (whom we recognize from the monastery) pours sake for a LORD and walks away.

MONK (V.O.)

...the Ninja had no code.

Seconds later, the Lord collapses.

EXT. TOP OF A HIGH WATERFALL - DAY

TWO SAMURAI fight to the death on the rocks.

MONK (V.O.)

Japan's future would be decided by
the blades of swords...

One plunges his sword into the other's HEART, sending him toppling over the edge.

A HUGE BOULDER behind the victorious Samurai slowly COMES TO LIFE... a previously invisible NINJA unfurling from the crevices like a deadly chameleon!

MONK (V.O.)
...and the poison of darts.

He fires a POISON DART at the Samurai's neck, sending him, too, over the waterfall!

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - DAY

Knee-deep with SLAIN SAMURAI.

MONK (V.O.)
Whichever Lord rose victorious from the bloodshed would win the title of Shogun and thus, control of Japan.

EXT. VILLAGE OUTSKIRTS - DAY

A PEASANT drags A CARTLOAD OF SEVERED HEADS along a dusty road.

MONK (V.O.)
It was a prize sought by all and the history books celebrate the eventual victor's name.

EXT. HOMESTEAD - DAY

FLAMES scorch the sky as the homestead BURNS TO THE GROUND, columns of billowing, black smoke blotting out the sun.

The bodies of TWO NINJA are mounted on stakes out front.

MONK (V.O.)
Yet there is a name you shall not find written in any such book.

A SEAGULL

flies out of the smoke towards us. The CAMERA FOLLOWS IT --

EXT. SKY - AERIAL SHOT - WITH THE GULL

-- over TREETOPS, RICE FIELDS, MOUNTAINS.

MONK (V.O.)
It is the name of a man who was to play a pivotal role in Japan's future.

PLUMES OF SMOKE

dot the horizon in every direction.

The entire country of Japan is at war!

MONK (V.O.)

Many believe him to be a myth. Others
insist he was a demon, brought to
our lands to do the Devil's work.

The Gull heads out over THE COAST --

EXT. SHIP - DAY

-- alighting on THE MAST of a ship.

MONK (V.O.)

For most, however, his story is
unknown.

The CAMERA TRACKS DOWN.

MONK (V.O.)

Until now."

A SIX-YEAR-OLD BOY

stands at the ship's edge, gazing at the distant land mass.
He has PIERCING GREEN EYES and white skin and when he speaks
we will hear that he does so with an English accent.

He is joined by SMITHY, a sailor.

GREEN EYES

Father says they'll eat a fish
straight out of the ocean without
even cooking it.

SMITHY

That's one of their more civilized
traditions.

The Boy considers this and in this moment we see inside the
boy. Full of curiosity. Full of fear. Full of innocence.

He turns around.

He is on board A MERCHANT SHIP and the deck is A MAZE OF
CRATES. COLORFUL SAILORS prepare for arrival.

He scours the busy scene until he finds a MAN opening crates with a crowbar and checking their contents. This is the SHIP'S CAPTAIN and the Boy's FATHER.

The Boy runs to him, tugging on his trousers to get attention.

BOY
We're almost there.

THE BOY'S FATHER
Which means you'd best keep out from under my feet or 'there' may become 'home'.

His tone is gruff and not at all father-like yet we should not judge him on first appearance. The next crate he opens is EMPTY.

THE BOY'S FATHER
(to Smithy)
Smithy, what price do we get for thin air in these parts of the world?

Smithy comes and lifts a FEATHER out of the crate.

SMITHY
The chickens, Captain.

THE BOY'S FATHER
Ah, yes. That was a good meal.

SAILORS murmur in agreement. The Boy tugs on his Father's trousers again.

BOY
You said I could steer the ship before we arrived.

THE BOY'S FATHER
What I said was, you could take the wheel after a hundred days at sea.

The Boy runs to the side where NOTCHES are cut into the wood, each notch representing one day. He starts counting.

THE BOY'S FATHER
There's ninety nine.

The Boy, bitterly disappointed, puts on a brave face:

BOY
Perhaps on the voyage home, when the wind will be against us?

THE BOY'S FATHER

Perhaps.

The Boy dips his head. His Father smiles at Smithy and wraps an arm around his son's shoulders.

THE BOY'S FATHER

Come.

(off the Boy's look)

Why should you miss out just because
your old man's a gazelle on the ocean?

The Boy beams with joy.

EXT. MERCHANT SHIP - MOMENTS LATER

Boy and Father at the wheel, the Boy gripping it tightly, huge grin on face -- a nice, loving image.

THE BOY'S FATHER

Are you ready?

(off the Boy's nod)

Now!

The Boy spins the wheel.

THE BOY'S FATHER

Close your eyes.

The Boy does as told. The ship turns into A BAY.

THE BOY'S FATHER

Open them!

The Boy opens his eyes.

WHAT HE SEES: a THOUSAND MASTS puncture the sky, SAILS billowing in the breeze. This busy 15th century Japanese harbor is a feast for the eyes.

Sailors begin to lower the sails.

BOY

Why are we stopping?

THE BOY'S FATHER

We must wait for the harbor master to send an escort to tell us where to go.

EXT. HARBOR - DAY

The merchant ship follows a HARBOR ESCORT into dock. The escort is manned by SAMURAI. They do not wear armor -- just simple, dark blue kimonos.

EXT. MERCHANT SHIP - DAY

The Boy sits atop his Father's shoulders, enthralled.

WE SEE: boats of every shape and size. Off to one side, somewhat isolated from the other ships, are TWO GALLEONS, their sails full and glorious -- *obscuring vision of anything that may lie behind.*

The Boy spots the galleons just as they begin pulling apart, revealing...

BOY

Wow.

A SHIP

...hiding behind them. It has near vertical sides towering 100ft in the air and a bow reinforced with steel. This ocean-going behemoth defies the laws of what should be able to float. It is A SAMURAI WARSHIP. A sight to shudder at.

And it is coming directly at the merchant ship!

SMITHY

Have they not seen us?

The Boy's Father notices the Samurai on the deck of the escort (which lies between them and the warship). They are bristling.

The warship gets closer, casting an ominous shadow as it obliterates the sun.

ON THE ESCORT: more Samurai appear. They draw their swords.

The warship STRIKES the side of the escort! Samurai topple overboard. There's a DEAFENING CRUNCH, the warship's bow splintering through wood, SPLITTING THE ESCORT CLEAN IN TWO!

The 'crash' halts the warship's advancement and shaken Samurai get back on their feet, stare up at the monster in their midst. The feeling of dread that the worst is yet to come is palpable... and very true...

HUGE TRAP-DOORS

in the sides of the warship drop open. From the shadowy depths within --

SAMURAI ON HORSES

emerge! They wear ARMOR over BLOOD RED KIMONOS and gallop into the light, JUMPING OFF THE WARSHIP AND SAILING THROUGH THE AIR TOWARDS THE ESCORT!

There are FLASHES from steel raised in the sunlight and when the horses touch down, SWORDS slice through the surviving Samurai!

A LONE SAMURAI ON A HORSE

appears at the front of the warship's bow. He wears an INTIMIDATING, HORNED HEADPIECE and is in charge of this assault, watching the carnage below him with cold, heartless eyes before turning his attention to the merchant ship where he locks eyes with the Boy's Father.

He backs his horse away from the edge, disappearing from view. Seconds pass.

He reappears, horse and master leaping into the air. A demonic silhouette! He lands on the deck of the quickly sinking escort with an ALMIGHTY THUD!

THE BOY'S FATHER

moves hurriedly to the empty crate. He lowers his son inside.

BOY
What are you doing?

He rubs his son's cheek and stares into his eyes, knowing he shall likely never see him again, then leans in and kisses him on the forehead before placing the lid onto the crate and --

THE BOY'S FATHER
I love you.

-- securing it down. He drags the crate to the edge and, veins bursting, hauls it up until it teeters on top.

The Boy's hands thrust out of the slots in the side. He clings desperately to his Father, not wanting to let go.

BOY
Father!

His Father pushes the crate overboard, the weight wrenching his son's hands from his shirt.

BOY
No!

The crate plummets into the water with an ALMIGHTY SPLASH! It floats, bobbing up and down on the waves.

BACK ON THE ESCORT - A WAR RAGES

the blood red Samurai killing all in their path. Parts of it are ON FIRE. Through this smoking, bloody mayhem the lone Samurai comes, his horse's canter becoming a gallop as...

...HE LEAPS FROM THE ESCORT TO THE MERCHANT SHIP!

SMITHY

grabs the crowbar and bravely rushes him.

THE LONE SAMURAI

unsheathes his sword.

TIME SLOWS. The sword swings through the air with a TERRIFYING SWOOSH.

SMITHY'S HEAD

falls to the ground!

You now know this Samurai's name. THE DECAPITATOR. Fear him.

More blood red Samurai arrive on the merchant ship. Sailors grab MAKESHIFT WEAPONS and fight (futilely) for their lives, those choosing to take their chances in the ocean picked off with SPEARS.

The Decapitator makes his way to the Boy's Father. He dismounts. He stands seven feet tall at the shoulder.

He takes a SPEAR from his horse.

The Boy's Father -- unflinching. Defiant.

THE BOY'S FATHER
May God take pity on your soul.

The Decapitator hurls the spear!

But not at the Boy's Father.

TIME SLOWS. SOUNDS ARE MUTED. The Boy's Father screams in anguish. Spins to the edge of the boat. Watching the SPEAR.

IT FLIES TOWARDS THE CRATE!

INSIDE THE CRATE: two piercing green eyes!

WITH THE SPEAR: as it closes in on its target!

SMASH CUT TO:

THE MONK

and his painting. We see it now -- a painting of the above attack. A crate floats in the ocean in the foreground.

The Monk turns his head *and blows long and hard at a candle.*

CUT BACK TO:

THE SPEAR

as *IT VEERS SUBTLY OFF COURSE!* It still SMASHES INTO THE CRATE, but a few inches to one side!

EXT. MERCHANT SHIP - CONTINUOUS

The ship resembles a floating Hell. Any members of his crew who aren't already dead soon will be.

The Boy's Father sinks to his knees.

TWO BLOOD RED SAMURAI drag a CHEST in front of The Decapitator. He smashes it open.

SILVER COINS spill out.

THE BOY'S FATHER
We're a trade ship. A bloody trade ship.

There's a TERRIFYING SWOOSH!

The Decapitator's sword separates the Boy's Father's head from his shoulders. It spins in the air landing with a THUD on the pile of coins, blood staining the silver.

AN AGONIZED SCREAM

carries on the wind, The Decapitator turning to its source: the ocean.

THE CRATE BOBS UP AND DOWN

in the distance, spear still sticking out of one side.

The Decapitator stares at it, his eyes finding those of the Boy's, staring back at him, full of hate.

A beat.

The Decapitator slowly holds out a hand.

ONE OF HIS MEN lays a SPEAR in his grasp.

He readies it.

Suddenly a cross-current picks up the crate, sending it twirling round and round in an eddy before pulling it out to sea.

A beat.

The Decapitator turns back to the silver.

The CAMERA DRIFTS OVER HIS SHOULDER, FINDING THE CRATE...

EXT. OCEAN - TIME-LAPSE SEQUENCE - WITH THE CRATE

Days become nights. We lose track of time.

WAVES IN A THUNDERSTORM pound the crate.

The storm gives way to SUNSHINE and calm seas. A SEAGULL lands on the crate with a FISH in its beak. Something frightens it and it flies away, dropping the fish on top of the crate.

WE SEE: a SMALL HAND reach for the fish.

EXT. SANDY BEACH - DAY

A MAN AND WOMAN walk along the sand.

They pass the WASHED-UP CRATE. Stop to consider it.

They peer, cautiously, through the slots.

A PAIR OF PIERCING GREEN EYES

peers back at them.

DISSOLVE TO:

THE HOOVES OF HORSES

trampling a HILLSIDE. The CAMERA WIDENS, revealing...

A SAMURAI ARMY

...numbering over TEN THOUSAND! They wear ARMOR over GREEN KIMONOS and carry matching GREEN BANNERS.

SUPER UP: **ALMOST THREE YEARS LATER**

EXT. LOOKOUT POINT - DAY

A SAMURAI sits on a horse, looking at something in the distance.

Far behind him is a CASTLE, and beyond that, MOUNT FUJI. Several hundred years from now this land will be known as TOKYO.

This Samurai is far different from any seen so far. Modern-day Japanese would call him 'kakoi' -- 'cool' being the best English translation. His name is HIROYUKI. He wears a PALE BLUE KIMONO.

His countenance is calm, despite the terrifying sight unfolding before his eyes:

IN THE DISTANCE - THE 'GREEN' ARMY

head his way.

EXT. CASTLE - DAY

A compound of multiple buildings scattered around the actual 'castle'. A vast wall marks the perimeter.

Hiroyuki rides through the gates.

INT. CASTLE - DAY

LORD TAKAMOTO sits on a floor cushion.

13 SAMURAI sit around him in a circle, each a highly respected and highly feared warrior. Hiroyuki is the youngest. They all wear pale blue kimonos and are known as 'THE 13 ELITE.'

MEGUMI, Lord Takamoto's wife and a beguiling beauty, watches them.

They are calm.

They are silent.

They are not scared in the slightest.

Suddenly, a shoji is flung open.

WAKAMOTO, Takamoto's younger brother, enters. Where Taka cuts a serene and graceful figure, Waka is impetuous and combative. He resents his brother's inheritance and feels he would make a better, stronger Lord.

His dynamism excites Megumi.

He wears a blood red kimono and black armor.

The Decapitator follows him in.

(NB: FROM THIS POINT ON, ANY DIALOGUE IN ITALICS IS SPOKEN IN JAPANESE WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES. NON-ITALICIZED DIALOGUE IS IN ENGLISH.)

WAKAMOTO

*Have you not heard the thunder in
the hillsides? Doom is coming to our
lands.*

LORD TAKAMOTO

My lands.

WAKAMOTO
(seething)
My army is ready.

LORD TAKAMOTO
Men you pay with stolen money.

WAKAMOTO
An army numbering over one thousand,
with more men on their way.

LORD TAKAMOTO
But how many true warriors?

WAKAMOTO
Your army is what, a couple of
hundred?

LORD TAKAMOTO
(re the 13 elite)
It is these men the enemy fears most.

WAKAMOTO
By this time tomorrow they will be
in position. If we attack now,
together, while we still have the
element of surprise--

LORD TAKAMOTO
--No.

WAKAMOTO
Our enemy does not bring over a
thousand men in hopes of tea and
idle chat! The entire country is at
war! We will be annihilated unless
we attack. It is time to act like a
warrior!

LORD TAKAMOTO
If we attack now our armies will
clash in the village and hundreds of
innocent lives will be lost.

WAKAMOTO
To wait, is to invite death upon us.

