

THE OUTSIDER
(Gaijin)

by
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Note: All dialogue appearing within "< >" should be understood to be spoken in Japanese and subtitled in English.

A BLACK SCREEN. We hear the *thundering* of a steam train clawing along twisted rails. Smoke *coughing* out in angry, asthmatic bursts. Railcars *creaking*.

The train we're on bursts out of a tunnel and -

LIGHT REVEALS:

I/E. PRISONER RAIL CAR/FREIGHT TRAIN - DAY

NICK LOWELL (30) sits huddled, hands bound in a dark, packed, rattling prisoner car. Face bruised and clothes stained with sweat and filth. He is sinewy, hungry, eyes like a wolf.

Emaciated JAPANESE PRISONERS fill the car. They stare at Nick. He ignores them. Looks out a slat in the railcar:

Thirsty summer dirt and tall, waving grass. POOR FARMERS carry sacks along an unpaved road. They look hungry too.

A title appears, superimposed in large, white letters:

小阪
OSAKA
1954

EXT. FREIGHT TRAIN DEPOT - SAKAI - DAY

SHEEEK. Railcar doors grind open to reveal the car full of prisoners. PRISON GUARDS shout and unmercifully yank prisoners from the car, herding them like cattle.

Nick is one of the last to be pulled out. As he staggers down to the dry earth, the guards can't help but stare at his dirt-spattered, unshaven, WHITE FACE.

Nick puts his head down and falls in line silently. Doing his best to blend in. Which is to say not at all.

A YOUNG GUARD ties Nick's already bound hands to the ROPE the other prisoners are attached to.

And then conical STRAW SHROUDS are pulled over the prisoners' heads. Including Nick. He can't see shit. The line moves.

An endless march of blind prisoners following the sound of shuffling feet.

CUT TO:

INT. OSAKA PRISON - PROCESSING - DAY

THE STRAW SHROUD IS LIFTED OFF NICK'S HEAD AND HE CAN SEE:

He's in a PRISON processing area. Dirty cement walls. Guards shouting at prisoners as the straw hats are roughly removed.

The guards shout more commands in Japanese and the prisoners do as they're told: they quickly disrobe.

Nick strips down. And as he pulls off his clothes, he can't help but notice others looking - apparently curious about the rumors of the bigger Caucasian penis.

One by one, nude prisoners step forward to have their open mouths searched by a PAIR OF GUARDS.

An ALCOHOLIC PRISONER with a pitted face looks over Nick's shoulder and down at his dick. He turns to the others, mutters something.

Prisoners laugh.

Guards *SHOUT*. The prisoners shut up. It's Nick's turn.

He steps forward. Dozens of untrusting eyes watch as the guards search his cheeks. One of the guards is taken aback as he notices Nick's arm.

HIS ENTIRE SHOULDER IS HORRIBLY SCARRED as if his flesh was at one point carved and ripped open.

Nick makes inadvertent eye contact with the guard. The scar holds a dark story and the guard knows it. But he just writes in his ledger and gives Nick his new name:

PROCESSING GUARD
<1-4-1-0.>

CUT TO:

INT. CELL BLOCK - OSAKA PRISON - NIGHT

"1410" on his back, in prison fatigues now, Nick walks down the cell block single file with FOUR PRISONERS. A GUARD walks alongside, escorting them to their respective cells. Each prisoner carries his own ratty futon mat. They trudge ahead. Nick seems to be the only one surprised as he sees:

A MOUSE EATS ANOTHER DEAD MOUSE.

GUARD (O.C.)
<1410!>

Nick's cell door. Three-inch thick steel with a barred slot for the guards to see in.

K-CHACK! The guard unlocks it. Nick steps in hesitantly.

INT. PRISON CELL - CONTINUOUS

He BOWS slightly to the guard, as he's seen the others do.

The guard *shouts* at him. And Nick must understand because, humiliated, he bows deeper.

The guard smiles, enjoys the degradation.

K-CHACK! He locks Nick in utter darkness.

The details of his room lost to the black, Nick unfolds his stained mat, lays down and embraces sleep like a woman he hasn't seen in years.

DARKNESS.

INT. PRISON CELL - OSAKA PRISON - MORNING

SHOUTING. The gray light of dawn. Nick struggles to wake and suddenly TWO GUARDS are yanking him up onto his knees. *Screaming* at Nick maniacally in Japanese.

Disoriented, Nick kneels as they want him to. In the proper position: feet under his ass; back straight; eyes forward.

GUARD

<1410!>

Nick gives the awkward half-nod-half-bow that's typical of confused Westerners in Japan.

GUARD (CONT'D)

<1171!>

Nick turns to realize he has a CELL MATE. Kneeling on the mat next to him. But not bowing. In time, we will know him as -

KIYOSHI. Smart but violent. Honorable but unforgiving. His stare is unblinking apathy.

K-CHACK! They slam the cell door shut. Nick tries to engage his cellmate, but Kiyoshi won't even acknowledge him.

Instead, Kiyoshi moves on his knees to the door, lifts the food slot hatch and pulls out -

A SMALL BENTO TIN.

Kiyoshi lowers his head over his meal. Praying or something. Starving, impatient, Nick grabs his own tin from the slot -

OVER-COOKED RICE. SALTED FISH. SOME KIND OF BOILED ROOT.

HE ATTACKS THE FOOD like an animal, barely chewing. In seconds, his dirty fingernails are digging the last bits of rice from the corners of the bento box. Done.

Still hungry, he takes in his cell for the first time:

No windows. No chairs. Just a dank cement room with a rusted hole that serves as a toilet. He looks back at Kiyoshi.

Still not eating. Not yet. Kiyoshi holds the fish up by its tail. Inspecting it. Slow, creeping revulsion overcomes Nick.

MAGGOTS.

Kiyoshi puts the fish down. He starts to eat his rice.

Nick looks down at his empty tray.

EXT. RURAL ROAD - DAY

BZZZZ BZ BZ BZZZZZ. The incessant patterned buzzing of cicadas. The unique rhythm of the Kansai region.

K-CHUNK. Shovels cut into hard dirt. The prisoners sweat on a rural road, digging a massive trough for a sewer line.

Nick works. Pale, nauseous and weak from his breakfast.

A GUARD SHOUTS. On command, the prisoners stop digging abruptly and all face the ditch, heads down as -

A TWELVE YEAR-OLD GIRL APPROACHES. PUSHING A BICYCLE.

The guards face her, stand at attention. Standard procedure. For her safety. And because she's *above the prisoners*.

She's pretty. Lost in the shy innocence of youth. Uncomfortable with the attention. Her bike has a flat tire.

Quietly, the LANKY PRISONER next to Nick turns his head. He watches her sweat through her schoolgirl uniform. And he fucks her roughly with his eyes. She sees him looking. So -

He licks the air like he would her clitoris. TONGUE flicking.

Violated, she looks away. Acknowledging it would be more degrading. She just pushes her bike, head down. Cicadas *BUZZ*.

The guards are oblivious. The pedophile sees Nick staring hard back at him. But he ignores Nick and just turns back to the trough. No one else seems to care.

They all just look down. Kiyoshi too.

CUT TO:

INT. CHANGING ROOM - OSAKA PRISON - DAY

The cicada buzz has been replaced by the *LOUD HUMMING* of the massive laundry machines outside the CHANGING ROOM.

A guard walks along rows of lockers, checking prisoners as -

Nick changes into prison fatigues amid lockers and other prisoners. The guard is at the far end of the room, Nick's locker row unwatched. A few prisoners down his bench:

The pedophile smells his dirty clothes, breathes deep as if hunting for the young girl's smell. Nick turns, surprised as -

SOMEONE moves toward the pedophile. It happens fast -

BAM! The pedophile's feet KICK against a locker as he is grabbed from behind, hair pulled -

SHIK! BROKEN GLASS JAMMED into his open mouth -

SCREAMING. He FALLS - BLOOD pours out in pulses - he drools out BLOOD-SLICK GLASS along with -

HIS SEVERED TONGUE. And his attacker stands over him:

KIYOSHI.

GUARDS ARRIVE. *UNGODLY TONGUELESS SCREAMS* come out of the man as he writhes. The guards see the severed tongue. The glass.

And KIYOSHI. "Helping" the pedophile up now.

GUARD

<What the fuck happened here!?!>

KIYOSHI

<He had glass in his mouth!>

Unsatisfied, the guard turns to another prisoner:

GUARD
<WHAT HAPPENED!?!>

The PRISONER looks at Kiyoshi. Stares at:

A GLIMPSE OF A TATTOO, barely peeking out from under Kiyoshi's sleeve. He knows better than to speak up and -

CRACK! The guard BACKHANDS HIM HARD. That's when the guard catches Nick staring at him, eye contact.

NICK
Nobody saw anything.

GUARD
<You look me in the eye?>

Nick breaks eye contact, looks away. The guard boils:

GUARD (CONT'D)
<You were next to him, you let hide a shiv in his mouth?>
(to all, explodes)
<If he can't eat, none of you eat. Two days, no meals!>
(re: the pedophile)
<Which one's this?>

SECOND GUARD
<1021... serving 2 years for rape.>

GUARD
<Put him in solitary.>

Prisoners glare at Nick as they're forced to file out.

INT. CELL BLOCK - OSAKA PRISON - EVENING

Nick walks in line down the block, hungry prisoners all giving him the evil eye. He notices now just how bony and underfed these men are. And he walks by a familiar sight -

The dead mouse has been *stripped clean of flesh*. Suddenly it clicks. Nick is a marked man. He steals a look back -

Kiyoshi walks several prisoners behind him, apathetic.

INT. PRISON CELL - OSAKA PRISON - SAME

Nighttime. Darkness.

Whispers. Nick flutters awake in the middle of the night. Lying still, he steals a glance toward the door:

KIYOSHI CROUCHES, sliding A FOLDED PAPER under the door. A NOTE. Someone pulls it from the other side. And then -

Footsteps fade away. Kiyoshi moves quietly back to his dirty mat and as he lies down -

HE LOCKS EYES WITH NICK. Each of them caught by the other. A tense moment. Kiyoshi stares, unblinking.

But Nick just rolls back onto his side. No words. Fuck him.

EXT. SEPTIC DITCH - DAY

A pit around a BROKEN SEWER MAIN along a dirty Sakai road. Prisoners shovel mud and shit. Weak. Hungry.

A PRISONER PASSES OUT right next to Nick. No one responds.

A GUARD SMIRKS as he slowly devours a RICE BALL. And the prisoners steal deadly glances at Nick. He ignores them.

LATER

Guards *SHOUT*. End of the work day. The prisoners line up along the ridge overlooking the deep septic pit. Shit and filth teems below, stewing under the sun.

Guards *SHOUT* again. Nick and the others start walking. And -

THUD! Someone SLAMS NICK HARD and he goes off-balance, down the ridge, riding slick mud down to a HARD LANDING in a swirling pool of feces and urine. Human shit in his nostrils.

He looks back up at the ridge -

The prisoners smile down at him, the humiliated outsider. Nick is fury. And he sees the one who pushed him:

A WIRY, BIG-FOREHEADED, COLD-EYED BASTARD.

Guards *SHOUT* at Nick for slipping. He has to bow as he climbs back up, bathed in shit.

Guards *SHOUTING* again. Ordering Nick to the back of line. On his way he passes Kiyoshi. Who doesn't even look Nick in the eyes. An utter lack of respect.

INT. SHOWERS - OSAKA PRISON - DAY

SSSSHH - the SHOWERS run as prisoners herd single file toward them. One by one, they disrobe and toss their clothes in a bin. Then they have just 60 seconds to shower before being ordered ahead so other prisoners can take their turn. Cattle.

NICK's turn to disrobe.

He can see the man who pushed him in the showers ahead. He lowers his head shamefully. Cowardly. But then, as Nick disrobes, we watch HIS HANDS:

He balls up his shirt, caked with shit, clutches it in his fist. Anxious. Anticipating it...

GUARD

Tsugi!

Nick's turn.

SSSSSSSHHHH. Nothing but the sound of the showers now. He steps forward. Heart beating through his chest. A guard sees the shirt in his hand. Yells.

NICK. Ignores the guard, if he can even hear him. Stares at -

THAT FUCKER IN THE SHOWER. Grips the shirt tighter in a fist. Walks past the available shower he was supposed to stop at.

GUARDS SHOUT MADLY -

The asshole turns, sees Nick and -

NICK JUMPS HIM. THROWS THE SHIT-COVERED SHIRT AROUND HIM HARD AND FAST, PULLING IT VIOLENTLY BETWEEN HIS TEETH.

The fucker fights back, kicking, hitting but -

NICK TWISTS HARD WITH THE SHIRT IN ONE HAND, with the other -

HE CLAWS AT THE FUCKER'S EYES. BRUTAL. The guy's punching Nick hard in the head over and over but Nick doesn't even feel it. He just digs his fingers into the guys eyes as -

NICK SHOVES THE SHIT COVERED SHIRT DEEP IN THE GUY'S MOUTH -

GUARDS SWARM HIM. IT TAKES FIVE OF THEM TO PULL HIM OFF.

Everyone stares in shock as the guards drag Nick away, saliva roping from his mouth like a wild dog, bare feet streaking shit across shower floors. His victim bleeding from the eyes.

SSSSSHHHH. Blood snakes toward the shower drains.

INT. CELL BLOCK - OSAKA PRISON - MOMENTS LATER

Guards drag Nick down the block. Prisoners in line for work duty stare as he passes - naked, hands slick with blood.

And Nick is dragged all the way to -

INT. THE PRISON KITCHEN

The prison kitchen is a place of steam, grease and grime. The guards drag Nick past boiling pots and prison cooks, to a large STORE ROOM:

It's empty but for ONE MAN. Standing patiently, like he's been waiting here all day -

THE DEPUTY WARDEN (THE DW). His hair is perfectly slicked across his scalp. Pants creased. Shoulders crisp. As regimented in appearance as he is in life.