LORD TAKAMOTO
I am not afraid of dying, younger
brother.

WAKAMOTO
Then attack!

LORD TAKAMOTO

*While I am unafraid of dying I have
no wish to die a fool. We're
outnumbered more than ten to one.*

WAKAMOTO

*And whose fault is that? If you had
spent your years amassing the
resources to build a real army--*

LORD TAKAMOTO

*--loyalty that is 'bought' is not
true loyalty.*

Lord Takamoto glances at The Decapitator.

Wakamoto parades around Takamoto's circle, voice laced with contempt.

WAKAMOTO

*The 13 'elite'! Feared. Revered.
Envied. What use are your reputations
now? Your walls will crumble like
everyone else's. Your towers will
burn. And you shall all die.*

He stops in front of Megumi.

WAKAMOTO

But it is for you I fear most.

Takamoto clasps a reassuring hand over his wife's. He knows what defeat means for her -- rape and torture. Megumi also knows this, and thus it may seem odd to detect a slight smile on her face. Yet it is there.

HIROYUKI

All this talk of death confuses me.

A beat.

HIROYUKI

*Our enemy is hungry. Let's give them
something to choke on.*

CUT TO:

A FULL MOON

rising into the sky, revealing beneath it:

EXT. IN FRONT OF THE CASTLE WALLS - NIGHT

TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTY BRAVE SAMURAI IN PALE BLUE KIMONOS AND ARMOR stand motionless.

Ready for battle.

Ready to die.

INT. TOWER - DAY

Megumi watches THE GREEN ARMY'S CAMP in the distance. They are not advancing. She turns to Hiroyuki. Lord Takamoto and his brother, Wakamoto, are also present.

MEGUMI

It seems their hunger has deserted them. Why do they not attack?

WAKAMOTO

They're probably too busy laughing at us!

He gestures to their men in front of the castle walls

WAKAMOTO

This is not bravery. This is insanity.

HIROYUKI

They're letting the sun sap our men's strength. They will attack at night.

LORD TAKAMOTO

And tomorrow both wise men and fools shall celebrate together.

EXT. COURTYARD - DAY

MEN are busy carving ARROWS.

The sky DARKENS.

The sound of TEN THOUSAND GALLOPING HORSES fades in...

EXT. OUTSIDE THE CASTLE WALLS - NIGHT

The MOON is full and high.

The Samurai wait, the ground TREMBLING as THE GREEN ARMY advances, the sound of their horses getting louder and louder until ABSOLUTELY TERRIFYING!

THE GREEN ARMY

is almost upon them -- a TSUNAMI OF SPEARS powered by TEN THOUSAND WARRIORS on HORSEBACK! All charging at once! Horses snarling, their nostrils pumping hot air into the cold night!

Still the Samurai wait.

Not moving.

Not even breathing.

And now THE GREEN ARMY is upon them! Spears fly in the air! Swords glint in the moonlight! WARRIORS roar like LIONS!

HEADS AND ARMS FALL LIKE RAIN.

TIME SLOWS: a head soars through the air, THUDDING against the castle wall, losing its headpiece and falling to the ground where its PAINTED ON EYES stare upward. **It is made of wood.**

The waiting Samurai are nothing but MANNEQUINS -- something known as A SCARECROW RUSE!

Confusion quickly usurps confidence. THE GREEN ARMY, out of formation, exchange puzzled looks, puzzlement turning to fear as SOMETHING EXTINGUISHES THE MOON! Heads look upwards -- a big mistake.

THE FIRST ARROW

hits a man STRAIGHT IN THE EYE. He gets no opportunity to scream.

THE SECOND ARROW

pierces a man's clavicle -- HIS SCREAM, pitiful, now one of many as...

...HUNDREDS OF ARROWS POUR OUT OF THE DARK SKIES!

As the arrows fall the moon becomes visible once more, revealing a very different scene. The GREEN ARMY is now in total disarray. Thousands dead. More bleeding to death. And before they can regroup...

...the moon VANISHES AGAIN, plunging the Hellish landscape into darkness...

...a darkness unleashing MORE ARROWS!

CUT TO:

EXT. BEHIND THE CASTLE WALLS - CONTINUOUS

MULTIPLE ROWS OF ARCHERS, encouraged by the MOANS and SCREAMS from the other side of the wall, fire TORRENT AFTER TORRENT OF ARROWS TOWARDS THE MOON...

CUT BACK TO:

EXT. THE BATTLEFIELD - CONTINUOUS

A THIRD then FOURTH deluge of arrows strikes their targets, razor-sharp points ripping THE GREEN ARMY to shreds!

The devastation takes on a surreal quality in the moonlight. Arrows pin bodies -- men and horses -- to the earth, some victims with thirty arrows or more to their name. Survivors pull shafts from limbs. The lucky uninjured -- there are still several hundred -- are in a state of shock.

FOCUS ON: a MAN, pulling an arrow out of his leg when suddenly a FLAMING SPEAR slices through his back!

MORE FLAMING SPEARS

come hurtling down from the castle walls. We FOLLOW ONE as it sails silently through the night, PASSING EFFORTLESSLY THROUGH ONE MAN, ending his life instantly, AND CONTINUING ON, BURYING ITSELF IN A SECOND MAN, ENGULFING HIM IN FLAMES!

The spears do more than simply pick off two or three score of enemy -- they also act as MACABRE LANTERNS, endowing the grim surroundings with flickering light.

A FEW OF THE GREEN ARMY attempt to climb the castle walls...

...only to have THEIR FACES BURNED WITH HOT OIL!

Ten thousand is now perhaps three thousand. Time for...

THE CASTLE GATES

...to burst open!

THE '13 ELITE'

lead TAKAMOTO'S ARMY out, followed by ONE THOUSAND OTHER SAMURAI -- the latter led by The Decapitator.

The elite and Takamoto's army wear pale blue kimonos, The Decapitator and his men, blood red. Both factions wear armor.

THE DECAPITATOR

immerses himself deep amongst the combat, gleefully swinging his sword with brute strength, SOMETIMES SEVERING MULTIPLE HEADS WITH ONE STROKE! To watch him, and his men, is to watch a very different animal to...

THE '13 ELITE'

...and we quickly understand why Takamoto's men are so monikered -- their fighting skills deadly yet effortless.

The CAMERA CUTS QUICKLY from each of the 13, showing a kill for each, until IT FINDS...

HIROYUKI

...withdrawing his sword from a man's heart! He spies a DOZEN MEN on foot standing isolated from the battle.

He sheathes his sword and charges towards them, sliding from his saddle at the last moment, landing on his feet just before them.

They come for him in two columns.

Hiroyuki stands his ground, choosing to wait until the very last moment, then whips out TWO SWORDS -- for this is his signature style -- his right hand drawing the sword to his left, his left drawing the sword to his right.

He makes his way between the two columns, his hand movements a blur.

He stops upon reaching the far end. Behind him, the dozen men still stand. Then, as if God just snapped his fingers, BODY PARTS FALL TO THE GROUND! They are all dead.

A MAN

stands before Hiroyuki -- the LORD OF THE GREEN ARMY.

He casts a sad, despairing gaze at the huge loss of life around him. He witnesses the last of his men be cut down and turns his eyes back to Hiroyuki.

Hiroyuki puts his swords away.

THE LORD OF THE GREEN ARMY
No. There can be no honor for me.

HIROYUKI
It is your right as Lord.

THE LORD OF THE GREEN ARMY
*I thank you, but, I choose to die as
my men did.*

Hiroyuki -- conflicted. This is not the Samurai way.

THE LORD OF THE GREEN ARMY
Please.

A SPEAR

suddenly rips into the Lord's chest! He got his wish.

THE DECAPITATOR

stands thirty yards away. He smiles at Hiroyuki.

CUT TO:

PEASANTS

lifting CORPSES onto HUNDREDS OF BLAZING FUNERAL PYRES.

MUSIC comes from over the castle walls.

EXT. CASTLE GROUNDS - DAY

A SUMO WRESTLER grabs his MUCH BIGGER OPPONENT by his mawashi and forces him out of the ring!

Lord Takamoto watches the SUMO TOURNAMENT off a floor cushion inside A HUGE MARQUEE, Megumi at his side.

The elite 13 sit scattered around him.

Takamoto roars at the smaller rikishi's win.

LORD TAKAMOTO
*You see? The biggest does not always
win!*

WE SEE: SUSHI CHEFS pack ornate shells with ice then decorate them with sashimi. BEAUTIFUL GEISHAS tend to weary warriors' every need. Sake flows freely. There is DANCING and MUSIC.

The victory celebration is in full swing.

Unlike everyone else, Megumi is in low spirits.

LORD TAKAMOTO
*Why so glum? Anyone would think we
lost.*

MEGUMI
It is nothing.

LORD TAKAMOTO
*When a beautiful woman is not smiling
in her husband's finest hour, then
it is most definitely something.*

MEGUMI
You defeated an enemy you could see.

LORD TAKAMOTO
*This tired old argument again. I
should have guessed.*

MEGUMI
*The real threat lies hidden in the
countryside.*

Taka waves his hand, dismissively.

ELITE SAMURAI #1
*What is this threat you speak of,
Megumi?*

LORD TAKAMOTO
She speaks of ninja.

ELITE SAMURAI #1
Ninja? Samurai do not fear ninja.

ELITE SAMURAI #2
Samurai fear no one!

The Samurai raise their sake cups and toast.

MEGUMI

You call yourselves Samurai, men who live their lives according to the Bushido? Yet doesn't your fancy little code preach honor above all else? Ninja are cowards, untrustworthy traitors who sell their soul to the highest bidder and while you mock me their black arts continue to grow unchecked.

(to Takamoto)

You are a good Lord and dream of uniting Japan. But I say its future will forever be in doubt while we allow these black-clothed assassins to stalk our countryside.

HIROYUKI

Ninja are nothing more than assassins for hire. It is the men who hire them who are the true cowards.

He meant no malice yet Megumi gives Hiroyuki a truly icy stare.

MEGUMI

Perhaps if you had had a father you would speak differently.

She rises to her feet and leaves abruptly.

LORD TAKAMOTO

(off Hiroyuki's look)

Her father died by the dart of a ninja, a ninja he himself had hired to kill a rival warlord.

Off Hiroyuki's look we...

CUT TO:

EXT. A 2ND FLOOR VERANDAH - CONTINUOUS

Megumi storms out into the cool night air and leans against the balcony.

The BLAZING FUNERAL PYRES SERVE AS A SOMBER BACKDROP.

VOICE (O.S.)

Can I offer you a drink?

WAKAMOTO

stands in the shadows nursing a bottle of sake.

MEGUMI

*I am in no mood for the company of a
warrior.*

She stares at him, fully expecting him to leave her in peace. He doesn't, and offers this as his argument:

WAKAMOTO

I was here first.

MEGUMI

You are just like your brother.

WAKAMOTO

*I am nothing like him. Takamoto is
weak. This victory should have been
mine.*

MEGUMI

*His downfall shall not be weakness
but arrogance.*

She takes the bottle from Wakamoto and drinks.

MEGUMI

*He does not hesitate to kill one
thousand men because they carry swords
that all can see, yet one thousand
others who conceal their weapons are
untouchable!*

(baiting him)

You would be no different.

WAKAMOTO

*Do not tempt me to demonstrate my
strength... or you may find yourself
unable to sit for the coming week.*

Their eyes meet. Excitement registers for both.

WAKAMOTO

*Violent times demand violent measures.
If I were Lord I would rule this
land with such venom the entire
country would fall to its knees.*

Off Megumi's look we...

CUT TO:

EXT. CASTLE GROUNDS - LATER

The Decapitator soaks in AN OUTDOOR BATH with FOUR NAKED BEAUTIES. The CAMERA TRACKS FROM THIS to the dohyo (sumo ring), where two of the elite 13, stripped to loincloths, try to push a sumo wrestler out of the ring. Others can be found mingling with Wakamoto's men, playing Go (Japanese chess), gorging on sushi, filling their bellies with sake, and 'enjoying' the geisha.

The CAMERA COMES TO REST on Hiroyuki -- by himself in thoughtful mood.

Lord Takamoto joins him.

LORD TAKAMOTO
I owe you my thanks.

He holds out a cup of sake.

LORD TAKAMOTO
A cup of sake for your thoughts?

Hiroyuki accepts the cup and drinks.

HIROYUKI
A thousand men died today for one man. I would die a thousand times for you.
(a beat)
Why would their Lord refuse an honorable death?

LORD TAKAMOTO
Sometimes, there can be things more important than honor.

HIROYUKI
What are such things?

LORD TAKAMOTO
Each man must ask that of himself.

HIROYUKI
What would your answer be?

LORD TAKAMOTO
Peace.
(MORE)

LORD TAKAMOTO (CONT'D)

(a beat)

We are Samurai, Hiroyuki, and as such have sworn to live and die by the Bushido. But we are also human and ultimately must follow what is in our heart if honor is to have true meaning.

HIROYUKI

You mean, by choosing the path he did, he achieved an honor of his own making?

Lord Takamoto smiles.

LORD TAKAMOTO

Only he can tell you that.

A thoughtful beat.

MEGUMI

rejoins the celebrations. Lord Takamoto waves at her. She responds with a cold stare before walking off.

HIROYUKI

I'm sorry if my tongue has soured her mood.

LORD TAKAMOTO

It is many moons since she warmed my bed. Tonight will be no different.

(a beat)

What she said to you earlier was not fair.

HIROYUKI

Yet it was true.

LORD TAKAMOTO

As someone who thinks of himself as a father to you, I do not agree.

He puts an affectionate hand on Hiroyuki's shoulder.

LORD TAKAMOTO

If I had a son, you would be his greatest threat.

Hiroyuki -- touched.

EXT. CASTLE GROUNDS - SEVERAL HOURS LATER

All is quiet. All is still.

INT. HIROYUKI'S SLEEPING QUARTERS - NIGHT

Hiroyuki awakes from a nightmare.

He goes to the open window. Inhales the cool, fresh air.
Gazes into the quiet, night sky.

VIEW THROUGH THE WINDOW

the castle's main building stands a hundred yards away.

SOMEONE DRESSED IN BLACK

jumps from an upper floor window! They land a perfect 10
forward roll and scamper off.

EXT. CASTLE GROUNDS - CONTINUOUS

Hiroyuki runs to the spot where the person landed. Although
they left behind a FOOTPRINT, whoever it was is long gone.

He looks up at the window. A feeling of dread washes over
him.

INT. LORD TAKAMOTO'S BED CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

Hiroyuki BURSTS THROUGH a set of sliding doors. The sight
awaiting him stops him in his tracks:

LORD TAKAMOTO

lies on a futon on the floor.

A DAGGER

sticks out of his blood-soaked chest.

He is dead.

A NIGHTSHIRTED MEGUMI
steps into the torn doorway.