The guards force Nick to his knees, stand behind him and shut the door. And then a *long silence*.

The DW studies Nick's face. His bloody hands.

He turns to the HEAD GUARD. They speak for a good 15 seconds. Then the DW turns to Nick and seems to ask a direct question. But we have no clue if Nick understands it, because:

NICK

I don't speak Japanese.

DEPUTY WARDEN

No Japonisu?

Nick shakes his head no. *Silence*. The DW just stares at him. Eyes dissecting. Waiting for something. And then it comes...

THE DOOR OPENS.

GUARDS drag a man in, force the man to his knees beside Nick.

KIYOSHI. And then the guards escort someone else in, on foot:

ANOTHER GUARD. He's terrified. Can't bring his eyes to meet the Deputy Warden's. The DW makes a subtle signal to the head guard. Who steps forward and produces from his jacket pocket:

A HANDWRITTEN NOTE. *The one Kiyoshi slipped under the door.*

The scared guard lowers his head, guilty. The DW smiles.

He looks from the guard to Kiyoshi. Who just stares forward. And then the DW turns to Nick. Signals for the head guard to bring the note *right in front of Nick's face*.

DEPUTY WARDEN
Kore wa nan desu-ka?

Tense now, Nick knows damn well what he's being asked. But -

NICK
...I don't speak Japanese.

Nick stares past the note. The DW turns to his head guard.

Who *SHOUTS* out to the kitchen.

IN THE KITCHEN: A GUARD DIPS A LADLE INTO A BUBBLING OIL POT.

ON NICK. The guard approaches behind him, brings the full, smoking ladle into the store room, careful not to spill. He stands behind Nick. Nick breathes faster. Last chance...

DEPUTY WARDEN
Kore wa nan desu-ka?

Nick stares into the middle distance. Shaking now -

NICK
I don't speak Japanese.

The DW nods and -

SHISSSSSS! BOILING OIL POURS DOWN NICK'S BACK. SKIN BLISTERS AND BLEEDS. NICK *SCREAMS*. The guard stops pouring.

The DW is unaffected. The head guard pulls Nick's hair, forcing him to look at the note. Nick just drools in pain.

DEPUTY WARDEN
...Kore wa nan desu-ka?

Blood runs down Nick's back. In *perfect Japanese* now:

NICK
<*I don't speak Japanese.*>

The DW smiles. He *BARKS AN ORDER*. GUARDS DRAG NICK AWAY.

Kiyoshi watches him go. Can't believe it. His turn now.

CUT TO:

INT. SOLITARY CONFINEMENT - NIGHT

Darkness. Labored breathing. A small door slides open, casting dim light on NICK. The light is blinding to him after days of darkness. He sits weak, pale and wasting away in a solitary cell the size of a small refrigerator.

He's bound tightly by thin ropes. It's hojojutsu - feudal rope bondage. A rope is wrapped cruelly around his neck so that if he were to move even an inch, he'd choke himself.

A guard looks in through the small doorway. Asks something of Nick in Japanese. But Nick just looks down, choosing not to answer.

The door slides shut again, leaving him in dark misery.

CUT TO:

INT. CELL BLOCK - OSAKA PRISON - EVENING

Nick is escorted by two guards down the cell block. Emaciated now, the prisoners on the block look at him differently. They avoid eye contact, in either deference or fear.

INT. PRISON CELL - EVENING

Nick enters his cell. Surprised to find KIYOSHI inside, looking weaker but either his punishment was less harsh or he survived it more admirably. Nick turns to face the guard and -

BOWS DEEPLY, sarcastic exaggeration.

The cell door SHUTS. And Nick sits feebly on his mat. Silence. Nick avoids looking at Kiyoshi out of disgust. The guy owes him and here he sits, just staring at -

THE FOOD SLOT. *The sound of food arriving.* Kiyoshi slides toward the slot on his knees. Opens it. Turns back -

He holds TWO BENTO TRAYS. He hands one to Nick. Nick takes it, confused by the courtesy. And then -

Kiyoshi briefly examines Nick's tray. Nods. Safe to eat. No maggots. Nick nods awkwardly in thanks. And then, starving, he eats. Kiyoshi just watches. His English is surprisingly good but spoken with a strong accent:

KIYOSHI
You speak Japanese?

NICK
(voice raw)
You speak English.

KIYOSHI
The man you fight is out of prison.
In hospital. You make him blind.

Nick seems unaffected. He just goes back to eating. And as he finishes his rice, Kiyoshi slides *his own tray* to Nick.

Nick is taken aback. A small gesture that means everything.

KIYOSHI
This place is hell.

NICK
It's better than out there. 'Least
in my experience. *<Here is good.>*

Kiyoshi quietly lifts his mat. Nick stops eating and stares at what's hidden underneath it: A SMALL KNIFE.

KIYOSHI
The man you fight is out of prison.
(off Nick's confusion)
Prison doctors can not fix bad
things.

NICK
Like knife wounds?

KIYOSHI
Like *seppuku*.

Guards' footsteps. They stare at each other, silent. And as the footsteps *clack*, Kiyoshi demonstrates "seppuku". He mimes slicing across his own abdomen.

There's a desperation in his eyes. A humanness he hasn't shown before. It's *trust*.

CUT TO:

INT. PRISON CELL - NIGHT

The quiet dead of the night. And then a *rustling*. Kiyoshi rouses Nick and Nick sits up, ready.

KIYOSHI
If I cut too deep... cut my throat.

Nick nods. Kiyoshi leans forward -

Wraps his hand behind Nick's head. Forehead to forehead. Nick grabs Kiyoshi's head so that they mirror each other. This is a vow. A bond.

NICK
You're not gonna die.
(an attempt at levity)
Unless you fuck up.

Kiyoshi smirks, lets go of Nick.

Cross-legged, he unbuttons his shirt, peels it off. Through darkness, we barely make out that his back, arms and chest are covered with:

ORNATE YAKUZA TATTOOS. DENSE GREEN AND BLUE. SNAKE SCALES.

Nick stares, curious, as Kiyoshi folds his shirt perfectly, places it beside him and -

He takes THE KNIFE. Holds it in front of his belly. Peaceful. He breathes. Slow in, slow out. And -

HE DRAGS THE KNIFE DEEP ACROSS HIS ABDOMEN -

Kiyoshi starts hyperventilating, his body losing control. Panic sets in. Nick goes alert as Kiyoshi drops the knife. BLOOD RUNNING FAST - *KIYOSHI SPITS WORDS* -

KIYOSHI
<Oh fuck! Fuck!>

Nick moves fast, checking Kiyoshi's slashed open abdomen. Blood gushing out in the black of night but -

NICK
You're okay!

KIYOSHI
<Kill me! Kill me!>

Kiyoshi reaches for the knife but Nick kicks it away and BOLTS to the door - POUNDING at it, SCREAMING -

NICK
TASUKETE!!! TASUKETE!!

Seconds pass, blood pools out under Kiyoshi. He's foaming mad - screaming in Japanese now, ordering Nick to kill him. But -

GUARDS BUST IN, turn on the light - see Kiyoshi bleeding out -

NICK
He fuckin' cut himself!

The guards SHOVE NICK out of the way, GRABBING KIYOSHI - pulling him away, blood streaking -

A guard stays behind - SHOUTS at Nick and Nick does as ordered: he kneels, hands on his knees. And he watches Kiyoshi SCREAM as he's dragged down the cell block.

THE GUARD PICKS UP THE BLOOD-COVERED KNIFE. Looks at Nick's hands: no blood. Innocent. It was *seppuku*.

CUT TO:

INT. PRISON CELL - DAYS LATER - DAWN

SHOUTING. Nick snaps up, alert. Dawn. He's used to the process now, kneels perfectly as the guards shout -

GUARD
<1410! 1487!>

Nick looks lifelike again after weeks of recovery. His new CELLMATE's mat soiled by the fading red-brown stain of blood.

INT. CELL BLOCK - OSAKA PRISON - MOMENTS LATER

Nick walks in line down the cell block. His cellmate watches a MOUSE skitter down the hall. The survivor. Nick ignores it.

EXT. RURAL ROAD - DAY

Nick sweats, shoveling. The prisoners give him a conspicuously wide berth. An exhausted prisoner accidentally tosses part of his shovelful of dirt in Nick's direction.

He bows immediately, overly apologetic. Respect and fear.

GUARDS SHOUT. The prisoners drop shovels. End of the day -

INT. CHANGING ROOM - OSAKA PRISON - DAY

The prisoners dress under the watch of guards. And as Nick pulls his shirt on, a guard arrives from the hall -

GUARD
<1410!>

He waits for Nick to come with him.

INT. THE WARDEN'S OFFICE - DAY

Nick is escorted into a large, pristine office. A man sits behind the expansive desk, looking down at paperwork until a guard stands at attention, *heels clicking quietly* -

THE WARDEN looks up from his desk. Balding, thick glasses. He's paunchy, meek-looking. At odds with the brutality of the world he oversees. He looks at Nick, seems confused, and turns to one of the guards who brought the white man in:

THE WARDEN

<1410?>

GUARD

Hai.

The warden shakes off his confusion, signals, and as the guards step back, Nick sees - against the wall -

THE DEPUTY WARDEN. Humbly, he approaches Nick. Carrying a pile of FRESH CLOTHES. He gently hands the pile to Nick. And before Nick can even process what's going on, the Deputy Warden takes a step back. Stands at attention. And -

HE BOWS. Eyes down, respectful.

He stands back up. Takes a step back, to the wall. And the warden waves his hand, dismissing them all. The guards bow, turn, and escort Nick out. But not before Nick sees a PAPER-WRAPPED GIFT on the Warden's desk, A PLAIN BLACK SILK BOW.

EXT. OSAKA PRISON - DAY

Nick exits the massive, cement block of a prison in a clean pressed shirt and pants. Guards bow and - *K-CHUNK!* - close the door behind him. In front of him -

A PARKED 1953 CHEVY BEL AIR. A sparkling American behemoth.

A YOUNG JAPANESE MAN leans against the car, waiting by the open back door. He wears SUNGLASSES and a suit that costs as much as the car. He just stares at Nick, chewing gum.

Nick approaches tentatively. Sees ANOTHER MAN in the driver's seat. Might as well be this guy's big-boned cousin.

EXT. BLACK MARKET STREET - JUSO, OSAKA - EVENING

The Juso black market is buzzing not with cicadas but with crawling, urban humanity.

Wooden shacks selling everything that isn't strapped down are crammed into the flashing cement city growing around them. The squeak of bicycles and the growl of cars. Kimonos and suits. Electric light everywhere.

Women roam in threes and men prowl in packs of fifteen. Crime and vice meet everyday life. This is the real Osaka.

The Bel Air pulls into a narrow black market street and just stops, idling. Traffic behind it has to wait as -

Pedestrians clear the way, recognizing Nick's escorts as *shatei* (low-level "little brothers"). The *shatei* escort Nick, pressing through people, shacks, alleys. Noise and movement.

A NINETEEN YEAR-OLD HOOKER gives Nick the *I-need-it-now* look - why else would a white guy be here? But he's dragged along -

Toward a WOODEN BUILDING behind it all. Dark in a back alley. They take Nick up stairs on the side of the building. To a second floor entrance -

INT. MATSUOKA FAMILY HEADQUARTERS - MOMENTS LATER

They stop in an ANTEROOM where TWO YAKUZA sit guarding a door, HANDGUNS casually in their laps. The escort in sunglasses turns to Nick.

SUNGLASSES

Kotoba ni kiwotsukero.

NICK

<I don't understand.>

Sunglasses just chews his gum, fixes Nick's lapel like he's an embarrassment. And then he gestures for the guards to get out of the way. He *KNOCKS* on the door -

A voice shouts inside. And he slides the door open -

INT. OFFICE - "THE SMOKE ROOM" - CONTINUOUS

SIX MEN sit around a table. The room is filled with smoke, all of it coming from one man -

AKIHIRO MATSUOKA. Oyabun of the Matsuoka crime family. Late fifties. His eyes are heavy and unflinching. They have seen more death than life and they don't prefer one to the other.

He wears a yukata (cheap cotton kimono). The men around him wear suits, jackets off and sleeves rolled up to fight the humidity. And the man sitting directly next to him has his shirt open to his navel:

KIYOSHI. Bandages across his gut. He smiles slyly at Nick. Akihiro drags his cigarette as the men wait for him to speak.

AKIHIRO
<You speak Japanese?>

NICK
<A little.>

Akihiro looks at one of the men at the table: EIICHI - in his forties, the family's kaikai (accountant). His English is decent and he translates as Akihiro speaks:

EIICHI/AKIHIRO
You are soldier?

NICK
No.

EIICHI/AKIHIRO
Businessman?

NICK
No.

AKIHIRO
<You just come out of your mom's pussy today?>

Eiichi doesn't know how to translate that one. So:

EIICHI
What are you?

NICK
I was a *prisoner* until about two hours ago.

EIICHI/AKIHIRO
Why a prisoner?

NICK
Free food. Free bed.

AKIHIRO
(exhales smoke)
Norainu ka.

EIICHI

He says you are a stray dog. No loyalty.

NICK

Is that a bad thing?

AKIHIRO

(signals Eiichi to stop)
<What's your name?>

NICK

Nick.

Nick sees the typical Japanese confusion at hearing a Western name that ends in a consonant. He repeats it for them:

NICK (CONT'D)

Nikku.

AKIHIRO

<Kiyoshi says you tried to rip a man's eyes out of his head.>

Akihiro can see that Nick is hesitant to speak. He turns to Eiichi, who picks up, deadly serious:

EIICHI

Are you patoriotiku?

NICK

Patriotic?

EIICHI

For Amerika.