MEGUMI
(re the doors)
What is the meaning of this--

Hiroyuki tries to shield her from the view but is too late.
She SCREAMS. Pushes past. Runs to her dead husband's side.

She freezes. Eyes fixated on the dagger.

Wakamoto enters, followed by members of the elite 13. All approach Takamoto.

Megumi points at the dagger and snarls with pure hatred:

MEGUMI
Ninja.

CUT TO:

A SNAKE
carved into THE HILT OF THE DAGGER.
The CAMERA PULLS BACK TO REVEAL:

INT. CASTLE - DAY

LORD TAKAMOTO'S BODY lies on a mahogany altar in a GREAT HALL. The dagger is still in his chest. Megumi mourns nearby.

Wakamoto, his men, and The Decapitator line the walls. The mood somber. All eyes on...

THE 13 ELITE

...kneeling in a line in the center of the room. They wear fabulous, WHITE KIMONOS.

A READER finishes a DEATH POEM:

READER
...the winter is cold, yet in your world it's warm still."

He adds the poem to a pile of 12 others.

WAKAMOTO

*No doubt my brother would be proud
of such literary brilliance. He'd be
prouder still if one of you had not
been in a sake induced coma the night
a shadow stole his soul.*

He steps forward.

WAKAMOTO

*As is the Samurai way, I give you
the chance to wipe away your
transgressions and regain your honor.*

He nods at The Decapitator.

He walks behind the 13 Samurai stopping behind #1.

**What follows is as amazing as it is heartbreaking -- SEPPUKU,
the Samurai form of RITUAL SUICIDE:**

Each of the Elite 13 tuck their sleeves beneath their knees.

ELITE SAMURAI #1

picks up a SHORT SWORD.

Opens his kimono.

Looks at Takamoto.

ELITE SAMURAI #1
I have failed you, Lord.

HE PLUNGES THE BLADE DEEP INTO THE LEFT SIDE OF HIS ABDOMEN,
DRAWING IT FORCIBLY ACROSS TO THE RIGHT, WITH A SHARP, UPWARD
CUT AT THE END!

ONE SECOND LATER: The Decapitator swings his sword! It's a
skillful, controlled movement, SEVERING #1'S HEAD YET LEAVING
A SLIGHT BAND OF FLESH KEEPING IT ATTACHED TO THE BODY!
AMAZINGLY, THE HEAD DOES NOT FALL.

ON THE GROUND: #1's BLOOD seeps towards #2 and, as it stains
his neighbor's kimono...

ELITE SAMURAI #2

...picks up a SHORT SWORD.

He opens his kimono.

Looks at Takamoto.

ELITE SAMURAI #2
I have failed you, Lord.

He also PLUNGES THE BLADE DEEP INTO THE LEFT SIDE OF HIS ABDOMEN, DRAWING IT FORCIBLY ACROSS TO THE RIGHT, WITH A SHARP, UPWARD CUT AT THE END!

ONE SECOND LATER: The Decapitator swings his sword! THE CUT LEAVES A SLIGHT BAND OF FLESH KEEPING THE HEAD ATTACHED TO THE BODY! AGAIN IT DOES NOT FALL.

ON THE GROUND: #2's BLOOD seeps towards #3 and, as it stains his neighbor's kimono...

ELITE SAMURAI #3

...picks up a SHORT SWORD.

You've never seen anything like this before, and it is to play out in its full, glorious length, the room deadly silent as each member of the elite repeats the identical actions of his predecessor.

The only deviation comes with ELITE SAMURAI #11 whose head falls from his neck, hanging gruesomely by its thread in front of his chest.

We end with a line of TWELVE BODIES -- ELEVEN BEAUTIFULLY POISED AND ONE MACABRELY SO.

There's only one left.

ELITE SAMURAI #13 - AKA, HIROYUKI.

A beat.

He takes his SHORT SWORD.

He opens his kimono.

He looks at Takamoto. His Lord. His Master. A man who thought of him as a son.

HIROYUKI
I have failed you, Lord.

He presses the tip of the blade to his skin...

...yet his stare continues. Everyone's eyes burn into him, the tension level in the room rising dramatically.

A nail-biting beat.

And then he does the unthinkable: HE RISES TO HIS FEET!

A CLAMOR goes up.

WAKAMOTO
You dare to defy the Bushido?

Hiroyuki walks up to Lord Takamoto's body.

Reaches for the dagger.

Pulls it out.

Megumi GASPS.

HIROYUKI
(to Wakamoto)
Sometimes there can be things more important than honor.

WAKAMOTO
Enlighten me. Enlighten us all!

A beat.

HIROYUKI
Justice.

He turns to Megumi.

HIROYUKI
Before I die I shall return this dagger to its rightful owner.

He dips his head to her in respect.

Megumi approaches him. Stares into his eyes. Whispers:

MEGUMI
Do not spare his brothers or sisters.

She kisses him lightly on the cheek then bows her head.

Hiroyuki wipes the blood from the blade, tucks it inside his kimono, then turns and heads for the door.

WAKAMOTO
You dishonor my brother even in death!

The Decapitator steps into Hiroyuki's path. Hiroyuki (who, like all 13 elite, has his swords by his side) looks him in the eye.

HIROYUKI
Too many warriors have died today.

The Decapitator glances at the line of twelve corpses.

THE DECAPITATOR
Tomorrow is another day.

He moves aside, allowing Hiroyuki to pass.

WAKAMOTO
You are Samurai no more. You are ronin! You hear me? RONIN!

EXT. WOODS - DAY

A BEAUTIFUL, YOUNG WOMAN defends herself with WOODEN STAFF from a similarly armed MAN AND WOMAN -- the same man and woman from the beach where the crate washed ashore. Their names are KENJI and AYAKO. The Young Woman's is MAYUMI.

Kenji and Ayako take turns to attack Mayumi, their younger adversary blocking their moves easily.

Ayako vaults herself into the air, landing behind Mayumi. She and Kenji rush in for the kill only for Mayumi to drop quickly to the ground doing splits. She swings her staff 360 degrees, taking their legs out from beneath them and bounces back to her feet. Kenji and Ayako follow her up.

Mayumi considers her attackers. She throws something at her feet, disappearing in A PUFF OF SMOKE.

She reappears behind Ayako and sidekicks her into a tree, winding her, then launches into an assault against Kenji, pummeling him through the woods and up against a tree... with a DAGGER at his throat.

A beat.

Kenji smiles. Mayumi looks back at Ayako who also smiles.

MAYUMI
(to Ayako)
Did I hurt you?

AYAKO
No. But the tree did.

Mayumi grins and releases Kenji.

She is their daughter.

KENJI
(in English)
You can come out now.

THE BOY, NOW 9 YEARS OLD

steps out from his hiding place behind a tree.

Mayumi high-fives him on her way out of the woods.

BOY
(to Kenji)
Is it my turn now?
(off Kenji's look)
Is it my turn now?

EXT. CASTLE APPROACH - DAY

HUNDREDS OF SAMURAI WARRIORS in blood red kimonos -- the rest of Wakamoto's men -- file through the castle gates.

INT. CASTLE - DAY

MAPS OF JAPAN cover the walls. They show lands and armies of rival warlords.

Wakamoto engages in hushed conversation with Megumi.

The Decapitator enters. Megumi leaves -- the hint of a smile on her face.

THE DECAPITATOR
The remainder of your army has arrived. Word of your recent victory has spread to our neighbors.

WAKAMOTO
Good. The time is ripe for cementing their fears.

The Decapitator walks to a map.

THE DECAPITATOR
Our neighbors to the west are your intended target?

WAKAMOTO

(nods)

Before we attack, let our enemy know our gates are open to any man wishing to switch allegiance. In the meantime, my brother's murderer roams freely in our countryside.

THE DECAPITATOR

Hunting the ninja is pointless. His friends will lie and send us in circles, if they tell us anything at all.

WAKAMOTO

Then bring me the head of every ninja we can find.

(a beat)

There can be no obstacles in my path to Kyoto and being the Shogun.

EXT. VILLAGE - DAY

A scared PEASANT points out a HOMESTEAD WITH A THATCHED ROOF to a SAMURAI wearing a blood red kimono.

The Samurai gestures to other blood reds (we shall have seen all these Samurai before, e.g. at the seppuku ceremony).

CUT TO:

A FLAMING ARROW

hitting the thatched roof. Then another. And another.

EXT. NINJA HOMESTEAD #1 - CONTINUOUS

SMOKE pours into the sky.

A MAN AND A WOMAN DRESSED IN BLACK flee from inside, coughing, only to be MERCILESSLY CHOPPED DOWN BY WAITING SAMURAI!

EXT. WOODS - DAY

The Boy focuses on a tree. He runs at it. Leaps onto the trunk. Scrambles a few feet up. And crashes to the ground.

KENJI

Remember, the tree is not an adversary, but an accomplice. Watch.

Kenji runs at a tree, leaping onto the trunk and vanishing effortlessly into the branches. The Boy peers up, trying to find him.

Kenji reappears behind him, hanging upside down from a branch like a bat.

KENJI

All you have to do is believe it is possible.

The Boy tries again -- with similar results.

BOY

When do I get to practice with a weapon?

KENJI

A weapon is merely an extension of your body. First you must master your body.

EXT. NINJA HOMESTEAD #2 - DAY

Surrounded by EIGHT SAMURAI ON HORSES.

INT. NINJA HOMESTEAD #2 - CONTINUOUS

Tatami floors. Shoji. Sparse furnishings. A simple home. Yet not so simple for look again...

WE SEE: hidden in wall crevices / ceiling nooks -- NINJA.

SUDDENLY - EIGHT SPEARS

pierce the walls! One IMPALES a NINJA, PINNING HIM IN PLACE, UNABLE TO BREAK FREE.

EXT. NINJA HOMESTEAD #2 - CONTINUOUS

The Samurai grip the ends of the spears tightly to their stomachs (as if oars) and CIRCLE THE HOME ON THEIR HORSES!

INT. NINJA HOMESTEAD #2 - CONTINUOUS

The spears CUT A HORIZONTAL PATH THROUGH THE WALLS, the pinned Ninja SCREAMING as he is dragged sideways! The OTHER NINJA emerge from their hiding places only for the roof TO COLLAPSE IN ON THEM!

EXT. MARKET SQUARE - DAY

Mayumi chooses octopuses off a slab of ice.

A distressed PEASANT runs into the square, shouting:

DISTRESSED PEASANT
They're hunting ninja!

He points to a COLUMN OF SMOKE rising into the sky. The place erupts in furor.

Off Mayumi's worried look...

INT. KENJI AND AYAKO'S HOMESTEAD - DAY

The Boy nurses his bruises.

Ayako cooks while Kenji sets the table for four.

Ayako's ears prick up.

WE HEAR: the OMINOUS SOUND OF HORSES APPROACHING.

EXT. KENJI AND AYAKO'S HOMESTEAD - CONTINUOUS

It's a picturesque setting with RICE FIELDS on all sides and the WOODS in the background.

A DOZEN SAMURAI ride up. Stare suspiciously at the home.

Kenji comes out.

KENJI
*Do your horses require water? Or
grain, perhaps?*

The Samurai turn their gaze on him.

INT. KENJI AND AYAKO'S HOMESTEAD - CONTINUOUS

Ayako kneels innocently at the table with a bowl of rice. The Boy is nowhere to be seen. All twelve Samurai are inside. The scene has the feel of an inquisition to it.

THE LEAD SAMURAI
How many live here?

KENJI
Just who you see.

The LEAD SAMURAI peers past an open shoji. The homestead appears to have many rooms.

THE LEAD SAMURAI
A large dwelling for only two?

KENJI
It was my parent's home. I have many brothers and sisters.

The Lead Samurai nods to HIS MEN. They snoop about. Each returns with a shake of the head -- having found nothing.

The Lead Samurai looks at Ayako. Draws his sword. Using the tip he begins to peel back her kimono... revealing nothing but a simple undergarment.

He looks at Kenji. Replaces his sword. Heads to the door.

He pauses. Something in the kitchen area draws his gaze.

TWO BOWLS

sit on the counter.

Kenji and Ayako watch him closely -- turning back to the table... seeing another TWO BOWLS on it...

A beat.

He turns towards Kenji... Ayako's hands moving stealthily beneath the table... the Lead Samurai's moving for his sword...

He draws it quickly. But not quick enough.

A RAZOR-SHARP SHURIKEN (THROWING STAR)

hits him in the forehead, courtesy of a flick of Ayako's wrist!

There's a lot of SHOUTING. Each Samurai draws his sword. Ayako jumps up from the table, disappearing into another room, shoji SLAMMING shut behind her. Kenji vanishes in like manner behind a different set of shoji.

What we have now is a deadly game of cat and mouse!

The Samurai form a circle in the center of the room. Nervous.

We hear their BREATHING. Heartbeats quickening. We also hear SCURRYING. From behind shoji. From above. From below.

A shoji slides open! There's A BLUR OF BLACK as a figure cartwheels out! Vanishing behind another shoji.

Seconds later, ONE OF THE SAMURAI DROPS DEAD!

ALL HELL BREAKS LOOSE!

The Samurai CHARGE shoji, cutting them to shreds with their swords. They overturn furniture. Kick walls. Throw things.

A FIGURE IN BLACK (AYAKO)

drops out of A SECRET HATCH IN THE CEILING onto one of the Samurai. She sinks a DAGGER into his neck and, as Samurai rush her, she backflips to a wall and climbs up it, MATRIX-STYLE -- aided by the pair of TIGER CLAWS ('FREDDY KREUGER' GLOVES) on her fingers!

A SECOND FIGURE IN BLACK (KENJI)

bursts through a shoji brandishing A LONG SWORD and KAGINAWA (hooked rope)! He trades blows with two Samurai then throws the kaginawa at one, yanking the sword from his grasp then stabbing him through the heart!

MEANWHILE - AYAKO

scurries back and forth across the ceiling, flicking DARTS at the Samurai below! They try to JAB HER WITH SPEARS as they DODGE THE DARTS!

BACK WITH KENJI

as his long sword IS BROKEN IN TWO! He dashes to a wall and opens A CONCEALED COMPARTMENT FULL OF WEAPONS! He grabs two daggers and throws them over his shoulder!

WITH THE DAGGERS: spinning through the air, embedding in the chests of two approaching Samurai!

FOUR SAMURAI

come at Kenji -- now armed with two more daggers. He defends himself valiantly until the Lead Samurai appears behind him, sinking a sword into his back! Kenji coughs up blood and slumps to his knees.

AYAKO

Kenji!

She drops from above and runs to his side, fending off Samurai with a dagger. She pulls Kenji close. He dies in her arms.

The Samurai stare at Ayako. She is trapped.

The Lead Samurai walks towards her, blood oozing from his forehead. He starts untying his kimono...

AYAKO

flips her DAGGER inward and, protecting her honor, PLUNGES IT DEEP INTO HER BELLY! She smiles at the Lead Samurai as her life ebbs away.