NICK

No. If you're talking about Nagasaki or somethin'... like I said, I'm not a soldier.

(beat)

Why?

A voice *GROWLS* from the table. OROCHI - late twenties, sharp and cool. He exudes sex and violence. He's Elvis, if Elvis' first guitar was a .38 revolver.

OROCHI

<Why isn't important, okay buddy?>

Akihiro puts a hand out to silence Orochi. And he answers Nick's question with another question:

AKIHIRO
<Do you need money?>

Nick's hungry, disheveled stare answers for him.

AKIHIRO (CONT'D)
<We have a job that pays 50,000
yen. It's just one day.>

EIICHI
You understand what he say?

NICK
Yes.

He nods to Akihiro. Tries to hide his eagerness but everyone sees it. Eiichi writes on a SMALL SLIP, which he hands to the bigger of the shatei who brought Nick in, the driver - along with an order:

EIICHI
<Bring him back up here tomorrow.>

The shatei lead Nick away. But Orochi calls after them -

OROCHI
<And tell him to take some fucking
Japanese lessons.>

Nick stops on a dime, turns and looks Orochi in the eye. Flawless Japanese. A haiku recitation:

NICK
<O snail - climb Mount Fuji - but
slowly, slowly.>

And he exits with his escorts, leaving Kiyoshi amused.

INT. MATSUOKA GAMBLING HALL - NIGHT

The sound of rough Japanese jazz and humanity grows loud as the shatei walk Nick down steep stairs to -

A GAMBLING ROOM. The place is packed. Degenerate, red-faced gamblers who can't handle their liquor choke on cigar smoke while young girls serve beer and smiles to keep them spending money they don't have. Nick is led to -

THE CASHIER. The big-boned shatei hands over Eiichi's slip and within seconds, the cashier is counting out 25,000 yen.

BIG-BONES

<Stay at the Uma-Raida Inn. If they
make you pay, we'll get the money
back. Understand?>

NICK

What's your name?

Big Bones just stares back, cold. Nick hands him 500 yen.

NICK (CONT'D)

Thanks for picking me up.

BIG-BONES

...Satoru.

NICK

Arigatou, Satoru-san.

Satoru leaves. And Nick turns, pocketing his cash -

THUD! He bumps right into a GIRL that could charge him for the privilege. Twenty years old, jet black hair up to show off a thin neck. Her thick lips done-up red for work and it does work cause they're about all he can look at.

Somehow she doesn't spill her tray, full of bottles -

NICK

Sorry.

HER

American beer? It's one-hundred.

She bites her lip. She knows what she's doing and so does Nick but that's okay.

NICK

I only got big bills.

HER

It's okay.

He takes a beer. Hands her 1,000 yen. Expects change but she takes the money, smiles, turns her ass and walks off.

He watches her go flirt with customers. Somehow it was worth the money. Nick swigs the beer. Tastes like piss. He leaves.

EXT. OSAKA ROAD - DAY

A new summer day. Bicycles everywhere. A SKY BLUE '53 BUICK SUPER pushes through it all.

I/E. '52 BUICK SUPER - SAME

Nick sits in back. Kiyoshi next to him. Mid-conversation.

KIYOSHI

They sell at half cost of our companies and they will not pay us for protection. If it was Japanese company, it would be easy, but Americans are first class citizen in Osaka. You can not touch them if you are Japanese.

NICK

So you just want me to talk to these guys? And say what?

KIYOSHI

Make him understand they cannot sell cheap in Osaka. Or he has to pay us. We fix problems police can not fix. That is yakuza.

NICK

What if he says no?

KIYOSHI

<Talk louder.>

I/E. '53 BUICK SUPER - FACTORY ROW, CITY OUTSKIRTS - LATER

The Super pulls to a stop on a shaded industrial road on the Osaka outskirts, up the Yodo river. Out here, you can hear the cicadas again. Nick looks out, staking out the area.

Time to go but he sees Kiyoshi's bandages. One last question.

NICK

How's your stomach?

Kiyoshi sees a takoyaki cart in the road. Serving up steaming, fried octopus meat for a short line of dock workers.

KIYOSHI

Hungry. <Go.>

Nick climbs out. And the Buick u-turns away.

EXT. FACTORY ROW - CITY OUTSKIRTS - MOMENTS LATER

Nick walks the filthy street. A side of Osaka we haven't seen yet. The industrial docks. Streets filled with trash and sleeping vagrants. Urban poverty. He rounds a corner -

A RIVERSIDE WAREHOUSE ahead. American flag over the entrance.

INT. SHEET METAL WAREHOUSE - DAY

Nick is escorted past sheet metal palettes by an eighteen year-old AMERICAN KID. Eager, happy to see another American.

AMERICAN KID

If you're lookin' for a job he pays
kinda cheap cause the Japs around
here'll work for nuthin', y'know -

NICK

I'm not lookin' for a job.

AMERICAN KID

Oh okay, you got a company or - ?

NICK

I'm here about a contract.

AMERICAN KID

Crazy, man. I got ya.

The kid stops at a door at the back of the warehouse floor. Blinds shut. "A. PANETTI - PRESIDENT". The kid *knocks*.

ANTHONY PANETTI (O.S.)

What?

AMERICAN KID

Mr. Panetti, I got a guy out here
says he's here about a contract?

ANTHONY PANETTI (O.S.)

What fuckin' contract?

AMERICAN KID

I dunno. You wanna see 'im?

ANTHONY PANETTI (O.S.)

No.

NICK

(loud, to the closed door)
You got a Queens accent. You grow
up near Woodside?

Quiet. Then -

ANTHONY PANETTI (O.S.)
Open the door, Robbie.

INT. PANETTI'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

ANTHONY PANETTI is in his mid-thirties. Fat off too much money and too much free time. He studies Nick.

ANTHONY PANETTI
 Elmhurst. Where you from?

JUMP CUT TO:

LATER. At Panetti's desk.

ANTHONY PANETTI
 Look, I'm sure you got respect for these people cause they all wear fuckin' silk pajamas and they bow like you're the fuckin' sun god when they serve you coffee. But frankly, I don't care about their rules or their tradition or whatever the fuck you're here to explain to me.

Nick just stares at this guy. Doesn't like him.

ANTHONY PANETTI (CONT'D)
 We won. What's the point of winning a fuckin' war if you gotta worry about steppin' on every Japs' toes?

NICK
 I wouldn't call 'em *Japs*.

ANTHONY PANETTI
 Oh, you're one a *those*.

NICK
 One a *what*?

ANTHONY PANETTI
 Look. I got a deal. The United States Army - your country's army - gives me metal at two cents a cubic yard. They got that metal from breaking down the war machines these fuckers built to *sneak attack* us. Excuse me if the Japs gotta buy that metal back from me for *cheap*.

(MORE)

ANTHONY PANETTI (CONT'D)
I don't know if you fucked some
slanty-eyed girl and now you're
turnin' Japanese or what, but
that's the way it is.

NICK
That's the way it is?

Panetti glares back. Square-jawed. Big tough guy.

NICK (CONT'D)
A *slanty-eyed* guy got me out of
jail.

ANTHONY PANETTI
Yeah, well you're stupid for
gettin' your ass in jail. What'd
you do, steal a fuckin' tuna fish?

NICK
Nah, I broke a typewriter.

ANTHONY PANETTI
A *typewriter*?

CRACK! Nick SLAMS Panetti's face to the desk -
PICKS UP PANETTI'S THIRTY POUND TYPEWRITER and -
HAMMERS it down on Panetti's cheek bone -
SLAM! AGAIN he brings the typewriter down - keys bust off -

NICK
You okay? Can you hear me alright?
Panetti groans, bloody. Jaw broken.

NICK (CONT'D)
You know my name? You know me?
Panetti shakes his head no.

NICK (CONT'D)
Cause I know who you are, Tony. I
know where you work every day. You
said you grew up in Elmhurst? I got
friends there too. These *slanty-*
eyed cops can't arrest someone if
they don't know who they are or
where to find them. And they don't
arrest a white man unless he does
something really bad. You still
hear me okay?

Panetti nods.

NICK (CONT'D)

Now when my friends come here and ask you to pay them what you owe them - and I know you can afford it you fat, rich motherfucker - you can go ahead and call the cops on them. But I'll still be out there. And you'll have a new typewriter.

Nick fishes out Panetti's wallet. Takes all his cash. And he leaves Panetti there bleeding as he walks out.

EXT. FACTORY ROW - CITY OUTSKIRTS - DAY

Adrenaline pumping, Nick hands Panetti's cash to one of the vagrants on the curb. And he rounds the dusty corner to -

THE BUICK SUPER. Kiyoshi watches Nick storm towards the car. The same rage he had in prison. Nick climbs in. Breath short, wiping blood on his shirt. Sees Kiyoshi staring at him.

NICK

I had to talk loud.

CUT TO:

EXT. CROWDED STREET - MINAMI, OSAKA - NIGHT

Nick and Kiyoshi walk a crowded Minami sidewalk at night. Lights sell sex and drinks and Kiyoshi walks Nick down a flight of stairs, music growling, to a basement club -

INT. "RED BAR" - ROCK CLUB - CONTINUOUS

AMERICAN ROCK MUSIC - Bill Haley's *CRAZY MAN*, *CRAZY* - blasts on a record player. It's deafening and Kiyoshi gets gin drinks for him and Nick.

Nothing but Japanese faces and they're all dressed like extras in *Rebel Without A Cause*, dancing to music that came out in the US less than a year ago. Culture clash.

Nick and Kiyoshi have to shout to hear each other.

NICK

(pulling out cash re: gin)
How much?

KIYOSHI
Akihiro owns this place.

NICK
That's your boss? Akihiro?

KIYOSHI
Akihiro Matsuoka. He's been yakuza for forty years. Killed fifteen people. He owns this street to the Yodogawa. The rest belongs to Seizu family. Enemy yakuza. Drink.

Nick downs his entire glass.

KIYOSHI (CONT'D)
You fucked up today. <"Violence only when necessary."> The 5th rule.

NICK
No one told me any rules.

KIYOSHI
You're gaijin. *Outsider*. The rules are not for you.

NICK
Then it doesn't matter what I do.
(off Kiyoshi's look)
That guy was gaijin too. He shoulda known better. He grew up in Queens.

Kiyoshi finishes his drink. Gets them another round.

EXT. MATSUOKA FAMILY HEADQUARTERS - NIGHT

DOCK WORKER
Matsuoka-san! *MATSUOKA-SAN!*

A DRUNK DOCK WORKER in dirty coveralls pounds on the door to the Matsuoka family headquarters, it isn't long before -

TAKESHI emerges, furious - he's one of Akihiro's *kyodai* ("big brother"), a "made man", and we recognize him from Matsuoka's table last night. A shark in a checkered coat and gold watch.

No words. Takeshi just grabs the dock worker by his hair and starts dragging him down the stairs.

DOCK WORKER
<I have to see Akihiro!>

TAKESHI
 <It's Matsuoka-san, asshole! Have
 some respect ->

DOCK WORKER
 <Fuck you kid, I've known him for
 thirty years!>

THUD! Takeshi shoves the worker and he falls in the dirt.

DOCK WORKER (CONT'D)
 <I lost my job today! Some gaijin
 comes in and beats the shit out of
 my boss and now I don't have a job!
 Akihiro has to do something!>

Takeshi stops on the stairs.

TAKESHI
 <What *gaijin*?>

EXT. STREET - MINAMI, OSAKA - NIGHT

OROCHI, TAKESHI, SATORU and four other SHATEI walk through the Minami alleys like jackals. Ready to kick ass, moving fast, with purpose. No one gets in the way.

INT. "RED BAR" - CONTINUOUS

Their power is terrifying as they enter RED BAR: PEOPLE CLEAR THE DANCEFLOOR as the SEVEN YAKUZA cross the room to NICK AND KIYOSHI AT THE BAR, looking *mean*, music still blaring -

KIYOSHI
 <What's this?>

Orochi stares down Kiyoshi, gives no explanation.

TAKESHI
 <Akihiro sent us. For him.>

KIYOSHI
 <Then I'm coming with you.>

OROCHI
 <Be my guest.>

Kiyoshi steps aside, guilty conscience. Satoru smirks at Nick. And ALL SEVEN DRAG NICK OUT, bar patrons staring.

EXT. STREET - MINAMI, OSAKA - NIGHT

They drag Nick across the street - cars braking hard, people practically running out of the way. Nick knows better than to fight back, but we can see him thinking through an escape.

They drag him toward a doorway. Flashing lights. ADS FOR LIVE NUDE DANCING plastered all over the place. They pull him in -

INT. A STRIP CLUB - CONTINUOUS

Strip club patrons stare - the DANCERS just keep dancing - as SEVEN YAKUZA drag a white man into the place and SLAM HIM DOWN IN A CHAIR, right in front of the stage. Takeshi turns to a cocktail waitress.

TAKESHI

<Get him a drink. GO!>

Nick looks up at Takeshi. Confused. Takeshi talks to Kiyoshi:

TAKESHI

<The fat American laid off all his workers. Akihiro's offering them jobs on our docks in exchange for 30% of their first year pay. They say the guy's gonna put his entire warehouse up for rent.>

Nick is lost, didn't understand half the words.

OROCHI

You did okay, white man. <Relax.>

TAKESHI

<Look at some tits.>

Kiyoshi relaxes, the fight leaves his tense shoulders. And the yakuza call out orders for drinks. They take seats around the two mostly-nude CHINESE GIRLS on stage.

JUMP CUT TO:

SIX DRINKS LATER. Nick is less drunk than the others. They have a table by the stage now. Satoru drunkenly flirts with their hostess, who's having none of it.

Nick has been relegated to the edge of the table. No one talking to him. Everyone speaking Japanese, cracking each other up. Until one of them has a serious observation.

A MATSUOKA SHATEI

<Look at this.>

The yakuza all look across the club as EIGHT MEN WALK IN.
Yakuza with their bow-legged strut and tailored suits.

SATORU

<Seizu.>

OROCHI

<Hey.>

The stripper near Orochi looks over as he pulls out 20,000 YEN and tosses it on the stage.

OROCHI

(re: the Seizu yakuza)

<Ignore them.>

The Seizu sit at a table, see the Matsuokas across the stage from them and put on tough faces.

The Chinese girls put more filth in their act, right in front of Orochi. But he isn't even looking at them. He's staring at the Seizu. A look that says *I OWN YOU*.

The senior SEIZU KYODAI (30) - gray sharkskin suit and a ratpack toothpick - looks at a dancer and -

HE WHISTLES. She turns, sees the 40,000 yen in his hand. And she approaches him as he tosses it on stage. Takeshi boils.

TAKESHI

(to Kiyoshi)

<This is our district.>

KIYOSHI

<But it isn't our *club*. We don't own this place.>

OROCHI

<*We do tonight*. Hey, China girl.>

Orochi throws even more money on stage. A Chinese girl turns back. It's monkey in the middle. Satoru gets involved, holding out cash for one of the girls as she rubs her nipple against his sweaty, chubby face. Satoru glares at the Seizu.

But the Seizu have had enough. They stand, straighten their jackets as they walk around the stage - to the Matsuokas -

The KYODAI looks down at Nick. Smirks.

SEIZU KYODAI

<What's this?>

KIYOSHI
<Get out of our *shiba*.>

SEIZU KYODAI
<You expect me to take you
seriously with this little white
kitten at your table?>

The kyodai pats Nick on the head.

OROCHI
<Why don't you take him with you?>

Nick bottles fury and sips his vodka.

SEIZU KYODAI
<You trained her to drink vodka!
Nah, you keep her. Considering you
bring in half the money we do, you
might wanna save it. Take this,
stick to drinks tonight.>

The kyodai drops cash on the table. The Matsuokas are quiet.
And the kyodai turns to go. As he does, he pats Nick on the
head again, spilling vodka down Nick's chin and -

SMASH!

NICK SLAMS HIS GLASS INTO THE KYODAI'S FACE - GLASS SHATTERS -
HE HAMMERS HIS FISTS INTO THE GUY -

The Seizu GRAB NICK - the Matsuokas leap up - PUNCHES FLY -
dancers *scream* - Nick takes a glass to the back of the head -

He falls to his knees, bleeding badly and -

K-CLICK - A GUN AT THE BACK OF HIS HEAD but -

K-CLICK - OROCHI has a gun at the Seizu kyodai's forehead.

A STANDOFF. Orochi looks like he actually *wants* to pull the
trigger. The kyodai signals his men to back down. They do,
lowering guns and stepping back. But that isn't enough:

OROCHI
<Run back to your *shiba*.>

The kyodai nods to his men to go. He's on his knees,
bleeding, face gashed. His men resentfully back out. Finally,
Orochi laughs. Looks at Nick as Kiyoshi helps him up.

OROCHI
Holy shit, white boy! <You're
bleeding. You wanna hit him again?>

Nick doesn't move. Orochi still has the gun on the kyodai.

OROCHI (CONT'D)
<Don't be scared.>

Nick doesn't want to do it but Orochi has a gun and he's clearly fucking nuts so... Nick stands over the Kyodai and -

CRACK! It hurts Nick's knuckles. Orochi watches the kyodai go face down on filthy strip club carpet.

OROCHI
<Never let anyone humiliate you.>
(to Takeshi)
<Give me 20,000.>

Takeshi does. Orochi tosses it at the dancers onstage, one of whom is crying. And he heads out, everyone else follows.

INT. BEDROOM - UMA-RAIDA INN - DAWN

Nick wakes up hungover, head hurting, lip scabbed. He stands at the window and looks out over Juso. Different at dawn. Peaceful. Old women shopping. Men going to work.

The sun slowly rises.

INT. SHOKUDO - NOODLE HOUSE - MORNING

Nick sits at a small *taishu shokudo* - the cheapest breakfast you can get in Osaka. Steam, noodles and quiet working class Japanese men in bargain suits.

The server quickly brings Nick a hot bowl of soba, briefly glancing at the wounds on Nick's face. Doesn't want trouble.

Nick starts to eat his soba American-style: rolling up the noodles around his chopsticks, biting into it. But he hears the *slurps* - the Japanese men are all sucking up the stuff in long strands. Nick's sick of standing out.

So he emulates them. *Slurping*. Just another man at the bar now. As he eats, something stops him.

Down the bar, *SHE SITS DOWN* alone. *THE GIRL* from the gambling room. The one who extorted a thousand yen from him.

No makeup and tired, she looks even more beautiful. Nick watches as the server brings her soba. The men glance at her - this is a *man's place* - but she ignores it. Slurping. Hungry. Fighting a hangover. Nick watches her. Fuck it.

He gets up. Walks over. Sits next to her.

NICK
Konnichiwa.
(she ignores him)
<What's your name?>

HER
I'm tired, leave me alone.

NICK
Is that a family name?

She just slurps her soba. Almost finished already.

NICK (CONT'D)
Does it mean cherry blossom or
somethin'?

HER
Why do you want my name?

NICK
I dunno, it's just usually, when
someone fucks me, I like to get
their name first.

She is grotesquely offended.

HER
I'm not going to *fuck you*.

NICK
No you *did* fuck me. You took a
thousand yen from me the other
night. I just thought it would be
polite if you told me your name
cause I'm still a little raw. You
know I been walking funny.

She studies him a moment. Likes something about him.

HER
Miyu.

NICK
What?

MIYU
(points at her, then him)
Me... you. Is my name.

NICK
But your last name's "Leave me
alone"?

MIYU
No.

NICK
No? Not leave you alone?

MIYU
No, not "leave me alone".

She pays, gets up. So does he.

NICK
Okay I won't.

He follows her out. To the -

EXT. MARKET - JUSO - CONTINUOUS

NICK (CONT'D)
You gettin' off work?

His act is boyish but she likes it. Utterly American.

MIYU
I'm going home.

NICK
Where's that?

MIYU
I know who you are.

NICK
Yeah?

MIYU
Nikku. You all have the same names.
Nick, John, Butch.

NICK
Butch? You watch too many movies.

MIYU
Maybe.

NICK

You wanna see one? They got one called *The Big Heat* showing here. I heard Glenn Ford plays "Butch".

She collects her bicycle. Hikes up her skirt away from the bike chain, gets on the seat. She catches Nick looking.

MIYU

I don't like *American* movies.

She rides away smirking, Nick just watches.

INT. MATSUOKA FAMILY HEADQUARTERS - NIGHT

OROCHI. KIYOSHI. EIICHI. TAKESHI. AKIHIRO. And RYO - mid-thirties, sharp and measured in everything. We've seen him before, but this is the first time we've heard him speak. He's the family's *saiko komon*, Akihiro's main advisor.

RYO

<I think it's best to retain his services. Give him an apartment. Pay him a salary.>

OROCHI

<He's a fucking gaijin.>

RYO

<That's why he's useful.>

OROCHI

<Shit's useful as a fertilizer but you don't keep it in your house.>

AKIHIRO

(to Kiyoshi)

<Do you trust him?>

KIYOSHI

<Yes.>

AKIHIRO

<If he embarrasses us, you take full responsibility?>

The words sit with Kiyoshi. Orochi glares at him, hoping Kiyoshi does the smart thing but... Kiyoshi nods. Accepts it.

AKIHIRO

<Give him a salary.>

(beat)

<Anything else to discuss?>

TAKESHI

<The judge from Kishiwada.>

AN IMAGE: A PALATIAL ESTATE AT DAWN. A PREFECTURAL JUDGE (60) adorned in a kimono is escorted by a beautiful 20 YEAR-OLD MISTRESS down the many stone steps from his hillside home.

TAKESHI (CONT'D)

<He took a 500,000 bribe from us but he *still* sentenced Kiyoshi to three years. He's officially retired now. Which means we can do something about it.>

Akihiro listens. He lights a cigarette. Burns his fingers.

KIYOSHI

<So we humiliate him. Let all his government friends know he took dirty money.>

AN IMAGE: THE JUDGE leads his mistress to a waiting rickshaw.

OROCHI

<He fucks his mistress at his own estate and then has his wife's escort take her home. He doesn't care about humiliation.>

KIYOSHI

<What then?>

TAKESHI

<He just bought ten Kobe cows at 400,000 a head. He wants to breed them. They're his little *retirement prize*.>

AKIHIRO

<Where are they?>

TAKESHI

<Kobe. But he probably wants them sent to Kishiwada now that they're all paid for.>

RYO

(adamant, to Akihiro)

<Revenge is a waste of your time.>

AKIHIRO

(to Orochi)

<Do it. I want you and Kiyoshi. Take who you want.>

Neither man wants to work with the other and Akihiro knows it. But that's how he solves problems. Trial by fire.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - JUSO - EVENING

A shatei leads Nick up a stairwell to -

HIS NEW APARTMENT. Lights off. The place overlooks an alley lined with bars and gambling dens. Above it all, the developing Osaka skyline. The shatei flicks the lights on, revealing a cheap furnished apartment. But -

NICK
Nah, turn it off.

The shatei flicks the lights back off and leaves. Nick stands alone in the dark. Takes in the view. Osaka. *His* city.

CUT TO:

INT. TAILOR - NIGHT

A TAILOR finishes fitting Nick in a suit. Nick checks himself in the mirror. He looks dangerous.

EXT. COVERED ARCADE - JUSO, OSAKA - MOMENTS LATER

Kiyoshi pays the tailor and they exit onto one of Juso's busy, covered arcades.

NICK
You didn't hafta pay for this.

KIYOSHI
<Don't speak English to me in public.>
(off Nick's surprise)
<You wanna be a *little white kitten* or a big bad wolf?>

Nick sees the everyday citizens. Heads down. Timid. He walks with purpose now. All work and no play.

INT. "RED BAR" - LATER

A corner booth at Red Bar. Nick and Kiyoshi sit down across from Orochi and a fearless nineteen year-old shatei.

KIYOSHI
 (to Nick)
 <You know Orochi. This is ->

BANJO
 Banjo.

NICK
Banjo?

Banjo just glares back. Sees no humor in his nickname.

NICK
 <How old are you?>

BANJO
 <Old enough. I fucked fourteen girls if you're wondering.>

OROCHI
 (re: Nick)
 <He's gonna stop a train?>

KIYOSHI
 <They won't kill an American.>

OROCHI
 <I would.>
 (beat)
 <At 7 A.M. they'll be alert.>

KIYOSHI
 <He won't even need a gun.>

CUT TO:

EXT. THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE - MORNING

Tall grass for miles. Train tracks. *Kansai cicadas*. A deserted dirt road runs along the forest beyond the tracks.

A train approaches.

I/E. LOCOMOTIVE - SAME

The CONDUCTOR and RAIL GUARD, both in their forties, watch the forest roll by as the train chugs along loudly. But then the conductor sees something as the train rounds the bend -

ON THE TRACKS: A PERSON. WAVING A COAT.

The guard pulls a SHOTGUN from a rack in the cab as the conductor slows the train. He's already sweating, anxious.

RAIL GUARD

<It's chinpira. Keep going. He'll
move or get run over.>

The guard hangs out the window, he watches the treeline for an ambush. But the conductor squints as the figure on the tracks gets closer. There's blood. A white man.

CONDUCTOR

<No. It's an American. His leg's
all fucked up.>

The guard relaxes as the train slows and SCREECHES TO A STOP. Steam groans out.

A CAR FULL OF CATTLE LURCHES. The cows complain.

EXT. THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE - SAME

Nick lays on the tracks. His pant leg swathed in blood.

NICK

Hey! I need a fuckin' doctor!

The conductor and guard hop down and approach Nick. Seeing the massive amount of blood, they hurry to help.

They pick him up, shotgun lowered, supporting his weight across their shoulders when, from out of the tall grass -

OROCHI, KIYOSHI and BANJO approach - HANDGUNS COCKED.

I/E. CATTLE CAR - LATER

Tied up, the conductor and guard watch Nick standing on his perfectly good leg, resenting this foreigner as he and the yakuza push cattle out of the railcar, into the back of -

A TRUCK.

BANJO aims his gun at the guard. Nervous with all that power.

INT. THE TRUCK - MOVING - LATER

The cows groan in the dark of the moving, rumbling truck.

EXT. THE JUDGE'S ESTATE - EVENING

The judge arrives home at dusk. He places a candy on his mistress' tongue as they ascend the stone steps. A gift waits for him at his doorstep. A HEAVY COTTON SACK.

The bottom of the sack is soaked with blood.

CUT TO:

EXT. BLACK MARKET - JUSO, OSAKA - MORNING

SLABS OF RAW KOBE BEEF being sold at a cut rate at the Juso market. People line up for the deal.

EXT. SHITENNOJI BUDDHIST TEMPLE - DAY

Akihiro drops coins into the slatted offering box at Shitennoji temple. He claps his hands twice. And prays.

Finished, he descends the temple steps to where his lieutenants wait for him - Eiichi, Ryo, Kiyoshi, Orochi, Takeshi. They all walk back across the temple grounds.

AKIHIRO

<I paid Buddha. Pay them.>

Eiichi hands thick envelopes to Takeshi, Orochi and Kiyoshi. Takeshi is impressed by the amount of cash.

AKIHIRO (CONT'D)

<Go get drunk.>

INT. CUBAN BAR - NIGHT

50'S MAMBO CRAZE MUSIC. Nick and Kiyoshi at the bar - the bartender pours two drinks. And Kiyoshi slaps A STACK OF CASH on the bar, slips a bill off it to pay the bartender -

KIYOSHI

<It's on him.>

(to Nick, re: cash)

<It's yours. For the train.>

Nick looks across the room at Orochi, Takeshi and several lower-level guys taking up tables in a private section.