A beat.

THE LEAD SAMURAI

There are others here.

They tear down walls. Move furniture. Lift tatami.

THERE'S A TRAP-DOOR IN THE FLOOR! A TUNNEL!

EXT. KENJI AND AYAKO'S HOMESTEAD - CONTINUOUS

The Samurai race out. There are EIGHT of them left. They scour the surroundings.

SAMURAI #1

There!

He points into a rice-field.

THE BOY

is running for the woods!

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

The Boy cuts desperately through the brush to A WINDING PATH and races off. He looks over his shoulder.

THE SAMURAI APPEAR BEHIND HIM ON HORSEBACK!

He runs faster. Tears around a BEND. Screams to a stop.

ANOTHER SAMURAI IS AHEAD OF HIM!

There is nowhere to hide. Only, we recognize this other Samurai. He is Samurai no more. He is Ronin.

IT IS HIROYUKI.

Hiroyuki peers at the Boy. Curious. After all, he is white-skinned and this is Japan. He dismounts. The Boy backs away.

Hiroyuki follows the Boy and as he comes around the bend he sees the OTHER SAMURAI GALLOPING TOWARDS THEM!

He sees the Boy's fear. Strides up to...

...and past him.

THE APPROACHING SAMURAI

pull up on their reins! There is about 70 feet between them.

THE LEAD SAMURAI

(shouts)

Give us the boy, Ronin.

HIROYUKI

What do you want with him?

THE LEAD SAMURAI

We want his head. He's ninja.

HIROYUKI

Ninja? Are you blind? He's not even Japanese.

SAMURAI #1
Sorcery!

HIROYUKI
*He's just a boy. Seven, eight years
old at most--*

BOY
--I'm nine.

Hiroyuki frowns at him.

THE LEAD SAMURAI
*Hand him over and we will let you
leave with your life, or this path
will be your final resting place.*

A wry smile forms on Hiroyuki's face.

HIROYUKI
*Nice and shady. The ground's a touch
hard for my liking, though.*

THE LEAD SAMURAI
*Your insolence matches your dishonor
and seals your fate.*

He nods to two of his men.

THE TWO SAMURAI

break into a gallop... bearing down on Hiroyuki... swords
raised above their heads...

HIROYUKI

stands his ground. Unflinching.

The Two Samurai are almost upon him. Still he doesn't move.
Thirty feet. Twenty. Ten. Five. At the very last minute:

HIROYUKI

unsheathes his swords and pulls them quickly into the air,
suspending them horizontally -- each blade hanging in the
air directly in the path of each horse!

THE LIGHT GLINTS OFF THE RAZOR-SHARP STEEL AND...

...THE HORSES, SCARED, REAR UP ON THEIR HIND LEGS!

The Two Samurai fight to stay in the saddle, oblivious to...

...HIROYUKI WHO LEAPS INTO THE AIR!

TIME SLOWS: HIROYUKI SOMERSAULTS OVER THE HORSES, DROPPING BEHIND THE MEN'S BACKS, RAMMING HIS SWORDS INTO THEIR SPINES ON HIS WAY DOWN!

TIME QUICKENS: HIROYUKI LANDS. GIVES EACH HORSE A SLAP ON THE BUTT! THE HORSES TAKE OFF AGAIN -- THE TWO SAMURAI DEAD IN THEIR SADDLES!

A beat.

Hiroyuki keeps his swords out, for...

FIVE OF THE REMAINING SIX SAMURAI

...get off their horses and come his way on foot (the Lead Samurai stays).

Hiroyuki beckons for the Boy to come to him. The Boy does. Hiroyuki holds one hand behind his back, protecting him.

The Five Samurai form a circle around them. True to the Samurai code of honor, THEY ATTACK ONE AT A TIME -- beginning with --

-- SAMURAI #3.

Hiroyuki is just as deadly with one sword, fending off blows effortlessly, seeming to toy with his rival until... SWOOSH!

Samurai #3 stops. Looks down at his gut. A TRICKLE OF BLOOD APPEARS, SPANNING HIS ENTIRE GIRTH. Hiroyuki jabs him with the end of his sword -- his torso falls in two halves!

The four remaining Samurai exchange looks.

The code of honor is forgotten -- THEY ATTACK ALL AT ONCE.

HIROYUKI

tucks the Boy in closer and takes them all on, alternating arms between protecting him and fighting the Samurai.

Interspersed between his blocks and jabs are DEADLY SWOOSHES (immediately after which TIME SLOWS AS THE SEVERED LIMBS FALL TO THE GROUND, THE PACE QUICKENING AGAIN STRAIGHT AFTER).

SAMURAI #4 dies.

SAMURAI #5 dies.

SAMURAI #6 dies.

And then SAMURAI #7 dies.

A beat.

Hiroyuki looks at the Lead Samurai.

The Lead Samurai turns his horse around and flees!

The Boy steps out from behind Hiroyuki's back and stares at the dead Samurai.

He turns to Hiroyuki.

BOY

Why--

(a beat; in Japanese)

Why aren't you like them?

HIROYUKI

Because I remember what it is like to be nine years old.

BOY

You speak English?

Hiroyuki nods. He gets back on his horse.

HIROYUKI

You should learn to make better friends if you want to reach ten.

He takes one last look at the Boy and rides off.

The Boy looks at the dead Samurai... and their swords...

EXT. CASTLE - DAY

Wakamoto's army prepares for battle.

The Lead Samurai rides through the gates.

INT. CASTLE - DAY

The Lead Samurai kneels before a furious Wakamoto and The Decapitator.

WAKAMOTO
Hiroyuki dares to defy me?

THE DECAPITATOR
(to the Lead Samurai)
*This boy has the skin of a ghost,
you say?*

The Lead Samurai nods.

The Decapitator -- thoughtful.

WAKAMOTO
You know of this curious creature?

THE DECAPITATOR
*There is a chance he represents some
unfinished business.*

WAKAMOTO
*If they are traveling together
Hiroyuki will be easy to find. Kill
them both.*

THE DECAPITATOR
What of our battle plans?

WAKAMOTO
I will lead the army.

THE LEAD SAMURAI
And of me, Master?

Wakamoto caresses The Lead Samurai's shuriken scar then turns to The Decapitator.

WAKAMOTO
*Make sure this man's courage is
suitably rewarded.*

His look lingers -- something unspoken passing between them.

THE LEAD SAMURAI
*Thank you, my Lord. I shall not
disappoint again.*

Wakamoto smiles, wryly.

MEGUMI

looks in from the VERANDAH.

EXT. VERANDAH - CONTINUOUS

MEGUMI SEES: Wakamoto comes towards her. Behind him, THE DECAPITATOR LOPS OFF THE HEAD OF THE STILL KNEELING LEAD SAMURAI!

As Wakamoto exits:

MEGUMI

Trouble?

WAKAMOTO

Not anymore.

She takes his hand and leads him to the wall.

THE SKY

is a PECULIAR COLOR and hazy from THE SMOKE OF NUMEROUS, DISTANT FIRES.

MEGUMI

The sky is so pretty when it's tinged with death.

She kisses him. Softly at first, then becoming harder...

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Hiroyuki follows the path. There's a NOISE. He stops and looks behind him. Continues on his way.

ANOTHER NOISE. He turns his horse around. Stares at a tree.

HIROYUKI

Show yourself.

He takes out his spear.

HIROYUKI

I will not ask again.

Something moves on the other side of the path -- not where Hiroyuki's looking. He spins around, spear at the ready...

...to find the Boy watching him. He holds up A SAMURAI SWORD.

BOY

If this was a bow you'd be dead by now.

HIROYUKI
If you could fire it.

He dismounts. Approaches the Boy.

HIROYUKI
Last time we met we were headed in
different directions. Why are you
now following me?

BOY
I want to reach ten.

HIROYUKI
Then you shouldn't be carrying this.

A deft hand movement relieves the sword from the Boy's grasp.

BOY
Hey! Give that back.

Hiroyuki throws the sword upwards, EMBEDDING IT IN THE BRANCH
OF A TREE -- way out of reach. He gets back on his horse and
rides away once more.

The Boy looks at the sword. Tries to scale the tree. Fails.

EXT. KENJI AND AYAKO'S HOMESTEAD - DAY

THE BODIES OF KENJI AND AYAKO lie on the ground out front.
Each is on a BED OF FIREWOOD.

A tearful Mayumi stands over them holding a LIT TORCH.

She sets light to the firewood.

Flames rise quickly, cremating the bodies.

She stares into the flames, lost, then studies HOOFPRTS IN
THE SOIL. They lead to the woods.

A beat.

Mayumi enters her former home.

INT. KENJI AND AYAKO'S HOMESTEAD - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Mayumi opens a SECRET COMPARTMENT FULL OF NINJA WEAPONS.

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Mayumi, NOW DRESSED AS A NINJA, gazes at a patch of path stained with blood.

All of a sudden she LOOKS DIRECTLY AT US. She starts running. She is incredibly nimble. She gets closer and closer then SPRINGS INTO THE AIR, SAILING AT, THEN OVER US!

REVERSE ANGLE: she clings to a tree trunk! Climbs up with amazing dexterity.

EXT. IN THE TREE TOP - CONTINUOUS

It towers far above others and serves as a fantastic lookout point.

Mayumi reaches the top and scans the surroundings.

WE SEE: evidence of numerous fires.

A beat.

EXT. VILLAGE INN - DAY

A raucous drinking/eating hole in a clearing in the heart of the woods.

INT. VILLAGE INN - DAY

Hiroyuki makes his way to the bar. The INNKEEPER greets him.

INNKEEPER
What'll it be?

He reaches behind his neck and pulls THE DAGGER out of his kimono, laying it on the counter.

EXT. VILLAGE INN - A SHORT WHILE LATER

The Boy peers at the Inn from the tree-line. He sees Hiroyuki's horse. A WIDE-BRIMMED RICE FARMER'S HAT rests on the saddle of the MULE beside it.

INT. VILLAGE INN - CONTINUOUS

The Boy weaves through the crowd, the HAT tipped low to hide his face. He spies Hiroyuki sitting at a corner table, showing the dagger to some MEN.

A PATRON walks past with A BOWL OF FOOD, distracting him. He is hungry.

Looking about, he sees THREE MEN sit at a nearby bench laden with food and drink. They are a little drunk. He crawls beneath the table. Watches the Men through cracks. Slips his hand above the table, reaching for AN APPLE.

He is just about to find it when a hand grabs his wrist! The Man (#1) pulls him up, The Boy keeping his head low.

1ST DRUNK

Think you can steal from me, huh?

The Man cocks his head to peek at the Boy. He frowns. Pulls the hat down. The three Men GASP. They stare at the Boy, fascinated.

2ND DRUNK

Eyes of a demon!

#1 picks up the APPLE (green).

1ST DRUNK

The very same!

He offers it to the Boy.

1ST DRUNK

Come and get it, demon child.

BOY

I'm not a demon.

3RD DRUNK

It speaks!

1ST DRUNK

What else does it do, I wonder?

He teases the Boy with the apple.

2ND DRUNK

Careful or it'll cast a spell on you!

3RD DRUNK
Turn you into a cockroach!

BOY
Somebody already beat me to it.

#2 and #3 roar with laughter, taunt #1 with lines like "He called you a cockroach!"

The Boy grabs the apple, angering #1 even more and he rises to his feet. It's now the Boy's turn to tease him with the apple and he does so magnificently, holding it out, switching hands, making it disappear up his sleeve, etc.

The Man draws HIS SWORD. The Boy stops, lets him take the apple. The Man does. Suddenly...

A DAGGER SAILS THROUGH THE AIR

...piercing the apple, knocking it out of the Man's hand and embedding itself in a wall!

#1 looks at Hiroyuki -- the dagger's owner.

#1 advances.

Hiroyuki picks up a chopstick. He holds it as if a sword.

#1 rushes him. Hiroyuki throws the chopstick in his face, startling him, using the opportunity to rob him of his sword, throw him to the ground, and ram the sword through his sleeve and into the floorboards, staking him in place.

#2 and #3 rise, drawing their own swords.

Hiroyuki picks up the chopstick.

#2 rushes him. Hiroyuki throws the chopstick at #3, confusing #2. And in his confusion he suffers the same fate as #1!

Hiroyuki faces #3 and points to the stick -- on the floor in front of #3.

#3, not wanting to lose face, bends for the chopstick. Hiroyuki kicks him in the face and before he knows anything about it, he too is staked to the floor courtesy of his own sword!

Hiroyuki retrieves his dagger from the wall and grabs the Boy by the scruff of his neck.

EXT. VILLAGE INN - CONTINUOUS

Hiroyuki drags the Boy outside.

HIROYUKI
Are you brave, or just stupid?

The Boy stares at him.

HIROYUKI
Do you have a name?

BOY
George.

He crouches down. They are eye level.

HIROYUKI
I will call you Midori Metsuki.
(a beat)
Green Eyes.

The Boy (now GREEN EYES) looks at him --

GREEN EYES
Green Eyes?

-- and smiles.

HIROYUKI
My name is Hiroyuki.

Green Eyes smiles.

GREEN EYES
I will call you Hiro.

INT. CASTLE, LOOKOUT TOWER - DAY

A RIVAL WARLORD WEARING A WHITE KIMONO stares at a BLOOD RED STAIN ON THE HILLSIDE.

It is coming his way.

EXT. HILLSIDE - DAY

Wakamoto marches his BLOOD RED ARMY towards the castle.

They are on foot.

A FIREBALL

appears in the air...

WAKAMOTO

Here it comes!

He lowers his head and raises his SHIELD! All around him, men do the same, simultaneously bunching up closer until shields overlap.

THE FIREBALL

slams down on top of the impenetrable steel mass, skittering off and down the hillside!

MORE FIREBALLS hit their mark, FIRE dripping through any gaps in the shields!

Still Wakamoto's army advances.

As they get closer...

A DELUGE OF ARROWS

...replaces the fireballs.

Again the shield tactic is adopted.

Again Wakamoto's men survive unscathed.

They reach the castle walls. All of a sudden THE SCREEN OF SHIELD STARTS TO RISE UPWARDS as warriors climb onto each other's shoulders.

The shields reach the top of the castle walls.

WARRIORS IN BLOOD RED KIMONOS

pour over the walls into the castle's grounds, swords at the ready.

SAMURAI IN WHITE KIMONOS

rush them -- their white kimonos soon red with blood.

WAKAMOTO

clambers over the wall. He holds a SPEAR in one hand and a SWORD in the other, thrusting his spear into an onrushing WHITE SAMURAI as he swings his sword at another!

He's not as graceful as Hiro or as brutal as The Decapitator, but more ruthless than both put together.

He searches for the RIVAL WARLORD. Finds him. Starts heading his way...