NICK

<I'll get their drinks.>

KIYOSHI
<No. Stay here.>

Kiyoshi says it firmly, a warning. And Nick understands why:

NICK
(re: Orochi)
He doesn't trust me.

KIYOSHI
<He doesn't have to. You aren't
part of his family.>
(a consolation)
<Akihiro trusts you.>

NICK
<Only because he trusts you.>

KIYOSHI
<You aren't yakuza.>

Nick sees the TV behind the bar. A "PRO" WRESTLING MATCH:

RIKIDOZAN, the legendary Japanese wrestler, fights a GIANT AMERICAN. One of Rikidozan's nationalist bouts. America as the enemy. Kiyoshi can see Nick is getting lost in it.

NICK
<...stray dog.>

KIYOSHI
Dogs can be trained.

MEANWHILE: ACROSS THE BAR, AT A TABLE IN THE PRIVATE SECTION:

TAKESHI
<Miyu's here.>

Orochi turns to see what Takeshi sees. Sure enough, Miyu crosses the dancefloor. All dolled up. Buzzed. She *is* sex. The possibility of it. The smell and taste of it.

TAKESHI
<I'd kill my mother for that.>

OROCHI
<I'd kill you.>

He stares Takeshi down. And then his eyes devour Miyu, a history of desire in his stare. He sees other men looking at her. And he turns to Satoru - distracted at the next table:

OROCHI
<Tell Kiyoshi his sister's here.>

THE DANCEFLOOR

Miyu drips sweat, dancing to Cuban heat. She keeps her body to herself and her drunk dance partner tries to keep up.

KIYOSHI

<Excuse me.>

Suddenly Kiyoshi is pulling her off the dancefloor - her partner starts to protest but Kiyoshi is not someone to fuck with. She stumbles as he pulls her all the way to the dark of the bathroom alcove. They're alone.

KIYOSHI

<What are you doing?>

MIYU

<Let go of my arm.>

KIYOSHI

<You *know* what kind of bar this is.>

MIYU

<What kind of bar is this?>

KIYOSHI

<You aren't stupid.>

As if on cue, they notice the COUPLE standing a little deeper in the dark of the alcove, the woman with her hips pressed against the man, drunk, her neck craned. It's a *pick-up bar*.

KIYOSHI (CONT'D)

<You can do what you want but don't come here drunk. You know what guys do with drunk girls.>

MIYU

<I know what *drunk girls* do with *guys*.>

(off his look)

<I came for the *music*.>

KIYOSHI

<That's not what they came for.>

MIYU

<Aren't these your friends?>

KIYOSHI

<I'm not worried about my *friends*.>

Orochi watches from afar like a hungry coyote, unnoticed.

MIYU
 <If you want me to leave, I'll just
 go to a bar in Seizu shiba.>

And Kiyoshi EXPLODES, grabs her roughly -

KIYOSHI
 <C'mere.>

Furious, he marches her all the way to the bar. To Nick:

KIYOSHI (CONT'D)
 <You want something to do? Take my
 sister home. She's drunk.>

MIYU
 <I'm not drunk.>

NICK
 You want me to *take her home*?

She eyes Nick. Smirking. Kiyoshi catches it.

KIYOSHI
 <You know each other?>

MIYU
 I never met him before in my life.

She stares deep into Nick's eyes. Nick can't figure her out.

KIYOSHI
 <He's taking you home.> She lives
 in Asahi. I owe you.

Kiyoshi means it. Nick says nothing. He looks at -

I/E. TROLLEY CAR - MOVING - NIGHT

Miyu holds a rail for support in a rumbling trolley car. She looks up at Nick. Alcohol behind her eyes. The kind of drunk where just about anything could set her off laughing.

MIYU
 You got a suit.

NICK
 Is that funny?

MIYU
 Yes.

They're the only ones talking on the trolley. The everyday citizens judge them quietly for standing too close. Inappropriate behavior and it's a Monday night.

MIYU (CONT'D)
It fits well.

NICK
Your *brother* chose it.

MIYU
Is that a problem? Who my brother is?

NICK
Why would it be a problem?

She shrugs. Straightens the strap on her shoulder.

And they ride in silence.

LATER

The trolley rolls to a stop. *Ding ding!*

MIYU
This is my stop.

Nick nods. She walks toward the exit. But as she gets a couple feet away, she tugs Nick by the hand.

MIYU (CONT'D)
It's a dangerous neighborhood.

EXT. STREET - ASAHI-KU - NIGHT

It's the opposite of a dangerous neighborhood. Asahi-ku is picturesque along the Yodo river. No one on the street.

Nick walks Miyu through a small garden to her place. A small, traditional guest house - more typical of Kyoto than Osaka.

She stops at the door.

MIYU
You're drunk.

NICK
So are you.

She shakes her head no. A sly smile.

MIYU

I'm a good actor. People say I
watch too many movies.

NICK

American movies?

MIYU

Sometimes.

She steps inside. Slowly slides her shoes off. Starts to
close the door. He stops it. She looks in his eyes.

And pulls him toward her. They kiss hard.

She pulls at his shirt. He lifts her dress and they move
through the dark of her house, until she falls back against
something - a bed or a couch, too dark to tell, but it works.

She tastes the liquor on him as he grabs the back of her
thigh and she grips him by the neck -

And he's inside her now. They slow down a moment, realizing
what this is. Dangerous. But that's what makes it good.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - MIYU'S HOUSE - MORNING

Bright sun. Nick wakes up a mess. He's naked next to Miyu.
She's asleep. And he looks at her naked back:

COVERED IN TATTOOS. Dark flowers twist from the nape of her
neck to the small of her back. Nick stares like he's been let
in on a secret. And then he sees HER SCAR:

A BURN that snakes down her back, masked by the tattoos. She
moves. He drops the sheet. She turns and looks him in the
eyes. Sleepy:

MIYU

You move in your sleep. You make
fists.

NICK

I get in a lot of fights.
(beat)
You watched me sleep?

MIYU

No. *You* watched *me*.

He looks in her eyes, the sun lighting them up. Somehow he feels exposed, transparent.

MIYU (CONT'D)
My brother's going to kill you.

EXT. STREET - ASAHI-KU - MORNING

Nick leaves her home in the harsh light of day. Looks around anxious like someone might be watching. Guilty.

INT. MATSUOKA GAMBLING HALL - MORNING

KIYOSHI listens as Orochi speaks. The lieutenants sit in the dim, empty gambling club. Glasses and beers strewn about from last night. Akihiro presides. Mid-plan:

OROCHI
<The company's insured, so we won't lose face with them.>

RYO
<What about the driver?>

OROCHI
<He tells the company he lost the shipment, he loses his job, and we pay him a year's salary. For a truck driver, that doesn't even dent the 22 million we'll make.>

Akihiro looks to Eiichi. Eiichi nods. Orochi's right.

AKIHIRO
<Where do we get the truck?>

OROCHI
(hesitates)
<Nanko.>

RYO
<That's *Seizu* territory.>

OROCHI
<It's a lot of fuckin' money.>

RYO
<Dead people don't need money.>

Quiet. The lieutenants wait for Akihiro to decide.

AKIHIRO
 (to Orochi, firm)
 <No. Find something else.>

Orochi stares at Akihiro. Fuming.

AKIHIRO (CONT'D)
 <Is that a problem??>

OROCHI
 <No.>

AKIHIRO
 <Find a way to do it outside Seizu
 shiba or forget it. Get out of
 here.>

The lieutenants stand and bow to Akihiro. Orochi is last.

INT. NICK'S APARTMENT BUILDING - MORNING

Still anxious, Nick comes up the stairs in his rumpled suit. Disheveled, his tie in his hand. Something stops him:

A WHITE CAT stalks along the hall. It looks lost, confused. A *phone rings*. Nick opens his door, wary of the cat and -

INT. NICK'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

He picks up the ringing phone:

NICK
 Moshi.

KIYOSHI
 <Put your suit on.>

Nick looks down at his messy suit and -

EXT. STREET - MINAMI, OSAKA - NIGHT

He follows Kiyoshi through the streets of Minami. Flashing lights and pedestrians in the way of growling cars. Nick is distracted, still guilty, he keeps looking at Kiyoshi and -

KIYOSHI
 <You're thinking about something.>

Nick looks like he's been caught but before he can respond -

KIYOSHI (CONT'D)

<Don't.>

(beat)

<You're a warrior. Out here, you can't care about anything because everywhere you go, *they* see your face. Look at me.>

Kiyoshi's face is pure inhuman apathy. Nick stares at him and slowly relaxes. Lets go of his guilt. It makes him look *cold*.

KIYOSHI (CONT'D)

<You want the others to trust you like I trust you?>

NICK

<Yes.>

KIYOSHI

<Then I have to teach you.>

He walks, Nick follows. They walk into a THEATER. Ignoring the VELVET ROPE across the entrance.

INT. KABUKI THEATER - SAME

A KABUKI ACTRESS and ACTOR act out the final scene in a traditional shinjuu ("double suicide") play. Gripping each other under a single spotlight.

The actors/lovers plunge their knives into each other. The spotlight overhead goes instantly red and a cloth is drawn out under them by unseen strings pulled by unseen stage hands. The cloth spreads in crimson folds, overtaking the stage as the actors collapse in each other's arms.

After a devastating silence, the audience applauds.

INT. THEATER BOX OFFICE - LATER

The theater manager pulls all the cash out of the theater's cash box. He hands stack after stack to Kiyoshi. Nick just watches like a good apprentice. And as the manager hands over the last of his cash, he bows reverently to Kiyoshi. Kiyoshi nods his thanks. And Nick follows him out to -

INT. THE HALL - CONTINUOUS

Kiyoshi walks, counting cash, pulling off just about HALF THE STACK. Nick follows alongside him, surprised when Kiyoshi suddenly turns off the hall and into -

INT. A DRESSING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The actress from the play wipes away her makeup.

KIYOSHI
<Miss... you were beautiful.>

He lowers his eyes, bows as he hands a STACK OF CASH to her. She blushes. And he bows again, hands her ANOTHER STACK.

KIYOSHI (CONT'D)
<And for your co-stars.>

As he comes out of his bow this time, he keeps his eyes on hers. There's sex in the look and she knows it. She smiles.

ACTRESS
<I'm blushing.>

Kiyoshi turns to leave, taking Nick with him.

EXT. STREET - MINAMI, OSAKA - LATER

A street vendor serves Nick and Kiyoshi beer and takoyaki. They speak English to keep the conversation private.

NICK
First you steal all their cash,
then you give it back to them.

KIYOSHI
A kabuki producer comes to me. He needs money to put on a play. He says the city won't give him a permit. So I give him money. I pay the cops to ignore the permit and he puts the play on in our shiba. <In return, he gives me ticket sales every Friday night.>

NICK
But you throw the money away.

KIYOSHI
I give it to the actors. They're poor. The audience is rich. Every night, they cross the street to our bars. <And the bars jack up the prices so they feel more at home.>

Orochi nods toward the RESTAURANT-BAR just beyond the cart. Wealthy couples walking in.

KIYOSHI (CONT'D)
You see the plant in the window?

THE BAR'S ENTRANCE: A CURIOUS PLANT sits in the display window. BAMBOO AND PINE SPRIGS wrapped together.

NICK
Yeah.

KIYOSHI
It's called *kadomatsu*. Decoration plant. It means we protect them. They pay 5,000 yen every two weeks to rent the plant from us.

NICK
Jesus Christ. For that thing?

KIYOSHI
<Thugs steal money. Yakuza make it out of thin air.>
(beat)
<Look at that.>

A movie theater. Dozens of people lined up to buy tickets. Toshiro Mifune holds a sword on the POSTER FOR -

NICK
(translating for himself)
Seven Samurai?

KIYOSHI (CONT'D)
<They call that a samurai? Fuck that. We're samurai. For the past 200 years, the only people this country could call real warriors have called themselves yakuza. Why do you think we lost the war? The yakuza were too busy making money to put on uniforms and get shot at by American teenagers. The real battle's here.>
(beat)
This is our shiba. Our territory. We are the crime and the justice. If another family comes into our shiba, it is a country starting a war.
(beat)
You understand?

Nick sees the intent look on Kiyoshi's face and knows enough to read into it. He repeats Kiyoshi's line back to him:

NICK
<You're thinking about something.>

KIYOSHI
(hesitates)
Akihiro turned down 22 million yen today. Because we have to go into Seizu shiba to get it. It would start a war if a *yakuza* went.

NICK
...but I'm not *yakuza*.

KIYOSHI
If you want them to trust you, bring them 22 *million yen*.

Nick smiles. But Kiyoshi's face is stern, forbidding.

KIYOSHI (CONT'D)
Think about it. It's your choice. You can always start small.
(hands Nick half the cash)
Give that to Akihiro tomorrow. Wrap it in paper with a black bow.

NICK
It's your money.

KIYOSHI
It's okay...

Kiyoshi eats a takoyaki ball. Dry:

KIYOSHI
<I get to fuck an actress tonight.>

Nick sees the kabuki actress exiting the theater across the street. So he finishes his beer. Smiles at Kiyoshi and pats him on the shoulder before he goes, pocketing the cash.

CUT TO:

INT. OKONOMIYAKI RESTAURANT - MORNING

An okonomiyaki restaurant has closed its upper floor in deference to the *yakuza*: Orochi, Eiichi and Banjo sit across from Nick and Kiyoshi. Half-drunk beers on the table.

NICK
<I want to do it.>

OROCHI
 (suspicious)
 <Why?>

NICK
 <22 million yen.>

OROCHI
 <You aren't yakuza, but if the
 Seizu catch you, they'll cut your
 dick off and feed it to you.>

The WAITRESS arrives with okonomiyaki, all crisscrossed with ketchup and mayonnaise. Dead silence until she leaves.

KIYOSHI
 (to Nick)
 <He's right.>

OROCHI
 <I thought you *trusted* him.>

Orochi smiles cruelly at Nick. *Like he knows about Miyu.* But Nick just stares back at him, fight in his eyes.

NICK
 <I'm not scared of anything.>

Orochi grinds out his cigarette. Looks at Eiichi:

OROCHI
 <Tell him.>

EIICHI
 <You get there at 3 A.M. The driver
 will be there, he'll help you move
 everything from his truck to yours.
 It's heavy, 400 kilos of guns.>

NICK
Guns?

EIICHI
 <You aren't scared of anything?>
 (off Nick's glare)
 <We'll put the cash for the driver
 in your seats. If someone stops
 you, act lost. The only ones who'll
 know about this are us and the
 driver.> Okay?

NICK
 Yeah but I got a question...

They all look at Nick. He draws it out, ominous...

NICK
<When do we get paid?>

OROCHI
<I like this guy.>

CUT TO:

EXT. INDUSTRIAL DOCK - NANKO PORT - SUMINOE-KU, OSAKA - NIGHT

Osaka Bay is quiet at night. The industrial docks at Nanko are abandoned. Until A TOYOTA TRUCK creeps onto the dock. Lights off. It parks along stacks of shipping crates.

Nick climbs out of the driver's seat. No one in sight. A ONE TON '53 CHEVY TRUCK parked 50 feet away. He approaches -

Rounds the front of the truck, looks in the cab -

EMPTY.

CLICK.

Nick knows that sound. He doesn't have to turn around to know someone's behind him with a GUN COCKED:

A MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
<Don't fucking move.>

FIVE YAKUZA approach, one of them turns Nick around, puts a SNUB-NOSED REVOLVER to his forehead.

THE ONE WITH THE SNUB-NOSED
<They sent a fuckin' gaijin.>

And Nick locks eyes with -

THE SEIZU KYODAI he disfigured with a shattered glass. Face scarred. He takes special pleasure in seeing Nick. Turns to one of his men and utters the words Orochi said before Nick knocked him out cold, sinister:

SEIZU KYODAI
<You wanna hit him?>

CRACK! The one with the snub-nosed COLD-COCKS Nick in the face and on the kyodai's command, his men drag Nick back to -

NICK'S TRUCK. They force him to his knees, revolver at the back of his head now as he looks up to see a NERVOUS MAN who stands out among the yakuza: THE TRUCK DRIVER.

SEIZU KYODAI

<You know these are our docks? Your friend here knows that. He told us about your exchange tonight.>

The truck driver just keeps his head down. Terrified.

SEIZU KYODAI (CONT'D)

<Where's the money?>

NICK

I don't speak your language, man.
I've never seen this guy before in my life.

The kyodai smiles. He nods to his men. They open the cab to Nick's truck. Start searching.

They check under the seats. Nothing. One of them pops open a switchblade and slices the driver's seat down the middle. Pulls out stuffing. Does the same with the passenger seat.

Nick waits as they keep searching until -

SEIZU SHATEI

<It's empty.>

SEIZU KYODAI

<Bring the driver over here.>

A yakuza pushes the nervous truck driver over to the kyodai -

SEIZU KYODAI (CONT'D)

<On his knees.>

The driver's forced to his knees. Right in front of Nick. The kyodai puts a gun to his head. The man shakes.

SEIZU KYODAI

(to Nick)

<Where's the money?>

Nick says nothing. He just looks the driver in the eyes. The man betrayed him. But the driver's eyes plead with Nick.

SEIZU KYODAI

<WHERE IS THE MONEY?>

Nick doesn't even move. He watches as -

BANG! BLOOD, TISSUE AND BONE BLAST OUT OF THE DRIVER'S SKULL -

The man crumples, blood pouring from his head - flecks of his blood on Nick's face. He tries to ignore it.

SEIZU KYODAI
<Where's the money?>

The kyodai points his handgun at Nick's forehead now and -
CLICK. The yakuza behind Nick cocks his snub-nosed -

SEIZU KYODAI
<Three... two...>

The kyodai gets in a firing stance, one leg back - slowly
lowers his aim to Nick's BALLS now and -

In the time it would take the kyodai to say "one":

NICK STANDS SUDDENLY - WRENCHES THE REVOLVER BEHIND HIS HEAD
FORWARD - the man behind him becomes a human shield as -

BOOM! The kyodai FIRES, hits the human shield - and Nick -

KBANG-KBANG! FIRES TWO ROUNDS THROUGH THE KYODAI'S CHEST -
KBANG! AGAIN IN HIS FACE and -

Nick puts the revolver to his human shield's head now -

Ready to fire.

It all happened in two seconds. Professional, efficient.
Where the fuck did that come from? It's quiet now except for
Nick's breathing. He stares down -

THE THREE OTHER YAKUZA. Utter disbelief. Nick is shaking,
blood on his face. No doubt he'll do it. They lower their
weapons: two guns and a knife. And drop them to the ground.

NICK
Open the fucking truck.

The Seizu back off toward the big Chevy truck. Nick marches
them over, gun jammed into his human shield's temple. He
watches as one of the Seizu opens the back of the truck to
reveal: it's *empty*. Nick isn't surprised. Plan B:

NICK
Get in. <GET IN.>

The three terrified yakuza climb in the back of the Chevy.
Nick forces the human shield inside too. And he shuts the
door, shoves the chained pin-bolt in, *LOCKING THEM INSIDE*.

NICK BACK AT HIS TRUCK. He climbs in the cab. Looks out at
the two bodies. At his own hands. They're shaking. But he's
been here before. He stares at his hands, willing them to
stop... they do. He starts the engine.

PULLS AWAY. The engine fading until all we hear is -

Water lapping against the docks. Two bodies slowly go pale, blood drying in cool night air.

CUT TO:

EXT. UNDERPASS - NIGHT

Banjo waits under an overpass in the middle of the night. A faint light, he looks up -

The truck approaches -

Pulls to a stop. The back is empty, so Banjo walks around to the driver's side door. And sees Nick staring back.

BLOOD SPATTERED AND DRIED ON HIS FACE. Pale as a ghost. *Fuck.*

I/E. TRUCK - LATER

Nick drives. Banjo in the passenger seat, wired now.

BANJO

<They didn't take the cash??>

Nick shakes his head no.

BANJO (CONT'D)

<They cut the shit outta these seats. Fuck! Don't mention Orochi. Don't mention Kiyoshi or Eiichi. No one sent us to do this, got it?>

(off Nick's look)

<You never rat out your boss. Rats choke on their own blood. They shot the driver in front of you?>

(off Nick's nod)

<Good.>

Nick wipes his face, but the blood doesn't want to leave.

CUT TO:

INT. ANTEROOM - MATSUOKA FAMILY HEADQUARTERS - DAWN

Nick and Banjo sit outside the smoke room. The silence is oppressive. They're pale, eyes heavy with lack of sleep.

A commanding shout from beyond the doors. Banjo stands. Nick follows suit. FOUR SHATEI escort them through the doors to -

INT. THE SMOKE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Akihiro sits at the ebony table inside. Kiyoshi, Orochi, Takeshi and Eiichi alongside him. The same kyodai who were present when Akihiro forbade going into Seizu territory.

Akihiro stares poison as Nick and Banjo enter with their hands folded, heads lowered.

AKIHIRO
<Step forward.>

Both of them do.

BANJO
<Boss, it was my idea ->

AKIHIRO
<Bullshit.>

Silence. Akihiro just stares at them.

NICK
<It was mine.>

AKIHIRO
<You?>

NICK
I'm not yakuza.

AKIHIRO
<Speak Japanese! I'll slit your
fucking throat.>

Nick's Japanese is fluent but simple, he searches for words:

NICK
<I'm a stray dog. I have no shiba.
I have no rules to follow. What I
do is on my head, no one else's.
That was my idea.>

AKIHIRO
<Was it your idea to kill a kyodai
of the Seizu family?>

NICK
<I brought no weapons. They were
waiting for me. Someone told them
you sent me.>

AKIHIRO
 (re: Orochi et al)
 <Did we send you?>
 (off Nick's silence)
 <ANSWER ME!>

NICK
 <I'm sorry. I can't.>

Orochi, Eiichi and Kiyoshi all watch Nick. But he doesn't even glance their way.

NICK (CONT'D)
 <They were waiting for me.>

AKIHIRO
 <The driver told them you were coming.>

NICK
 <No. I don't know how to say this in Japanese.>

Akihiro nods to Eiichi: *translate*. Eiichi does.

NICK (CONT'D)
 Those guys ripped up the seats looking for cash and just gave up. Anyone searching a car who has his head on straight checks the glove compartment. They never even fuckin' opened it. If they had, they woulda found their 2 million yen. But someone told them the money was in the seats.

AKIHIRO
 <Someone. Someone in this room?>

Nick doesn't answer. But his silence is answer enough. Kiyoshi studies Banjo, Eiichi and Orochi... *did they do it?*

AKIHIRO
 <You're calling one of these men a traitor? You were the only one there?>

Nick nods. Akihiro addresses a shatei behind Nick, cold:

AKIHIRO (CONT'D)
 <Kill him.>

The two big SHATEI behind Nick grab him - he struggles furiously as they drag him to where another shatei pulls up the tatami, exposing the bare wood floor below cause they don't want to get blood on the matting -

They kick Nick's legs out - he slams down hard on the wood -

A ROPE IS WRAPPED TIGHTLY around Nick's throat and pulled hard - he tries to scream but nothing comes out as his neck turns beet red - skin ripping around the rough rope and -

KIYOSHI SHOVES THE SHATEI, PULLS THE ROPE AWAY from Nick's throat - he stands between them all, feral -

KIYOSHI

<GET THE FUCK OFF HIM! You wanna kill him, you kill me first!
Everyone understand that!?!>

The air goes stale. Kiyoshi stands at the center of a roomful of eyes, all staring at him, allegiances unclear. No one wants to be the first to move, the first to speak. Until -

OROCHI

<He fucked your sister.>

KIYOSHI

<What?>

OROCHI

<He fucked her the night you asked him to keep her safe. She has his poison inside her.>

Kiyoshi looks at Nick. And Nick's eyes tell him all he needs to know. *It's true.* But Kiyoshi turns back to Orochi:

KIYOSHI

<Better him than you.>

Orochi's eyes turn black.

AKIHIRO

<We'll have a war with the Seizu.
We have to give them something.
Would you rather sacrifice yourself than him?>

ON KIYOSHI. No. He wouldn't.

AKIHIRO (CONT'D)

<What then?>

NICK
 (voice destroyed)
 ...yubitsume.

The wall of eyes turn on Nick as he raises his *hand*.

CUT TO:

INT. TEA CEREMONY ROOM - DAY

A large, ceremonial room with tatami mats from one end to the other. The type of room where shoguns address their samurai in Kurosawa movies. Tonight, it's filled with yakuza from the Matsuoka and Seizu families.

Akihiro Matsuoka and HIROMITSU SEIZU, the two *kumicho* (godfathers) of their respective families, sit on the raised platform at one end of the room, overlooking dozens of their soldiers. The soldiers keep to their own sides of the room.

In the center of the room is a one foot tall petrified wood altar of sorts. Like a footstool. A white cloth on it. And -

A KNIFE. Ivory handle. Shining blade.

Akihiro turns to Hiromitsu. And Hiromitsu starts the ceremony by looking at his soldiers and -

HIROMITSU
 <Sit down.>

The Seizu all kneel. Akihiro raises his hand and the Matsuoka family follows suit, Nick included.

HIROMITSU
 <Where is he?>

ON NICK. He looks at Hiromitsu. Stands. The eyes on the Seizu side of the room bleed murder and vengeance.

But Hiromitsu betrays no emotion. His weathered, 60 year-old face is framed by a gray beard. Eyes heavy as Nick approaches the stool. For Nick, every step takes an eternity. Finally -

Nick bows deeply, first to Akihiro and then to Hiromitsu.

He kneels before the stool.

Rolls up his left sleeve. Then his right. Still not sure if he's doing this right, but they're all just waiting for him.

He picks up the knife.

Places it just past the last knuckle of his left pinky.

Looks at Kiyoshi. Who nods discreetly: it's the right spot.

Nick tries not to shake. He looks down at his finger and -

PRESSES DOWN HARD. *Winces*. Blinding pain.

No one else makes a sound. Blood pours out. The tip of his finger is no longer a part of him. It just sits there on the cloth. Nick hides pain. Wraps the thing in the cloth. And -

A kyodai from the Seizu side of the room steps forward. Takes the cloth from Nick. Steps up and presents it to Hiromitsu.

Hiromitsu opens the cloth. Inspects the severed fingertip.

And he hands it *back* to the kyodai. Not pleased. Instead, Hiromitsu looks at Nick, waiting for something.

The kyodai approaches Nick. And he places A FRESH CLOTH on the still bloody stool.

Nick's fist is blood-covered now. But he looks at his hand, the pinky missing its tip. And the RING FINGER, *just waiting* -

Nick picks up the knife. Puts his palm down on the cloth, pinky still pulsing, and he places the knife at the last knuckle of his RING FINGER. This time, no fear -

HE LOOKS HIROMITSU DEAD IN THE EYE. And he -

PRESSES DOWN HARD. No wincing now. Just the sound of meat being sliced and the knife cutting hard down to the wood.

Nick wraps up the second finger tip. Puts the knife down. Squeezes his fist to slow the blood pumping out of it.

The kyodai collects the cloth-wrapped fingertip. Brings it to Hiromitsu along with the pinky. And Hiromitsu inspects the second digit. He draws it all out to punish Nick. Finally -

He wraps it back up. Places both finger tips in his own handkerchief. And into his kimono.

On his knees, NICK BOWS forehead-to-floor, to Hiromitsu -

And to Akihiro.