All around, a vicious battle rages. Wakamoto's men continue to pour over the walls. A contingent fights their way to the gates and opens them, allowing the rest of the BLOOD REDS to storm inside.

SPEARS

sail through the air. Too many to count.

One strikes an ARCHER in a WHITE KIMONO in the TOWER, pinning his body against the wall!

Another hits a BLOOD RED just as he climbs over the wall, the force knocking him back over the other side!

WAKAMOTO

plows through man after man, chopping them down with his sword or ramming his spear into their chests, until he reaches the Rival Warlord.

They fight, mano a mano.

As they do, surrounding Samurai gradually stop fighting and watch... the sensation spreading throughout the battle until only the two Lords duel.

The Rival Warlord matches Wakamoto, blow for blow, until suddenly Wakamoto PLUNGES HIS SPEAR INTO HIS LEG, shattering his knee! He stumbles to the ground but does not scream.

Wakamoto knocks his enemy's sword out of his grasp.

The Rival Warlord kneels before him, bloody, and at his mercy.

Wakamoto shows him none, chopping off his right arm at the wrist, then his left.

Finally, there's a SWOOSH.

He CUTS OFF THE WARLORD'S HEAD.

Turns to look at all the White Kimonos around him.

WAKAMOTO

*You dedicate your lives to this man?
I give you the opportunity to serve
a real warrior!*

He rams his spear through the Warlord's severed head and hoists it into the air.

WAKAMOTO

*But first you must prove your
allegiance.*

He stakes the spear in the ground.

A beat.

A SAMURAI IN WHITE suddenly takes a sword and chops off the head of ANOTHER SAMURAI IN WHITE who is lying on the ground, wounded.

He daubs his kimono in his blood then picks up a spear and STAKES THE MAN'S HEAD.

The SAMURAI IN WHITE next to him hesitates.

Wakamoto kills him without a second thought.

DISSOLVE TO:

WAKAMOTO

leading a now vastly increased army out of the castle, leaving behind...

HUNDREDS OF HEADS ON SPEARS

staked into the ground inside the castle walls.

CUT TO:

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Green Eyes rides with Hiro.

HIRO

I am sorry about your father. A true
Samurai does not enjoy killing.

GREEN EYES

Then why do they do it?

HIRO

Because we believe in someone, and
have promised to protect them.

GREEN EYES

Who do you believe in?

HIRO

My Master is dead. I am no longer
Samurai. I am... Ronin.

GREEN EYES

What does that mean?

HIRO

It means... I get to make my own
rules now.

GREEN EYES

So what are you going to do?

HIRO

I seek my Master's murderer.

GREEN EYES

You want revenge?

HIRO

Justice.

GREEN EYES

What's the difference?

Silence.

GREEN EYES

Where are you taking me?

HIRO

To a place where you will be safe.

EXT. TEMPLE - DAY (FEATURED ON PAGE 1)

An APPRENTICE MONK rakes the pebble garden.

INT. TEMPLE - DAY

The Monk kneels at his easel, painting. His back is to the doorway.

The Apprentice approaches, quietly, and peers inside.

A beat. Without turning round:

MONK
A better view can be gained from within.

The Apprentice steps into the room.

THE MONK'S PAINTING

is of the temple being consumed BY FLAMES. A WARRIOR, a BOY, and a HORSE stand beside a WOODEN BRIDGE in the foreground. The Boy has a ghostly complexion and piercing green eyes.

It terrifies the Apprentice.

MONK
You disapprove.

The Apprentice doesn't respond at first -- unable to take his eyes off the painting. He gestures to others on the walls, the naval battle now one of them.

APPRENTICE MONK
You paint the future...

MONK
I paint what my mind shows me.

The Apprentice looks back at the unfinished painting.

APPRENTICE MONK
But that's... here?
(accusingly)
Them.

He points at the Warrior and Boy. They feature in a painting on the wall also -- SURROUNDED BY SEVEN DEAD SAMURAI ON A SHADY PATH.

APPRENTICE MONK
Who are these harbingers of doom?

MONK

*You may ask them for yourself. They
are to be our guests tonight.*

APPRENTICE MONK

They're coming here? Tonight?

He GASPS.

WE SEE: the unfinished painting. The Monk is in the process of adding ANOTHER PERSON to it -- lying on the ground at the Warrior's feet. Decapitated.

APPRENTICE MONK

Who is that?

MONK

*A fool. Every tragedy needs a fool
to set the wheels in motion.*

(a beat)

*You should go to the village and buy
supplies. You must hurry. Time is
not on your side.*

The Apprentice hurries out, fearful.

EXT. WOODEN BRIDGE - DAY

Connecting the temple to the mist-shrouded forest.

The Apprentice rides across on A MULE. He stops halfway, frozen in horror.

HIRO AND GREEN EYES

emerge from the mist and ride past him.

EXT. TEMPLE - DAY

Hiro lifts Green Eyes from the horse.

MONK (O.S.)

Welcome.

The Monk sits on a stone bench with a TEA-POT and THREE CUPS. He pours the tea and offers for them to join him.

GREEN EYES

(whispers to Hiro)

How did he know we were coming?

HIRO

People say he's a mystic.

GREEN EYES

What's that?

HIRO

Old and crazy. Come.

Hiro bows to the Monk. Green Eyes copies him.

The Monk studies Green Eyes closely.

MONK

You are small for a nine-year-old.

GREEN EYES

How do you know how old I am?

The Monk smiles.

MONK

Why don't you take a look around?
There are fish in the lake.

Green Eyes wanders off, uncertain. Hiro sits beside the Monk.

MONK

You are Ronin, now.

HIRO

I have brought dishonor to your name.

MONK

No. You have restored my faith in
our country's future.

He gazes at Green Eyes -- leaning over the wall to see the fish.

HIRO

Our people killed his father.

MONK

He is an orphan.

HIRO

Why do you speak to me in his
language?

MONK

You understand it.

HIRO

Because you taught me.

MONK

Perhaps now you know why.

A beat.

MONK

He is a blank canvas. He needs someone to help select the colors that will paint his future.

HIRO

That is why I've brought him here.
To you.

MONK

His mentor must be someone who has walked his path before him.

GREEN EYES

studies a stone lantern. He looks back at Hiro only to see him disappear into the temple with the Monk.

INT. TEMPLE - DAY

We are in a room we haven't seen before. The Monk takes a ROLLED-UP BUNDLE OF PAINTINGS from a drawer. He finds one and hands it to Hiro.

Hiro unrolls it.

IT IS A PAINTING OF HIM AND GREEN EYES -- Hiro with SWORDS raised in fighting style, Green Eyes crouching beneath him with a DAGGER in one hand and A PAIR OF TIGER CLAWS on the other. (This could very well be our one-sheet.)

HIRO

The boy is not my destiny.

MONK

Destiny is not the path you choose for yourself, but the path that is chosen for you.

CUT TO:

VIEW FROM THE SHADOWS

in the corridor outside the room -- the Monk returns the paintings to the drawer and exits. He stops in the doorway. Sensing something. A smile forms on his face. He walks off.

Hiro takes one last look at the drawer and follows him.

A beat.

GREEN EYES steps out of the shadows.

He gazes at the drawer, curious. Goes to it. Lifts the paintings out. Unrolls them.

THE PAINTING ON TOP

is of A DOOR IN THE GROUND. IT IS OPEN AND A STONE STAIRCASE DESCENDS FROM IT.

Green Eyes frowns.

THE NEXT PAINTING

is the image of him and Hiro.

Green Eyes -- fascinated.

EXT. MARKET PLACE - DAY

The Apprentice Monk buys supplies. The MARKET TRADER takes his money and says in a hushed tone:

MARKET TRADER

As if civil war and a ninja hunt
isn't enough -- now they're searching
for a dangerous Ronin and a child
with skin like the moon.

He nods into the crowd where SAMURAI are asking questions. One speaks to the Three Drunk Men.

The Apprentice Monk's face registers a glimmer of hope, the CAMERA HOLDING on his reaction then drifting to a nearby stall.

STANDING IN THE SHADOWS WITHIN

is a FIGURE DRESSED IN BLACK -- Mayumi. She is also watching the Samurai.

INT. TEMPLE - EVENING

The Monk, Hiro and Green Eyes eat dinner. Hiro is quiet, brooding.

GREEN EYES

Hiro says I'm to stay here for a while.

MONK

A while can be a life-time... or just a few hours.

GREEN EYES

You taught Hiro how to fight? Will you teach me?

MONK

I was much younger then.

(looks at Hiro)

You will need to find someone closer to your own age.

GREEN EYES

How old are you?

MONK

I do not know.

GREEN EYES

How can you not know how old you are?

MONK

It is not how long we live that is important.

HIRO

It's time for you to go to bed.

GREEN EYES

But I'm not tired.

Hiro glares at him.

GREEN EYES
(to the Monk)
Can I ask one more question?

The Monk nods.

GREEN EYES
Hiro says you're a 'mystic'. Does
that mean you see the future?

MONK
It means I see things others do not.

He beckons Green Eyes closer. Looks into his eyes.

MONK
I see a warm, soft futon awaiting
you upstairs.

He smiles. Green Eyes smiles back.

GREEN EYES
Can we talk again tomorrow?

MONK
I hope we will speak again many times.

Green Eyes leaves, followed, seconds later, by Hiro.

THROUGH A DOORWAY: the Apprentice Monk watches.

INT. TEMPLE, GUEST SLEEPING QUARTERS - EVENING

TWO FUTONS are on the floor.

Green Eyes changes into a smock. Gazes at Hiro's swords
leaning against a chair. He unsheathes one, nervous. It is
incredibly light for something so dangerous. He holds it,
menacingly.

HIRO (O.S.)
(harsh)
Put that back.

Hiro stands in the doorway. Green Eyes puts the sword back.

HIRO
It is against the law to draw a sword
inside a temple.

Green Eyes gets under the covers.

GREEN EYES
Will you tell me a story?

HIRO
The stories I know would not make
for a good night's sleep.

He blows out a candle.

INT. TEMPLE - EVENING

Hiro finds the Monk meditating, eyes closed.

HIRO
He is not a warrior.

MONK
That is what people said about you.
(eyes open)
They were wrong.

INT. TEMPLE, GUEST SLEEPING QUARTERS - EVENING

It is dark and shadowy, lit only by the glow from a lantern.

Hiro stands in the doorway, gazing at a sleeping Green Eyes.

A SHADOW MOVES!

THE SHADOW MOVES AGAIN!

Hiro slides the shoji fully open. He sees nothing until:

A FIGURE DRESSED IN BLACK, AKA MAYUMI
steps out from the shadows.

HIRO
Ninja.

Mayumi brandishes a LONG, WOODEN STAFF.

MAYUMI
*What's wrong, warrior? Naked without
your sword?*

She throws one of Hiro's swords at his feet.

Hiro does not take it, instead glancing at a staff on the wall. Mayumi realizes.

MAYUMI
But of course. We are in a temple.
(re the staff)
Doh-zo.

Hiro takes the staff. He bows to Mayumi.

HIRO
You will have honor in defeat, Ninja.

MAYUMI
The Ronin speaks of honor. How ironic.

HIRO
Judge me again when you are a ghost.
(re a still sleeping
Green Eyes)
Let us go somewhere a little more
suitable.

EXT. TEMPLE - EVENING

Hiro bows once more at Mayumi. When he raises his head she has gone.

The stone lanterns provide many a hiding place.

MAYUMI

emerges behind Hiro, staff raised.

HIRO

spins at the last second and PARRIES HER BLOW!

INT. TEMPLE, GUEST SLEEPING QUARTERS - CONTINUOUS

Green Eyes awakes. He hears the fight from an open window.

EXT. TEMPLE - CONTINUOUS

The duel is breathtaking, Mayumi's agility canceling out Hiro's superiority with a staff.

They clash staffs. Their faces are close.

HIRO

You fight well. If you possessed a conscience you may have made a good Samurai.

MAYUMI

The same could be said of you.

She shoves him away then flicks A DART at him. Hiro catches it on his staff and tosses it into the lake.

HIRO

Any more tricks up your sleeve?

His composure is clearly rattling Mayumi and she sends a SWARM OF DARTS his way. Again Hiro catches them all in his staff and tosses them into the lake. Mayumi comes at him, staff flailing. He endures her attack and then...

HIRO

My turn.

...he comes at her, knocking her staff from her grasp and forcing her backwards until she is up against a wall. She flips over him. Hiro thrusts his staff high in the air, hitting her mid-flight, sending her tumbling to the ground.

He keeps her on the ground with his foot.

MAYUMI

Let me go!

HIRO

Tell me, do you hide your face out of ugliness?

He pulls off her mask.

Mayumi's beauty takes him completely by surprise.

They gaze at each other a moment.

MAYUMI

Take your lecherous eyes off me.

HIRO

My lecherous eyes?

Mayumi kicks him where it hurts and springs to her feet. She grabs her staff and is about to connect it to Hiro's head when--

GREEN EYES (O.S.)
Mayumi!

--she freezes. She and Hiro look upward.

GREEN EYES

peers down at them from a window.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

The Decapitator and TEN SAMURAI ride at pace.

A portentous image.

INT. TEMPLE, GUEST SLEEPING QUARTERS - NIGHT

Hiro peers through a crack in the shoji at Mayumi.

She is telling Green Eyes a bedtime story.

INT. TEMPLE - NIGHT

The Monk hangs a painting. Hiro enters.

MONK
(re painting)
Is this straight?

The painting is the one he was working on earlier, except now a BEAUTIFUL, YOUNG NINJA WOMAN stands with the WARRIOR, the BOY, and the HORSE.

HIRO
Paint whatever you like. I told you,
the boy is not my destiny. She is
not my destiny.

He reaches behind his neck and pulls THE DAGGER out of his kimono. He hands it to the Monk.

HIRO
That is my destiny.

EXT. TEMPLE - NIGHT

The Monk leads Hiro to the wall and stares into the mist. The GLOW OF DISTANT FIRES gives it an eerie quality.

The Monk still has the dagger.

MONK

Evil is spreading. Japan's future
hangs in the balance.

IMAGES APPEAR IN THE MIST

as if projected onto the swirling, eerie canvas by an
invisible source.

WE SEE:

-- GLIMPSES OF NUMEROUS BATTLES ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

-- HUGE ARMIES BEING ASSEMBLED.

-- FIRES RAZING BUILDINGS TO THE GROUND.

-- PEOPLE GETTING SLAUGHTERED... SKINNED ALIVE... POISONED...
STABBED... BEHEADED... TRAMPLED UNDER HORSES... ETC.

MAYUMI

exits the temple. She makes her way quietly through the
minefield of stone lanterns.

MONK

Takamoto wanted to unite our country.
You are all that is left of his dream.

HIRO

I am just one.

MONK

No. You are three.

He turns to a lantern. Mayumi steps out from behind it.

HIRO

She is Ninja. I am Samurai.