CUT TO:

I/E. CHEVY BEL AIR - MOVING - DAY

Nick's hand is wrapped in bloody gauze. He's in the back seat of a rumbling black Chevy with Akihiro. Looks uncomfortable to be so close to a man who wanted him dead 24 hours ago.

AKIHIRO

<You know why you're riding with me instead of your friend Kiyoshi?>

Nick shakes his head no. Knows to be silent now.

AKIHIRO (CONT'D)

<When a yakuza sacrifices for the family, he's forgiven completely.>
(beat, into Nick's eyes)
<But you're not yakuza.>

Akihiro watches the road. Leaving Nick uncomfortable. And the car pulls off the road. Parks along grass and reeds.

Alone in the middle of nowhere. Stone steps lead off along a creek. The driver gets out. Comes around and opens Akihiro's door. Akihiro gets out. The driver waits for Nick to follow.

EXT. CREEK WALK - CONTINUOUS

Nick is alert as he clutches his bloodied hand, walking alongside Akihiro through the brush. The driver walks behind them about ten feet back. The trees tower over them. Quiet.

Just footsteps and water and the GUN in the driver's belt.

EXT. CHANIWA GARDEN - LATER

Finally, they emerge into a CHANIWA GARDEN. Ornately designed, vibrant in September sun. They walk stone steps toward an ancient TEA HOUSE. And as they round the house -

THE MATSUOKA FAMILY. DOZENS OF THEM. Still in their suits, they kneel in a long row along a mat that's been rolled out over the garden pebbles.

The driver walks Nick over to an open spot in the center of the row. Nick kneels there. Confused as hell. And -

Akihiro walks around to the opposite side of the mat. He kneels, facing the assembled family members as -

A MAN emerges from the tea house carrying a bottle of sake and a wooden box. He sets the box down beside Akihiro. And from out of the box, he pulls -

TWO SAKAZUKI CUPS.

AKIHIRO

<We sit outside the tea house
because we're outsiders. We use the
cheapest sake because we survive by
any means necessary.>

The man pours sake into the two cups. Pours more into one
than the other - the "7:3" ritual.

AKIHIRO (CONT'D)

<Do you know what these are?>

NICK

Sakazuki.

AKIHIRO

<If I drink from this cup, and you
drink from yours, you'll be bound
by our rules.>

Ryo watches Orochi. Trying to gauge the hot-head's reaction.

AKIHIRO (CONT'D)

<I become your *oyabun*. And you
become my *kobun*. I protect you as
you protect me. You understand?>

Nick nods.

AKIHIRO

<Say it.>

NICK

<I understand.>

AKIHIRO

<Are you thirsty?>

Nick nods again. And Akihiro picks up his sake cup. Drinks in
two slow sips. Puts the cup back in the box.

The man who brought everything out now brings the box to
Nick. Nick looks at his partially filled cup. Picks it up.

DRINKS. Places it down. BOWS. Stays there with his head down.

CUT TO:

INT. KAISEKI RESTAURANT - KYOTO - NIGHT

The warm lanterns of a traditional kaiseki restaurant are reflected in the slow-moving Katsura river below. Arashiyama, just outside Kyoto, is a land of the past. People on the street walk in kimonos. But inside -

Nick, Kiyoshi, Takeshi, Orochi, Ryo and Eiichi sit sweating in their suits, drunk with other familiar faces at a table of 12. The Matsuokas responsible for the Minami area in Osaka.

Their hostess and several other women bring in the sixth course: wooden box towers with sliding drawers. Each layer of the boxes contains immaculately conceived foods designed to look like flowers and animals.

The hostess explains to Ryo (and the table) what each is. But Nick is confused by a brown-gray lump in his tower.

TAKESHI

<Crab brain.>

As the hostesses leave, the kyodai all start talking and eating, laughing about something at the end of the table as Nick decides to try his kanimiso. But next to him, Kiyoshi's voice is cool in his ear, he speaks English for privacy -

KIYOSHI

You sleep with my sister.

Nick looks at him. Any response is dangerous.

KIYOSHI (CONT'D)

She's 20 years old. I don't want her with yakuza. Wakari masu-ka?

NICK

You got her a job in your *headquarters* and you don't want her with yakuza?

Kiyoshi has said his piece. He drinks. Nick can't let it die.

NICK (CONT'D)

What if I like her?

KIYOSHI

She was a virgin.

NICK

(laughs)
I don't think so.

Nick stops laughing as he sees Kiyoshi's eyes. Unblinking as always, they focus on Nick like he's an enemy. Just the two of them now - the laughing gangsters around them fade into the background. Nick relents. For his life and his friend:

NICK (CONT'D)
<I'll leave her alone. I promise.>

Kiyoshi turns back to his food, almost embarrassed. And the silence gives way as a sweaty-faced kyodai shouts:

SWEATY KYODAI
<Fuck, haven't they heard of air conditioning in Kyoto?!?>

TAKESHI
<People here still kill their own fuckin' chickens. Take your shirt off, they don't care.>

SWEATY KYODAI
<Fuck it. Let's scare the hostesses.>

He pulls off his shirt, revealing his body-suit - covered in tattoos. Others follow suit. Some go completely shirtless, others like Kiyoshi play along, unbuttoning their shirts but leaving them on.

Nick leaves his shirt completely buttoned. Hesitant.

TAKESHI
<Don't worry, we aren't going to fuck you.>

NICK
<Yeah? Orochi's been trying to get me drunk all night.>

Everyone laughs. Orochi actually smiles under his sunglasses.

OROCHI
Fuck you. Take your shirt off.

Nick peels his shirt off. Immediately he stands out. His flesh is pale, bare, void of tattoos. The only marking is the scar on his shoulder. Takeshi smirks:

TAKESHI
No baita?

NICK
Baita?

TAKESHI

All American have naked lady
tattoo. Prostitute. Tits.

NICK

Nah. <I just like virgins.>

He smiles at Kiyoshi. Kiyoshi finally relaxes. Smirks along.
Everyone laughs. Takeshi pours Kiyoshi more sake. To Nick:

TAKESHI

<You need horimono.>

OROCHI

<Motherfucker, are you kidding?
He's funny enough. You're all
laughing. You want him tattooed so
the other families can laugh too?>

TAKESHI

<Fuck the other families.>

EIICHI

<I agree.>

TAKESHI

<He killed a Seizu. He committed
yubitsume. Twice. He's yakuza.>

Orochi looks to Ryo. Who says nothing. Orochi knows he's
alone now. He looks at Nick's shortened fingers, dry:

OROCHI

<So he is.>

CUT TO:

EXT. COBBLESTONE STREET - ALONG THE KATSURA RIVER - NIGHT

TAIKO DRUMS pound on the soundtrack as the yakuza move in a
pack along the river walk. Nick in the midst of them. And the
pack stops at a small, century-old, two story MACHIYA home.

Takeshi *KNOCKS* on the wood siding and waits. Pounds again. A
woman calls from within, craggy-voiced.

WOMAN (O.S.)

<People are sleeping!>

TAKESHI

<Mitsuda! We have fresh skin for
you.>

(MORE)

TAKESHI (CONT'D)

(beat)

<And 500,000 yen.>

The drums stop. Silence. And the DOOR SLIDES OPEN. A tired woman in her 40's stands there in a yukata.

mitsuda's wife

<Who's it for?>

Kiyoshi steps forward with Nick. Off her surprise, we -

CUT TO:

INT. MITSUDA'S HOUSE - LATER

MITSUDA's eyes are heavy and unrevealing. In his mid-fifties, he sits across from Kiyoshi and Nick, studying them both while his wife serves them tea. She leaves them alone. And Mitsuda is unexpectedly icy, hostile:

MITSUDA

<You bring money into my house and try to buy me by the hour like a prostitute.>

Nick stops drinking tea mid-sip.

MITSUDA (CONT'D)

<Kiyoshi... you disgrace my work.>

KIYOSHI

(calculated)

<If your objection is *money*, I won't pay you.>

MITSUDA

<You bring this person into my home?>

KIYOSHI

<What *person*?>

(beat, re: Nick)

<This? This is no *person*. No *person* claws a man's eyes out with his bare hands. No *person* cuts his own fingers off. No *person* withstands beatings and burnt flesh and starvation. I didn't bring a *person* into your home.>

(beat)

<I brought an *animal*.>

MITSUDA
 (cold)
 <He's *white*.>

NICK
 <That's why we need to cover his
 skin.>

Mitsuda is surprised by Nick's Japanese. Disarmed by his unwavering eye contact. He addresses Nick for the first time:

MITSUDA
 <Take your shirt off.>

Nick does. And Mitsuda sees the burn scars on his back, the gouged scar in his shoulder, the missing fingertips. They're the undeniable wounds of a warrior.

MITSUDA
 <What's his design?>

KIYOSHI
 (firm)
 <Mizuchi and nishikigoi. We go back
 to Osaka tomorrow.>

Mitsuda deliberates and -

LATER

Mitsuda rakes a sake-soaked rag down Nick's back. Cleaning his canvas. Kiyoshi's gone. Nick lays face down in silence, staring at a sumi-e painting on the wall: A TATTOOED SAMURAI.

Mitsuda picks up his TEBORI STICK - a bamboo rod with a small cluster of needles at the end. And he dips a small brush in a bowl of sumi ink. Wets the tebori needles in the brush.

He grips the stick at its end, places it millimeters over Nick's bare skin and -

Nick blocks the pain. Needles puncture skin again and again. Drawing blood, injecting ink, as Mitsuda rams his palm into the end of the stick twice per second. *Shikshikshik...*

The painting of the tattooed samurai stands watch.

DAWN

A sliver of sunlight crawls across the tatami now. The mat under Nick is stained slightly crimson.

The sound of laughter. The door opens and a YOUNG BOY (5) stumbles in looking for a place to hide, but he sees Mitsuda wiping Nick's back, the design obscured by bruising and warm blood. The boy locks eyes with Nick, suddenly looks down and -

He bows reverently and quietly slips out barefooted.

NICK

He bows to Americans?

Mitsuda breaks a brick of Sumi like charcoal into the bowl, mixing the powder to black. And he answers Nick.

mitsuda

No. Yakuza.

SUNSET

A FLY walks along a bowl filled with bloody water, trying to get a sip. A used, twisted rag sits in the bowl. The young boy - Mitsuda's son - watches from afar as -

NICK rises from the river, water runs down his back clean and cool. We get just a glimpse of his raw skin and the fresh black lines - the design is still an unseen mystery. He senses something, turns to see Kiyoshi sitting by the bank.

KIYOSHI

Time to go home.

NICK

I didn't say sayonara yet.

KIYOSHI

No sayonara. You see him every week for a year.

The peace of the Katsura river gives way to -

CUT TO:

EXT. OSAKA STATION - UMEDA, OSAKA - NIGHT

It's raining hard in Osaka. 8 P.M. People rush from Osaka station to their cars and bicycles. And -

I/E. TROLLEY CAR - LATER

Nick climbs into a trolley car, holds onto the rail as it starts to move. He smiles to himself, content.

His grin is a sharp contrast to the uncomfortable, soaked commuters. He feels eyes on him and he looks across the aisle to see -

A WOMAN stares at his shortened fingers. She realizes he's caught her looking and quickly looks away, nervous -

It fills Nick with power. He likes it.

THE TROLLEY STOPS. People get off. And as someone climbs on, Nick recognizes her instantly:

MIYU. Shit. He turns around, faces out the trolley windows. Away from her. The trolley moves again. Hammered by rain.

She sees him. He looks at her. Looks away. She gets it.

EXT. TROLLEY CAR - LATER

Nick covers himself from the rain as he walks home. He looks back to see the trolley pull away.

INT. BATHROOM - NICK'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Nick's bathroom is old Japanese-style. A porcelain trough in the floor instead of a toilet with a seat. Standing in the open door, Nick pulls off his shirt and looks at himself in the mirror, turning so he can see his back:

It's lightly bruised but otherwise healed. He stares at the design. Black outlines cover his back. A DRAGON and a KOI FISH intertwined. Water crashing around them.

MIYU (O.S.)
It fits you.

NICK
(spins)
Jesus Christ.

Miyu stands in his main room. Damp from the rain.

NICK (CONT'D)
What the fuck're you doing here?

MIYU
So you *do* get scared.

NICK
I'm not scared.

MIYU

You're scared of my brother.

He has no answer for that. She looks casually at his body.

NICK

You don't act like a Japanese girl.

MIYU

What does a Japanese girl act like?

He crosses his hands femininely in front of him and bows gently like a Japanese woman. Eyes down. Then he becomes Nick again. Looks her dead in the eyes.

She plays along. She folds her hands, gracefully moves toward him as a geisha would, feet shuffling, cheek turned.

She stops just a foot from him. And becomes Miyu again.

NICK

You do that pretty good.

MIYU

My brother paid for good schools.
He thinks he knows what's best for
me.

She takes a certain pleasure in mentioning Kiyoshi again, it makes Nick uncomfortable. Vulnerable.

NICK

He probably does.

She looks over his shoulder, his back reflected in the mirror. She recognizes the design.

MIYU

You know what it means?
(off his silence)
It's a fable. The koi fish who can
swim up a waterfall becomes a
dragon. It means you're arrogant.

NICK

You could get me killed.

MIYU

But isn't that exciting?

She takes his hand, the one with two bandaged, shortened fingers, and brings it around her back. He leaves it there.

And she kisses him slowly. He kisses back.

CUT TO:

*BACH'S POLONAISE FROM THE BRANDENBURG CONCERTOS BLASTS
OPERATICALLY OVER A -*

MONTAGE:

THE JUSO BLACK MARKET. RESERVOIR DOGS: Nick, Kiyoshi and the other Matsuoka brothers flank Akihiro as he walks through the Juso market. People clear the way. Nick briefly locks eyes with a COMMON MAN. The man bows fearfully.