MONK

The boy will learn from both of you.

HIRO

He is just nine years old.

MONK

Boys grow up to be men... as you
know all too well.

He studies the dagger. Hands it back to Hiro.

MONK

Visit the Takada family in the
foothills of Fuji. The father will
be able to assist you with this.

MAYUMI

I know who you speak of.

HIRO

We leave with the sunrise.

MONK

I fear that will be too late.

Mayumi's ears prick up.

WE HEAR: the far-off sound of HORSES.

MAYUMI

(worried)

Are you expecting company?

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

The eerie, white mist obscures the view to one side.

The Decapitator and Samurai ride up to the Apprentice Monk.
He waits for them beside a tree.

He leads them to the edge of the mist, pointing out the WOODEN
BRIDGE...

INT. TEMPLE, GUEST SLEEPING QUARTERS - CONTINUOUS

Mayumi wakes Green Eyes. Hiro puts on his swords.

EXT. WOODEN BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

The Decapitator and Samurai ride across.

INT. TEMPLE - CONTINUOUS

The Decapitator and Samurai storm inside. MONKS and
APPRENTICES greet them (we will have seen these in the
background in previous scenes).

THE DECAPITATOR
(addressing A MONK)
Where are they?

He gets no answer and SLICES OFF THE MONK'S HEAD. He turns to AN APPRENTICE MONK.

THE DECAPITATOR
Talk.

APPRENTICE MONK #2
It is forbidden to draw swords here.

The Decapitator SLICES OFF HIS HEAD.

HIRO, GREEN EYES, MAYUMI AND THE MONK
run along the balcony of the floor above.
The Decapitator addresses his Men.

THE DECAPITATOR
(re the Monks)
Kill them all.

SAMURAI start killing the Monks and Apprentices.

INT. TEMPLE, 2ND FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

The Monk leads Hiro, Mayumi and Green Eyes through a maze of corridors.

They pass a STAIRCASE. Seconds later, The Decapitator comes up it.

GREEN EYES

glances over his shoulder. He sees The Decapitator walking after them.

FLASHCUT: THE DECAPITATOR KILLS GREEN EYES' FATHER!

Green Eyes stops running and just stares at his father's killer -- immobilized by fear.

MAYUMI
Georgie!

Mayumi SCREAMS at him. He doesn't respond.

The Decapitator gets closer.

He draws his sword.

Hiro races back. The distance is too great.

The Decapitator smiles at Hiro... prepares to swing...

Mayumi flicks her wrists.

A DOZEN SHURIKEN

whistle past Hiro! They TEAR into The Decapitator's arm, lacerating it!

He merely switches his sword to his other hand.

But Hiro has closed the gap. He draws his own swords and steps into The Decapitator's path.

A beat.

Mayumi races back and scoops up Green Eyes.

And then The Decapitator makes his move, summoning all his strength and superior reach to batter Hiro.

ON THE FLOOR BELOW

Samurai stop and watch.

HIRO

weathers the storm, slowly getting the upper hand and pushing The Decapitator back down the corridor to the top of the staircase.

One final barrage forces The Decapitator over the top step and tumbling down the stairs!

INT. TEMPLE - CONTINUOUS

Mayumi carries Green Eyes around a corner.

MAYUMI

It's a dead end!

The Monk pushes a panel.

A SECRET PASSAGEWAY opens up!

Hiro arrives as Mayumi and Green Eyes enter the passageway.

HIRO
(to the Monk)
You first.

MONK
I am not going with you.

HIRO
He will kill you.

MONK
He will try.

Hiro -- conflicted.

MONK
Go. Death comes to each of us when
the time is right.

Hiro embraces the Monk and slips into the passageway. The Monk seals it shut and waits next to a FLOOR-STANDING, WROUGHT IRON CANDLE HOLDER.

The Decapitator strides around the corner, plucking bloody shuriken from his arm. He analyzes the dead end.

THE DECAPITATOR
Open it.

The Monk looks into his eyes.

THE DECAPITATOR
I won't ask again.

MONK
*If a man wishes his innermost dreams
fulfilled he must make sacrifices.*
(a beat)
This is one of yours.

THE DECAPITATOR
*I have heard the rumors about you,
old man.*

He raises his sword above his head.

THE DECAPITATOR
Magic is no match for steel.

He swings his sword!

The Monk THRUSTS THE CANDLE HOLDER EFFORTLESSLY INTO THE AIR, miraculously blocking the attack.

MONK
But wrought iron is.

The Decapitator swings again and again. Each time the Monk meets his sword with the candle holder, his actions at odds with the holder's weight.

The Decapitator launches into frenzied combat, raining blow after blow on the Monk. None hit their target.

The Decapitator stops fighting. He is out of breath.

The Monk now goes on the attack, using the candle holder as a shield no longer, but as a weapon. His skill is mesmerizing. His movements seem to defy gravity.

The showdown ends with The Decapitator pinned up against a wall, the candle holder at his throat.

THE DECAPITATOR
What do you know of my dreams?

EXT. TEMPLE - NIGHT

A Samurai unties Hiro's horse. It rears up on its hind legs and bolts for the bridge, vanishing into the distant mist.

The Decapitator leads the Monk from the temple, watching carefully as he climbs onto a horse.

In the background, Samurai DIP ARROWS INTO A BLAZING FIRE PIT...

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

The Decapitator and Samurai emerge from the mist with the Monk -- their prisoner.

Beyond the mist, THE TEMPLE IS BURNING.

The Apprentice Monk steps out from behind a tree. He lowers his head in shame.

The Decapitator beheads him as he passes.

A beat.

HIRO, GREEN EYES AND MAYUMI

emerge from a CAVE-LIKE OPENING at the base of AN ENORMOUS TREE.

Hiro approaches the Apprentice Monk. He lies, decapitated, in front of the wooden bridge, eerie white mist and temple engulfed in flames behind him.

Green Eyes and Mayumi stand beside Hiro.

A beat. We hear a SNORT.

HIRO'S HORSE

trots through the trees to Hiro's side.

The scene is exactly as the Monk painted.

Hiro -- deep in thought.

EXT. CASTLE - MORNING

Wakamoto and his army return from battle.

The Decapitator approaches. Wakamoto looks about, expectantly.

WAKAMOTO

*Why do I not see Hiroyuki's head on
a stake?*

THE DECAPITATOR

*His escape is only temporary. We
returned with a far greater gift.*

INT. CASTLE DUNGEONS - MORNING

The Monk etches onto a sheet of paper with charcoal.

TWO SAMURAI stand guard at the foot of a spiral staircase.

Wakamoto descends.

WAKAMOTO

Leave us.

The Samurai leave.

Wakamoto watches the Monk. He continues to sketch -- yet to even acknowledge Wakamoto's presence.

WAKAMOTO

*So you are the Monk who raised
Hiroyuki? I am willing to overlook
your recent indiscretions if you
tell me where I will find him.*

(no response)

*You do not answer. You do not even
look at me. I frighten you that much?
You are wise indeed.*

(still no response)

I am Lord. You will speak to me!

(a beat)

*This childish game only delays the
inevitable. Hiroyuki. Will. Die.*

MONK

We will all die.

The Monk lifts his head.

MONK

Some sooner than others.

WAKAMOTO

*You save your breath for what -- a
thinly veiled threat?*

The Monk resumes sketching.

MONK

*Hiroyuki is only one man. It is odd
that someone who desires to be Shogun
would fear him.*

WAKAMOTO

*I fear no one. I gave Hiroyuki the
chance of an honorable death. He
repays me by killing my men.*

(a beat)

I offer you your freedom.

MONK

I am not imprison.

WAKAMOTO

*Then get used to these walls for
they are the last ones you will see.*

MONK

*Walls cannot imprison a man. Only
his actions can.*

Wakamoto walks to the staircase. Stops. Stares at the Monk.

WAKAMOTO

*If what they say about you is true,
I suggest you start sketching a
skeleton on a stone floor.*

MONK

I can do better than that.

He turns his sketch over for Wakamoto to see.

THE SKETCH

shows Wakamoto LYING IN A POOL OF HIS OWN BLOOD SURROUNDED BY A CIRCLE OF NINJA.

Wakamoto stares at it. Fearful.

EXT. BY THE SIDE OF A STREAM - MORNING

Mayumi splashes her face with water.

Hiro attaches the carcass of a wild animal to a spit. Mayumi kneels beside him.

MAYUMI

I haven't thanked you.
(off Hiro's look)
For killing the men who took my
parents' lives.

HIRO

I did not do it for you.

MAYUMI

I know. You did it for him.

She gestures to Green Eyes -- sitting quietly by a small fire.

HIRO

He hasn't said a word since last night.

Both of them gaze at Green Eyes. Their destiny.

INT. CASTLE, SPA - DAY

Wakamoto sits in the water, deep in thought.

Someone enters behind him. He spins around, on edge.

It is Megumi. She disrobes and stands before him, naked.

MEGUMI

*Does the sight of your dead brother's
naked wife unsettle you? Or is it
the etchings of a crazy old monk?*

WAKAMOTO

*Perhaps you should see if he has
anything in store for you?*

MEGUMI

The future is what we make it.

She wades through the water towards him.

MEGUMI

*With your last victory your army has
swelled.*

Whispers into his ear, manipulatively.

MEGUMI

*If you cleanse Japan of every Ninja
alive there can be none left to hurt
you...*

Wraps her legs around his hips.

MEGUMI

...my Lord.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

The sleeping giant of MT. FUJI makes a spectacular backdrop.

Hiro, Green Eyes and Mayumi all ride together on Hiro's horse. There are rice fields on either side.

UP AHEAD: a small house. It has been RECENTLY BURNED.

As they approach, Mayumi blocks Green Eyes' view.

THE HEADS OF A MAN AND A WOMAN
are IMPALED ON STAKES in front of the house.
Hiro slows. Stares at the macabre sight.

MAYUMI
These people are the Takada's
neighbors. They are not ninja.

A SCREAM pierces the air. It comes from further up the road.

HIRO
Wait here.

Mayumi and Green Eyes get off the horse. Hiro gallops away.

EXT. THE TAKADA HOMESTEAD - DAY

The TAKADA's are a FAMILY OF FOUR (FATHER, MOTHER, and TWO CHILDREN). Currently they are on their knees in front of their home covered in CUTS and BRUISES with hands tied behind their backs. They are dressed as ninja.

SIX SAMURAI surround them.

One of the Samurai draws his sword.

1ST SAMURAI
Who should die first?

He steps in front of MR. TAKADA. He draws his word. Prepares to kill him... but doesn't.

He moves in front of MRS. TAKADA. Prepares to kill her... but doesn't again.

He moves in front of THEIR SON, 14. Prepares to kill him. But doesn't.

He moves to THEIR DAUGHTER, 12.

Mrs. Takada sobs.

MOTHER
Please.

DAUGHTERS'S POV: the Samurai stands in front of her. He raises his sword above his head, two-handed. This time he means business. Suddenly...

A SPEAR

rips through his chest! Blood sprays from his mouth!

THE SAMURAI

slumps to the ground.

HIRO

sits on his horse beyond.

2ND SAMURAI

Hiroyuki.

He smiles at Hiro -- who had only the one spear -- and raises his sword above the Takada Daughter's head.

A SMALL 'BOMB' FILLED WITH METAL FILINGS (METSUBUSHI)

'explodes' in his face!

MAYUMI

stands in the middle of a rice field, ninety degrees to Hiro's side.

She runs forwards. Hiro gallops. The Samurai split into pairs and run to meet them.

WITH HIRO

letting go of his reins and drawing his swords...

WITH MAYUMI

as she closes in on the Samurai...

HIRO

rides straight at the oncoming Samurai. TIME SLOWS: he swings both swords, CUTTING CLEAN THROUGH the swords of the Samurai.

He turns his horse around. Dismounts.

MAYUMI

springs into the air, somersaulting over the Samurai, dropping to her feet just behind them.

She attacks the startled Samurai with her staff.

HIRO

walks towards his Two Samurai, each hand cutting fancy shapes in the air with a sword.

The Samurai rush him with daggers.

Hiro stabs each of them in the chest, simultaneously.

MAYUMI

runs up one side of the Takada homestead and down another, coming up behind the Samurai. She knocks one of their swords out of his hand, pulls A CONCEALED BLADE out of one end of her staff and kills him.

The last Samurai chooses to flee. Mayumi takes out a POISON DART...

HIRO

Let him go.
(off her look)
He'll be our messenger.

He cuts the Takadas free. The children hug their mother.

Mr. Takada looks at the Samurai who was hit with the metsubishi bomb. He's on his knees, hands clutched to his face, groaning.

Mr. Takada picks up the Samurai's sword and GUTS HIM, viciously.

He turns to Hiro, his gaze shifting over Hiro's shoulder.

GREEN EYES

watches from a distance.

MR. TAKADA

*You are the Ronin and boy people are
whispering about.*

He turns to Mayumi, recognizing her.

MR. TAKADA
*You are the daughter of Kenji and
Ayako?*

Mayumi nods. Mr. Takada dips his head.

MR. TAKADA
My condolences.

INT. THE TAKADA HOMESTEAD - A SHORT WHILE LATER

Mr. Takada studies the dagger that killed Takamoto.

MR. TAKADA
*There is only one swordsmith capable
of such craftsmanship. His work
commands a high price.*

HIRO
Where do I find him?

Mr. Takada walks to the door. He points at MT. FUJI in the distance.

MR. TAKADA
*He lives in the snow. But you must
take great care. There is magic in
the hills.*

MAYUMI
What kind of magic?

MR. TAKADA
The worst kind.
(a beat)
*I shall take you to a path that will
lead you to his cave -- if you get
that high.*

He looks at Green Eyes.

MR. TAKADA
Perhaps the boy should remain here?

HIRO
No. He comes with us.

EXT. THE Foothills OF MT. FUJI - DAY

Mr. Takada leads Hiro, Green Eyes and Mayumi (each with horse from one of the dead Samurai) to A CONCEALED PATH.

MR. TAKADA

Good luck. My family and our entire village are forever in your debt.

EXT. MT. FUJI - DAY

Hiro, Mayumi and Green Eyes climb the path. Trees flank either side.

Mayumi slows. She stares into the trees. It is dark and shadowy but she senses movement within. But then it is gone.

EXT. MT. FUJI - EVENING

Our trio are in the land of rocks -- about 50 yards out of the tree line -- and sleeping around a small fire, except...

...Green Eyes is not asleep.

He rises to his feet and tiptoes to Hiro, taking one of his swords.

He walks to the edge of the trees and swings the sword against a tree trunk. It makes a LOUD THUD.

He looks back at Hiro and Mayumi -- still sleeping.

He moves DEEPER INTO THE TREES and continues practicing. The blade sticks in a trunk. As he struggles to free it...

...he hears A LOW GROWL.

WITHIN THE TREES: movement. Some kind of creature...

AN ABOMINATION

...the like of which has never been seen before, similar to a big cat but with skin instead of fur, the skin possessing a translucent nature -- veins are visible beneath its surface. It has a grotesque head. Yellow eyes.

It circles Green Eyes then turns to face him.

IT HAS TWO HEADS!

Green Eyes frees the sword and backs away, flailing the weapon at the Abomination as it closes in on him.

The Abomination leaps into the air!

Green Eyes dives out the way!

He's on his feet in seconds and racing through the trees... the Abomination hot on his trail.

Green Eyes focuses on a tree ahead... runs straight at it...

...and scrambles up the tree trunk into the branches out of the Abomination's reach!

The Abomination's two heads BOTH ROAR THUNDEROUSLY! It starts slamming its body angrily against the trunk, shaking the tree.

Green Eyes loses his grip and is just about to fall when...

MAYUMI

...sails through the trees, landing on the branch above him and plucking him from the Abomination's jaws!

THE ABOMINATION

backs up, preparing to launch itself at the trunk once more. It pauses, nostrils SNORTING in the cold air.

HIRO

approaches, spear in hand.

Trees prevent a clear shot. He backs up to the path, luring the Abomination out into the open -- even more hideous in the moonlight.

Hiro throws his spear.

The Abomination 'CATCHES' it -- its tail wrapping around the shaft and plucking it out of the air! It twirls it around like a baton then extends its tail backwards and LAUNCHES IT BACK AT HIRO!

He dives out of the way! The spear SLAMS into a tree!

The Abomination advances.

GREEN EYES
We have to help him!

Mayumi holds him close.

He studies the blade of his sword. Breaks free of her grasp...

MAYUMI
Georgie!

...and drops to the ground, running out onto the path in front of the Abomination!

Green Eyes hurls the sword, spear-like, at the creature.

The Abomination's tail catches it again. The blade cuts through it, severing it. The Abomination HOWLS.

Hiro grasps the opportunity, attacking with his sword but the Abomination's fangs snap at him, prevent him from getting close enough. He looks up at a BRANCH hanging over the path.

Mayumi follows his gaze. She moves from branch to branch until she is directly above the Abomination.

Hiro continues to attack, choosing his moment carefully.

He throws his sword high in the air.

Mayumi drops from the branch. She grabs the sword and, landing on the Abomination's back, thrusts it into its neck!

The Abomination rears back violently then slumps to the ground. Dead.

A beat.

Hiro nods at Mayumi in respect and helps her down. They gaze at the Abomination. Green Eyes joins them.

GREEN EYES
What kind of creature is it?

HIRO
An abomination.

MAYUMI
Let's just hope it wasn't anyone's pet.

She shares a worried look with Hiro.

INT. CASTLE - DAY

Wakamoto paces. He is with The Decapitator and Megumi.

WAKAMOTO
How many did he kill?

THE DECAPITATOR
Five. There is a woman now traveling with him.

MEGUMI
Who is this little whore keeping him company?

THE DECAPITATOR
She is ninja.

MEGUMI
Ninja?

WAKAMOTO
His dishonor knows no limits.

MEGUMI
You must stop him. He is mocking you.

THE DECAPITATOR
First we must find him. His movements have been... erratic. He is now headed south.

WAKAMOTO
South?

He walks to a window. Gazes in a southerly direction.

WAKAMOTO
Perhaps our search is over. Tell my army to be ready for battle.

Megumi goes to him. She follows his gaze.

MT. FUJI

rises in the distance.

EXT. NEAR THE TOP OF MT. FUJI - DAY

Hiro, Mayumi and Green Eyes make their way through A MINEFIELD OF HUGE ROCKS BLANKETED WITH SNOW.

UP AHEAD: the path ends at the MOUTH OF A CAVE. The snow in front of it has thawed.

WE HEAR: the HAMMERING OF STEEL from within.

Mayumi and Hiro dismount.

GREEN EYES
I'm coming with you.

HIRO AND MAYUMI
(united)
No.

INT. SWORDSMITH'S LAIR - DAY

WE SEE: raised rock pools full of lava, furnaces built into the walls, torches burning brightly. This is a hot place.

Exotic, lethal weapons glisten in racks.

IN A CORNER: a small mountain of silver/gold/jewels, etc.

A DOZEN, BEAUTIFUL WOMEN IN KIMONOS

work here -- carrying big rocks of iron ore out of the depths of the cave... stirring pots of molten liquid... pounding slabs of virgin steel under heavy hammers... folding steel strips over on itself until razor-thin.

Their mesmerizing beauty and presence in this setting distract the eye from what should appear obvious -- the hammers are too heavy, rocks too big. The women are unnaturally strong.

HIRO AND MAYUMI

enter. The Women stop what they're doing and stare at them.

HIRO
I am looking for the swordsmith.

Two of the Women step aside, revealing:

THE SWORDSMITH.

He is shirtless and of scrawny physique. His skin glistens with sweat.

He stands behind a long, granite table where he works a thin strip of soft steel, transforming it into a beautiful, deadly blade.

THE FINGERS ON HIS LEFT HAND

are MERE BONES!

Hiro and Mayumi approach. They watch in awe as --

-- he dips his fingers into A POT OF MOLTEN LAVA then caresses the blade, creating a stunning design.

SWORDSMITH

You wish to buy a sword?

Hiro reaches behind his neck and lays the dagger on the table.

HIRO

Is this your work?

The Swordsman looks at it and smiles.

SWORDSMITH

That was a commissioned piece. They cost extra.

HIRO

I am not here to buy. I simply wish to know for whom this was made.

SWORDSMITH

I sell swords, not information.

MAYUMI

Hundreds of people are dead because of this dagger.

SWORDSMITH

I do not make toys.

HIRO

Tell me who you made it for and I will leave in peace.

SWORDSMITH
I have already given you my answer.

The Swordsmith returns to his work.

Hiro draws his sword.

TWO WOMEN

step between him and the Swordsmith.

HIRO
*I have never taken a woman's life
and do not wish to start now.*

The Women do not move.

MAYUMI
*I am not of the same moral high ground
as my friend here.*

She jabs at one of them with her staff.

The Woman HISSES at Mayumi and, for a split second only, morphs into...

A HIDEOUS GIANT

...with SHARP CLAWS, WILD HAIR and TWO HORNS growing from its head! It wears a LOINCLOTH and has RED skin. In one hand it holds A SPIKED, IRON CLUB. It is known as --

MAYUMI
Oni.

-- an ogre-like creature from Japanese folklore.

The other Women begin to close in on Hiro and Mayumi.

Mayumi backs away. Hiro stays rooted to the spot.

MAYUMI
They are not women. If you think of them as such they will crush your bones with their clubs.

The Women sense Hiro's weakness. They move closer and closer to him...

Mayumi flings a SHURIKEN at one! It cuts into the Woman's flesh.

She HOWLS and becomes ONI, flailing at Mayumi with her club.

Hiro flashes his sword.

THE ONI'S WRIST

falls to the ground.

THE OTHER ELEVEN WOMEN

instantly MORPH INTO ONI!

HIRO

draws his other sword.

The battle that ensues is mesmerizing -- two mortals against a dozen ogres in a setting that rivals Hell.

ONE OF THE ONI

rushes Hiro.

HIRO

ducks to the side, and, crouching low, slashes at the Oni's ankles! The Oni ROARS and topples to the ground with a THUD.

ANOTHER ONI

targets Mayumi, swinging its club ferociously. Mayumi blocks with her staff only for the force to knock it clean out of her grasp. The Oni swings again...

MAYUMI

cartwheels away towards THE WEAPON RACKS.

ONI

chase after her.

MAYUMI

grabs swords and flings them one after the other over her shoulders at her attackers.

HIRO

fights two Oni, one with his left hand, one with his right. His swords make no impact on their clubs and they steadily back him up against a wall.

THE ONI

grin to each other and lift HUGE ROCKS above their heads...

HIRO

puts his swords away and grabs TWO TORCHES off the walls.

THE ONI

throw the rocks.

HIRO

dives forwards, rolling in between each ONI and, as the rocks CRASH against the wall he...

THRUSTS THE TORCHES

...into each Oni's loin cloth! The Oni's SCREAM as the cloth bursts into flame.

MAYUMI

grabs the last weapon from the racks. She spins around to find an Oni right behind her. Several Oni lie dead in the background, weapons sticking out of their bodies.

THE ONI

swings its club.

MAYUMI

blocks. Again. And again. The Oni's might forces her towards a LAVA POOL! Mayumi slips a TIGER CLAW over a hand.

The Oni flails away until Mayumi teeters at the edge of the pool. Mayumi smiles at the Oni and...

...throws A SMOKE BOMB at the ground, vanishing into the smoke! We see her shadow leap upward, grip the roof of the cave, and flip behind the Oni's back.

She shoves the Oni into the lava pool!

BACK WITH HIRO

as he kills one Oni and then another. He doesn't see the last Oni coming up behind him...

GREEN EYES
Hiro!

Green Eyes stands in the mouth of the cave. Hiro turns to him, seeing the Oni's shadow on the wall. The Oni SMASHES HIS CLUB DOWN...

...just as Hiro dives out of the way.

The Oni turns to Green Eyes -- and goes for him, club raised.

Hiro runs past the Oni and throws Green Eyes out of the way.

The Oni swings his club. Lightning fast, Hiro puts one sword away and, using a two-handed sword grip, stops the club INCHES FROM HIS OWN HEAD!

His arms are about to buckle under the Oni's immense strength. He drops to his knees, the sudden movement sending the Oni crashing head over heels to the ground.

HIRO

stands over it.

He raises his sword.

THE ONI

morphs back into a beautiful woman and pleads:

ONI/WOMAN
Please don't hurt me.

Hiro pauses. Then he brings his sword plummeting down, burying it into the woman's chest!

A beat.

Hiro bows to Green Eyes -- who beams.

Hiro looks at the Swordsmith. Pulls his sword out of the woman. Walks towards him.

The Swordsmith looks about. There are tears in his eyes.

HIRO
Who commissioned the dagger?

He pulls out his other sword and traps the Swordsmith's left hand between both blades.

HIRO
I will not kill you. But you will lose your livelihood.

He applies pressure, his blades drawing blood.

A beat.

The Swordsmith nods.

Hiro releases him.

The Swordsmith shuffles towards the mouth of the cave.

He points a bony finger into the distance... where we see...

...TAKAMOTO'S CASTLE.

A beat.

EXT. MT. FUJI - NIGHT

A sheltered spot surrounded by rocks.

Hiro unpacks a blanket from his horse.

WE SEE: several of the Swordsmith's swords.

Hiro drapes the blanket over a sleeping Green Eyes. He looks to Mayumi -- sitting on A HUGE, FLAT ROCK staring up at the sky.

He joins her.

It's a clear night. You can see a BILLION STARS.

MAYUMI

I used to think there was a star for
each person.

She turns her gaze to THE VALLEYS FAR BELOW. Flickering lights
tell us people's homes are still burning.

MAYUMI

Another five or six days... there
will be no ninja left.

HIRO

This war ends tomorrow.

MAYUMI

Going to the castle is suicide.

HIRO

You do not need to come. The men who
killed your parents are dead. Your
journey is over.

MAYUMI

What about everything the Monk spoke
of?

HIRO

He was wrong. We are just three
people.

MAYUMI

Three orphans.

A beat.

MAYUMI

What are you planning on doing?
Waltzing up to the castle gates and
knocking? Does nothing scare you?

HIRO

I am Samurai. I do not fear death.

MAYUMI

But it's suicide.

Hiro takes out the dagger.

HIRO
I made a promise.

MAYUMI
To Samurai, we ninja are cowards
because we hide under masks and the
black of night, yet you hide under a
different mask, a mask you call
'honor'.

HIRO
I do not expect you to understand.

MAYUMI
I understand the sadness of losing
someone you love.

HIRO
No one will shed tears at my death.

Mayumi looks at Green Eyes.

MAYUMI
He will.

A beat.

Mayumi turns to Hiro.

She opens her tunic.

Guides his hand to her heart.

A beat.

She moves it to her breast.

Kisses him. He responds.

They begin to make love... Mayumi with tears in her eyes...

INT. CASTLE DUNGEONS - NIGHT

There are no windows down here and we can just make out the silhouette of the Monk -- sitting, cross-legged, in a corner.

WE HEAR: a door opening, followed by footsteps.

Megumi comes down the staircase. She holds a CANDLE.

The Monk seems to be asleep. CHARCOAL SKETCHES litter the floor around him.

Megumi moves from sketch to sketch, studying them in the candlelight.

She comes to the one lying nearest the Monk. She picks it up, holding it close to her face.

What she sees affects her in a very bad way, the blood draining from her face.

As she turns to leave WE SEE THE MONK'S EYES.

They are open.

EXT. MT. FUJI - SUNRISE

Hiro awakes to find Green Eyes watching him.

GREEN EYES
Mayumi's gone.

He looks about suddenly. Mayumi's horse is missing.

A beat.

Hiro walks to the mountain edge and stares at the castle in the distance. Green Eyes joins him.

GREEN EYES
She's not coming back, is she?

Hiro does not answer but Green Eyes can tell the answer is 'no'.

He follows Hiro's gaze.

GREEN EYES
You're going to the castle, aren't you?

Hiro nods, solemnly.

GREEN EYES
The man who came after us at the temple? Will he be there?

Another nod.

GREEN EYES
I am going with you.
(off Hiro's look)
He is the man who killed my father.

A beat.

HIRO

If you are coming with me there is
something you must learn.

He goes to his horse and draws one of THE SWORDSMITH'S
SWORDS...

CUT TO:

MONTAGE - GREEN EYES LEARNS TO FIGHT

Hiro and Green Eyes face each other on the huge, flat rock.

Hiro teaches him how to hold the sword. He recommends he
adopt a two-handed grip and the importance of strong but
supple wrists.

Green Eyes does not ask questions. He listens. He learns.

Hiro demonstrates basic moves. Green Eyes at his side, copying
him.

The moves become more advanced.

Green Eyes duels with Hiro.

Hiro teaches an over the head swing -- similar to swinging a
cat above your head.

He stands a tree trunk in the center. Five feet high. Nine
inches in diameter.

Green Eyes practices the move on the trunk.

Again.

And again.

The MONTAGE DRAWS TO AN END with Green Eyes swinging the
sword at the trunk...

...and slicing right through it!

INT. WAKAMOTO'S BED CHAMBER - MORNING

Wakamoto puts on BATTLE CLOTHES as he gives instructions to
The Decapitator.

WAKAMOTO

*I want men on the gates at all times.
The walkways, too. And keep someone
stationed in the tower.*

THE DECAPITATOR

*Why are you so convinced he will
come? To do so is a tactical mistake.*

Wakamoto stares out a window at Mt Fuji.

WAKAMOTO

He will come.

EXT. VILLAGE - DAY

Hiro and Green Eyes trot down the main road. There are houses on both sides.

Some are burned.

Some are ransacked.

All are deserted.

GREEN EYES

It's a ghost town.

Hiro lowers his head -- saddened.

EXT. THE FAMILY OF FOUR'S HOMESTEAD - DAY

Green Eyes waits on his horse.

INT. HOMESTEAD - CONTINUOUS

Hiro stands in the open doorway.

HIRO

Hello?

The place is deserted.

EXT. CASTLE GROUNDS - DAY

THOUSANDS OF SAMURAI are present -- the full force of wakamoto's army. They are everywhere -- lining the walkways at the top of the castle walls, guarding the gates, doorways, etc.

IN THE CENTER OF THE COURTYARD - WAKAMOTO

hones his sword-fighting against THREE 'SPARRING PARTNERS' -- his own men. His enthusiasm is high and he comes very close to actually hurting them -- but doesn't.

Megumi approaches.

MEGUMI
I know how to handle a sword.

She draws her sword and charges one of the sparring partners, battering him with blows until...

...she thrusts her sword through his heart, killing him!

A SHOUT rings out from THE LOOKOUT TOWER:

SAMURAI LOOKOUT
Hiroyuki!

The SAMURAI LOOKOUT points into the distance...

EXT. CASTLE APPROACH - CONTINUOUS

Hiro and Green Eyes stare at the castle.

It is a truly daunting image -- one man and one boy against hundreds.

GREEN EYES
What do we do now?

HIRO
We wait.

EXT. CASTLE WALKWAY - CONTINUOUS

Wakamoto and Megumi gaze at Hiro. The Decapitator orchestrates the defense.

THE DECAPITATOR
Prepare your arrows.

SAMURAI draw arrows. Prepare to fire.

WAKAMOTO
No.
(MORE)

WAKAMOTO (CONT'D)

(to The Decapitator)

*I will not allow history to remember
me as the Lord who needed a thousand
arrows to end one life.*

(smiles)

One and a half. Besides...

He turns to Megumi.

WAKAMOTO

*...I want my queen to see Hiroyuki
bleed.*

(a beat)

Let them in.

EXT. CASTLE APPROACH - CONTINUOUS

IN THE DISTANCE: the castle gates OPEN.

Hiro rides forward.

Green Eyes follows.

EXT. CASTLE GROUNDS - CONTINUOUS

Wakamoto's entire Samurai army watches Hiro and Green Eyes pass through the gates into the courtyard. It's a hostile reception.

They stop in front of Wakamoto, Megumi and The Decapitator, the army closing in around them until they are surrounded.

A beat.

WAKAMOTO

*Won't you introduce us to your unusual-
looking friend?*

GREEN EYES

My name is Green Eyes.

(to The Decapitator)

You murdered my father.

His use of Japanese startles the crowd.

THE DECAPITATOR

(stuttering English)

I... have... murdered... many.

Samurai whisper to each other -- trying to figure out what The Decapitator just said. Wakamoto notices this -- and decides to use it to his advantage.

WAKAMOTO

The man you stand beside is no angel.

(to Hiro)

You have the blood of a lot of my men on your hands, Hiroyuki.

HIRO

How much blood is on yours? Or should I say, **whose** blood?

He pulls out the dagger.

HIRO

(to Megumi)

I vowed to return this to its rightful owner.

He looks Wakamoto straight in the eye.

HIRO

Today I fulfill my vow.

WAKAMOTO

Really?

He looks at his huge Samurai army.

WAKAMOTO

You and whose army?

MAYUMI (O.S.)

Mine.

Heads look upwards. People GASP.

MAYUMI

stands on the roof of the castle. She is dressed from head to toe in the black of a ninja.

She throws a GRAPPLING ROPE to a building opposite and sails through the air, landing with a flip by Hiro's side.

She crouches beside Green Eyes and pulls off her mask.

GREEN EYES

(whispers)

I thought you'd left us.

MAYUMI

Never.

She rises back to her feet.

Megumi looks at her, menacingly.

WAKAMOTO

Someone should have taught you how to count, ninja. Three does not an army make.

MAYUMI

Look again.

A beat.

A SERIES OF SHOTS:

as THE SURROUNDINGS COME TO LIFE, NINJA EMERGING FROM OUT OF NOWHERE AND EVERYWHERE!

-- they spill out of a well, like a free-flowing, black liquid.

-- step out of shadows.

-- flow out of cracks in walls.

-- crawl from under staircases.

-- beneath bushes.

-- drop from the branches of trees.

-- the eaves of the castle.

ROPES

sail down from rooftops and over walls.

NINJA

climb quickly down them.

Their stealth and ingenuity is not confined to outdoors however.

INSIDE THE CASTLE:

-- a black onyx vase suddenly unfurls, becoming three ninja!
-- others step out of paintings on the walls!
-- emerge from behind curtains.
-- climb out of laundry baskets.
-- a ceiling revealed as a mass of interlocking bodies.

It is miraculous to watch.

BACK IN THE COURTYARD

the spectacle continues its entrancement.

MAYUMI

signals to a rooftop.

FOUR NINJA

appear on the roof. They are unmasked and we recognize them instantly -- THE TAKADA FAMILY! They throw their hands up in the air, releasing FIRECRACKERS AND SMOKE BOMBS INTO THE WIND!

WAKAMOTO
Kill them. LET THEM EAT STEEL!

All hell breaks loose.

HIRO

strides forward -- a DOZEN SAMURAI immediately blocking him from reaching...

WAKAMOTO

...who drives his sword into a NINJA'S CHEST!

MAYUMI

shields Green Eyes, striking out with her staff.

MEGUMI

zooms in on her, raising her sword, causing Mayumi to release Green Eyes to block her attack. The two women glare at each other and square off, staff vs sword.

GREEN EYES

is knocked to the ground. He stays on his hands and knees, crawling through the mayhem to the fringes where he finds a SMALL, WOODEN HUT...

WE HEAR: firecrackers... explosions... the SWOOSH of swords... the WHISTLE of poison darts!

Everywhere you look it is Samurai versus Ninja.

Samurai weapons are SWORDS! DAGGERS! SPEARS! BOWS AND ARROWS!

Ninja weapons are SHURIKEN! DAGGERS! LONG SWORDS! STAFFS! TIGER CLAWS! POISON DARTS! SPIKED BALLS ON CHAINS! Their prized asset however is their AGILITY!

WE SEE: a SAMURAI picking off Ninja with arrows from a tower. THREE NINJA run below him and form a circle, hands joined in the center. A FOURTH NINJA runs up and, using their hands as a TRAMPOLINE, springs into the air! The Samurai Archer reloads. He aims. Is about to fire when... the Ninja appears in front of his eyes! The Ninja stabs him in the face with a dagger and drops back out of view!

WE SEE: ANOTHER NINJA runs at a wall, TWO SAMURAI hot on his heels. The Ninja scales the wall with tiger claws and flips backwards, landing behind the Samurai!

WE SEE: a NINJA falls to the ground, a sword in their chest!

WE SEE: a SAMURAI is hit in the neck by a poison dart!

WE SEE: a SPIKED BALL ON A CHAIN coming right at us!

CUT TO:

GREEN EYES

watches the war through a window. He is inside the SMALL, WOODEN HUT.

THE DECAPITATOR

passes right in front of his eyes, sending Ninja heads spinning through the air! He stops. Turns towards the hut.

Green Eyes ducks. The Decapitator moves on.

Green Eyes grips his sword, summoning up courage.

He frowns suddenly. There is nothing in this hut except A DOOR IN THE GROUND. It's padlocked.

FLASHCUT: GREEN EYES LOOKS AT THE MONK'S PAINTINGS. THE TOP ONE IS OF A DOOR IN THE GROUND -- OPEN WITH STONE STAIRCASE DESCENDING FROM IT.

A KEY

hangs on the wall. Green Eyes unlocks the door, revealing...

...A STONE STAIRCASE.

INT. CASTLE DUNGEONS - CONTINUOUS

Green Eyes comes down the stairs.

The Monk is waiting for him.

A SKETCH on the floor draws Green Eyes' gaze.

He picks it up. We do not see it.

GREEN EYES
Is this the future?

Off the Monk's look we...

CUT TO:

A SAMURAI SCREAMING - HIS BODY

lacerated by metal filings! We are:

IN THE MIDDLE OF THE WAR!

TIGER CLAWS

rip at Samurai's faces!

SPEARS

impale Ninja!

SMOKE BOMBS

explode in front of Ninja enabling them to vanish!

MAYUMI AND MEGUMI

are still trading blows.

MEGUMI

Black suits you, but you look much better with your mask on.

MAYUMI

I'm still waiting for you to take yours off.

They continue trading... move inside the castle...

HIRO

blazes his way past Samurai with his two swords towards Wakamoto.

He kills the last man between them only for...

THE DECAPITATOR

...to step into his path.

THE DECAPITATOR

This time you will not be so lucky.

He strikes immediately, Hiro using both swords to block.

They duel, brute force vs grace, the CLANG of steel against steel deafening, a perfectly matched battle.

THE DECAPITATOR

grabs a NEARBY NINJA by the scruff of his neck with one hand and hurls him at Hiro, knocking both to the ground!

He POWERS forwards... sword raised high in the air...

Hiro shoves the Ninja aside, saving his life, only for The Decapitator's sword to sink into his own arm.

The Decapitator, sensing victory, prepares to strike again.

Just as he is about to land the fatal blow...

FOUR NINJA

...trap him in a net!

HIRO

gets to his feet. Pulls the arrow out of his shoulder.

He looks for Wakamoto. Finds him. Their eyes meet.

Wakamoto steps inside the castle.

INT. CASTLE - CONTINUOUS

Hiro enters. He sees Mayumi and Megumi trading blows.

HIRO
Where did he go?

Mayumi points to a STAIRCASE.

Megumi takes advantage of this distraction and cuts her down the stomach!

HIRO
Mayumi!

MAYUMI
It's just a scratch.

She launches into a spectacular counter-attack, pulverizing Megumi with the staff.

Hiro disappears up the staircase.

Megumi flees after him. Mayumi gives chase, but...

...on reaching the top of the staircase, Megumi SLAMS down a hatch -- cutting Mayumi off!

EXT. CASTLE GROUNDS - DAY

The Monk and Green Eyes come out of the hut. Green Eyes scours the battle. Sees The Decapitator cutting through the net and chopping the NINJA in half.

Green Eyes looks at the Monk.

He draws the Swordsmith's sword.

Walks through the battlefield.

The Decapitator sees him coming.

Green Eyes stops in front of him.

GREEN EYES
The future is bright... for one of us.

The Decapitator looks past Green Eyes at the Monk.

A beat.

He swings his sword at Green Eyes, only...

GREEN EYES

...is no longer in front of him!

A beat.

There's A SWOOSH.

The Decapitator flinches. Peers down at his legs.

BLOOD TRICKLES FROM HIS CALVES.

All of a sudden, his legs crumple. THEY HAVE BEEN SEVERED AT THE CALF!

He collapses to the floor on two bloody stumps.

GREEN EYES

steps in front of him.

GREEN EYES
That was for my Father.

He stares at The Decapitator with pure hatred.

GREEN EYES
This is for me.

He swings his sword above his head...

...AND DECAPITATES THE DECAPITATOR!

INT. CASTLE - 2ND FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Hiro walks slowly towards the waiting Wakamoto.

HIRO
He was your brother.

WAKAMOTO
Our father made a huge error in making
him Lord over me.

Normally Wakamoto would be no match for Hiro and Wakamoto knows it. But he can see that Hiro is injured and so he attacks, focusing on Hiro's injured side.

Yet Hiro's injury has a freeing effect on Hiro. There is no longer any grace to his attack -- and it is replaced by pure anger.

He destroys Wakamoto in a display of venom.

Megumi watches from the edge of the room as he forces Wakamoto up against a wall with a sword to his throat.

He reaches behind his neck with his free hand and pulls out the dagger.

HIRO
I once offered an enemy Lord an
honorable death. You shall not get
the same luxury.

He thrusts the dagger into Wakamoto's heart, twisting it, giving it a little more 'juice'.

Wakamoto dies.

Hiro lets him keep the dagger, allowing Wakamoto's body to slump to the ground with it still inside.

A beat.

Hiro GASPS.

He looks down at his stomach.

THE TIP OF A SWORD

emerges from it.

Hiro looks at his new adversary and... frowns.

IT IS MEGUMI.

HIRO

He killed Takamoto.

MEGUMI

No he didn't.

Hiro -- confused.

Megumi leans in close and whispers.

MEGUMI

He supplied the dagger. It is I who supplied the touch.

She whips the sword out of Hiro's stomach.

He slumps to his knees.

She raises her sword for the final blow.

MEGUMI

Now my Father's ghost can finally rest in peace...

She scratches her neck.

A POISON DART

sticks into her skin!

MAYUMI

crouches in a window opening. She holds A BLOW GUN.

MEGUMI

sees her. And dies.

MAYUMI

runs to Hiro. Suddenly...

THE HATCH TO THE STAIRCASE

...smashes open.

NINJA

pour in, forming a circle around the dead Wakamoto.

GREEN EYES

follows them in. He approaches Hiro and Mayumi. Looks at Hiro's wound.

GREEN EYES
This isn't how you die.

Hiro and Mayumi both look at him, curious. Green Eyes turns at the doorway, where...

THE MONK

...watches.

MONK (V.O.)
It didn't take long for the rumors to begin.

EXT. CASTLE GROUNDS - DAY

The war is over. Mr. Takada will be Lord. His army will be a mixture of the survivors -- Samurai and Ninja.

MONK (V.O.)
In the shadows of Mt. Fuji, a ronin, a ninja, and a green-eyed, white-skinned boy had defeated evil.

The CAMERA rises over the castle walls.

HIRO, MAYUMI AND GREEN EYES

ride away on horseback.

MONK (V.O.)
But this was the time of Sengoku
Jidai. Peace was a long way off.

EXT. MONASTERY - DAY

Snow falls on this invincible fortress carved out of rock at the top of a mountain.

MONK (V.O.)
He had survived the past. He had
conquered the present. And he had
seen the future.

INSIDE ITS WALLS

we find Green Eyes, stripped to the waist, the SWORDSMITH'S SWORD in one hand and a WOODEN STAFF in the other.

MONK (V.O.)
If they were to free Japan from its
darkest period in history, then
preparation was needed.

HIRO AND MAYUMI

stand in front of him. Dressed for battle.

Suddenly, Green Eyes attacks, wielding both sword and staff with amazing skill and speed and within seconds he has both Hiro and Mayumi at his mercy, pinning Mayumi to the monastery wall with the staff while the sword is up against Hiro's throat.

The SCREEN FREEZES on this image.

MONK (V.O.)
And so the myth began.

THE END.