TOBITA SHINCHI. The red light district. Girls kneel on tatami mats in open doorways. Old women beside them solicit the johns. Nick and Takeshi "escort" a drunk, belligerent john out of their district, face first into pavement.

A SHOP SELLING GINGER. A small kadomatsu plant on the counter. The PROPRIETOR hands Nick cash. Protection money.

MITSUODA'S HOUSE. Mitsuda sweats over the blood and ink on Nick's back. The dragon is gaining color. Becoming real.

AN ONSEN. The Matsuoka brothers fill a public bath house. Steam and tattoos everywhere and Nick just watches as some of the others enjoy being bathed by a few SISTERS (women also adorned with tattoos). KIYOSHI smirks, nudges Nick for staring. But we know what Nick's really thinking about...

MATSUOKA HQ. Nick hands Eiichi a thick, cash-shaped PACK WRAPPED IN WHITE PAPER, A FAMILIAR BLACK BOW. And -
DOWNSTAIRS. He barely glimpses at Miyu as she serves drinks. She tries to stop herself from looking over.

MIYU'S HOUSE - DAYTIME. He's inside her. Tattoos blending. Faces close, their hands intertwined. She looks up out her window, blissful as red maple leaves fall over Japan and -

INT. CORNER OFFICE - DAY

BACH'S POLONAISE sounds tinnier now as it comes from the tiny speaker on a small portable, PERSONAL RADIO.

Akihiro and Ryo sit across an incredibly expensive desk from the sharply-dressed 30-something STOCK BROKER holding the radio. Smiling, impressed with his own demonstration, the broker clicks the radio off for emphasis:

STOCK BROKER

<They're new to the Tokyo Exchange
and the offering is unprecedented.>

AKIHIRO

<Do I look like a radio salesman?>

STOCK BROKER

<I'm not selling you radios, I'm
selling you stock. In ten years,
they'll be making more than *radios*.
After the IPO, they'll be pouring
money into research. TV, auto
technology... they have a
subsidiary in the US.>

AKIHIRO

<Sony. What the fuck is that? What
does *Sony* mean?>

STOCK BROKER

<They say it comes from Latin.>

AKIHIRO

<Latin? Fuck!>

RYO

<With 400,000 shares, we'd have a
controlling stake.>

AKIHIRO

<And it'll cost us 400 million yen.
And make this asshole rich off us.>
(to stock broker)
<You think I'm stupid?>

Orochi speaks up from where he sits with Kiyoshi, on the
pristine white couch against the wall. Cocky and pedantic:

OROCHI

<He said himself there are two
Tokyo families willing to buy in
and split the 400 ->

AKIHIRO

<You want us in business with the
Tetsu family?? Are you sick!?!>

OROCHI

<I'm sick of making less money than
a FUCKING USED CAR SALESMAN!>

Immediate silence. Akihiro doesn't know how to respond to the pure insolence. Ryo glares at Orochi. Turns his look to the broker, apologetic. And the broker tries to salvage things:

STOCK BROKER

<Look. I have the best seats in the house for the last day of the sumo honbasho in Tokyo. Bring whoever you want. The Tokyo families will be there. If you don't agree to a deal, forget about the stock, enjoy the matches.>

To avoid any further animosity, Ryo stands, bows.

I/E. CHEVY - PARKED ON THE STREET - LATER

Outside, Ryo helps Akihiro into a waiting Chevy. The loud clash of construction. Ryo gets in. Akihiro *huffs*:

AKIHIRO

<Stock markets. A yakuza's place is down here, in the streets.>

Ryo looks up, out the window. Above the streets, the steel skeleton of a new building crawls with workers. Osaka's future. The old man doesn't even see it.

CUT TO:

INT. CUBAN BAR - NIGHT

Mambo music. Dark red lights and dancing. But from the private section, Orochi finds it all pathetic, small and dirty. He sits alone with Kiyoshi.

OROCHI

<How many nights have we spent here?>

KIYOSHI

<I don't count my days.>

OROCHI

<You should.>

(off Kiyoshi's glare)

<I've known you for thirteen years. You've always been strong. You've always been able to see weakness.>

(beat)

<Akihiro is weak.>

KIYOSHI

<The only weakness I see is yours.
Don't mistake your ambition for
strength.>

OROCHI

<He invited a gaijin into our
family.>

KIYOSHI

<No. I invited a gaijin into our
family.>

OROCHI

<And he accepted. He should've
stopped you like he should've
stopped me today. He let me
humiliate him in front of
everyone.>

KIYOSHI

<He could've asked for your finger
today.>

OROCHI

<If he was a man, he would.>

KIYOSHI

<He's our father. He took us both
in from the street. Do you forget
that?>

OROCHI

<Our "*father*" is getting old.>

They're at an impasse. Orochi sees Nick and Takeshi
approaching from the bar. Stands abruptly.

KIYOSHI

<Akihiro loves you as a son.>

OROCHI

<No. He loves you.>

And Orochi leaves, bitter. He bumps shoulders roughly with
Nick as he goes. Nick sits down, confused.

NICK

What was that?

INT. ANTEROOM - MATSUOKA FAMILY HEADQUARTERS - NIGHT

Orochi walks drunk to the smoke room door. *Knocks*. But the younger shatei sitting by the door stands up, blocks Orochi.

SHATEI

<He doesn't want to see you.>

(off Orochi's glare)

<I'm sorry, sir.>

Orochi is fury and disbelief.

INT. MATSUOKA GAMBLING HALL - NIGHT

Miyu checks the clock. 1:55. Almost done. She pours two watered down draft beers, puts them on a tray and rounds the bar. She heads for one of the busy card tables as she sees -

Orochi enters, fuming. He doesn't see her yet. Heads for the same card table, sits and tosses way too much cash on the table. The PATRONS go quiet, nervous to gamble with a yakuza.

The DEALER hesitates, deals him in. And before Orochi sees his cards, he sees Miyu. She avoids eye contact. But -

OROCHI

<Beer. Not one of the watered down ones you gave these fuckers.>

She's uncomfortable. So are the other players.

OROCHI

<Don't look at me like that.>

She nods, eyes lowered. Goes to the kitchen.

Orochi simmers at the table. Looking dissatisfied with the cards as they come out. And...

ANOTHER HOSTESS comes out with Orochi's beer.

OROCHI

<Where is she?>

THE OTHER HOSTESS

<Her shift's over.>

Orochi gets up, pushes past her, leaving his cash and cards.

INT. THE KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

He closes the kitchen door behind him. Locks it. And Miyu looks back at him, trying to hide any semblance of fear.

He pulls a thick stack of cash from his jacket. Thumbing bills out. Stops after several thousand. Looks at her:

OROCHI
<How much?>

MIYU
<I'm not seventeen anymore.>

OROCHI
<You can use your hands.>

She just stares back. So he sets the cash on the counter. Steps toward her, hand on his gun.

OROCHI (CONT'D)
<Unzip me.>

MIYU
<No.>

Her eyes are defiant and -

CRACK! He hammers her across the face with the gun - she falls, glasses shatter and -

WHUMP! He kicks her in the face -

She cowers, arms over her head, balled up, trying to stop the blood from coming out of her nose and mouth. She looks up -

HE'S POINTING THE GUN AT HER FACE. She's expecting the worst now. But he jams his gun back in his belt.

OROCHI
<You're still a whore. See?>

He tosses the cash onto her. Bills fluttering. And he leaves her there bleeding. Crumpled cash around her.

INT. NICK'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Nick gets home. Flicks the lights on. *Weird*. The place is empty. He walks around, searching. Empty bed. Empty bathroom.

INT. NICK'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Nick wakes up on his bed in the same position in which he fell asleep. Sitting up, still in his clothes, watching the door. Still alone.

EXT. MIYU'S HOUSE - MORNING

He walks through the garden to Miyu's house. Wary of anyone who might see him here. He gets to the door. Knocks. Waits. Knocks again. Tries the door handle. Locked. He walks around -

BEHIND THE HOUSE. Back door's unlocked. He goes in -

INT. MIYU'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The floor creaks under him. No sign of life or movement. But the bedroom's RICE PAPER DOOR is closed. Nick approaches. As he reaches to slide the door, he stops. Sees -

The silhouette of a hand holding the door shut.

NICK

Where were you last night?

Her silhouette speaks. A soft shadow against the paper.

MIYU (O.S.)

<Who said you could come in?>

NICK

Open the door.

MIYU (O.S.)

<It's not a "door", it's shoji.>

NICK

Can you open the shoji?

MIYU (O.S.)

<What would you do if I told you I was fucking someone else?>

NICK

Open the door.

MIYU (O.S.)

<I'm fucking someone else.>

NICK FORCES THE DOOR OPEN and freezes on the spot -

Her face. Bruised and scabbed. Her lip split where it was crushed between tooth and shoe. Nick's stomach twists up.

NICK
Who did that to you?

She tries to close the door, he gets in the way -

NICK (CONT'D)
Who did that to you!?

MIYU
Go -

NICK
When did this happen!?

MIYU
Last night.

NICK
Motherfucker! Who did it!? Who hit you!? Your *brother*!?

Now SHE EXPLODES.

MIYU
NO! It isn't your business! You understand that? Wakari masu-ka?!?

She grabs the shoji door, shutting it and -

CRASH! Nick rips the door off its rails - paper rips and wood splinters in his hand, drawing blood, fury bursting - *CRACK!* He heaves what's left of the door across the room.

She's stunned silent.

He stares down at what he's done to the door, his fury quieted by shame. He sits on the floor, holding his bleeding hand. And she kneels beside him, calm and quiet now:

MIYU
(re: the outburst)
It's what I like about you. But I'm not going to tell you what you want to hear. And I don't want you to ask me again. I can take care of myself.

He turns, looks in her eyes. They're nose-to-nose now, her voice filled with confidence in him:

MIYU (CONT'D)

Go to work. Show them what you're made of.

CUT TO:

EXT. KURAMAE KOKUGIKAN HALL - SUMO ARENA - TOKYO - EVENING

People mob the streets outside the Kuramae sumo hall. Colorful, twenty-foot tall banners wave in support of wrestlers. And the tournament drums bang loudly to announce the high-ranking bouts are about to begin.

CONSPICUOUS, EXPENSIVE AMERICAN CARS press through the mass of people outside the hall. Yakuza with their suits and sunglasses ride inside, unfazed by the madness.

INT. THE ARENA - KURAMAE KOKUGIKAN HALL - MOMENTS LATER

The arena is a place of sweat and noise. One of the few places in Japan where it's acceptable to shout like a madman.

NICK walks with nearly two dozen MATSUOKA FAMILY MEMBERS. All in suits, they surround Akihiro, escorting him to their seats. Down the row from them sit dozens more suit-clad YAKUZA. The Tokyo families. Two old men amidst them:

TETSU and SANGA. Both in their sixties. The heads of their respective families. They sit in the front row, an open seat beside them. Akihiro takes the seat and the three old men acknowledge each other. It's an uncomfortable formality.

Kiyoshi and Nick sit in the row behind Akihiro with the rest of the family. And Nick takes in his surroundings:

They're just fifteen feet from the sumo ring. The enormous WRESTLERS are preparing for the bout by throwing SALT into the ring to purify it. The audience is deafening.

KIYOSHI

(privately to Nick)

<It's their last bout in the tournament.>

(re: the crowd)

<They're rooting for Hakuryuzan. He's the better wrestler. His record in the tournament is already 13 and 1. Kotonotsuki is only 25 and he's been average.>

NICK

<What's average?>

KIYOSHI
<Seven wins. Seven losses.>

Nick looks at the two combatants. KOTONOTSUKI (25) is indeed young. And he narrows his eyes viciously as he looks at his opponent, the stronger, taller, more regal HAKURYUZAN (33).

KIYOSHI (CONT'D)
(re: Kotonotsuki)
<He's gonna get his ass kicked.>

AKIHIRO, SANGA AND TETSU. An uncomfortable silence between them as they watch the wrestlers prepare. Until -

TETSU
<Have you considered our proposal?>

AKIHIRO
<I came here for the sumo. Nothing else.>
(off Tetsu's look)
<I believe in tradition. We're hustlers, not stock investors.>

TETSU
<Hustlers like to gamble.>

AKIHIRO
<Only when they know the odds. And they don't gamble on radios.>

TETSU
<So let's gamble on *this*.>
(off Akihiro's look)
<Choose your wrestler. If he wins, I invest where you choose and I pay for your trip home. If he loses, you invest with us. 133,000 shares worth of *radios*.>

AKIHIRO
(suspicious)
<Hakuryuzan is guaranteed to win.>

TETSU
<If you know the odds, make your bet.>

ON NICK. Overhearing this. He shouldn't be listening.
AKIHIRO. He's eager. Can't resist a sure bet and -

AKIHIRO
<Fine...>

ON NICK. He sees the wrestlers and catches something. A *look*. The most subtle of acknowledgements from the older to the younger. Like they're both in on something.

NICK

<Don't.>

Akihiro turns and glares at Nick for his insolence.

NICK (CONT'D)

<I'm sorry, but the young one's gonna win. If you're gonna bet, bet on him.>

SANGA

<Who is this??>

NICK

(continuing, to Akihiro)

<His record's 7-7. He has everything to fight for. One match makes him a winner or a loser. The big one's got nothing to lose. He might as well throw the match.>

Nick looks into Akihiro's eyes, and Akihiro gets it: Nick knows something he doesn't. But -

AKIHIRO

<I'll bet anyway.>

(beat)

<On the young one. Kotonotsuki.>

TAIKO DRUMS POUND. The bout begins.

The wrestlers face each other and CLAP. POUND their feet down into a wide stance. The crowd goes insane as the two whale-sized men spring up and slam into each other -

Slapping at each other, pulling at each other's belts, they spin - the crowd responds with each move - FLASH BULBS blinding - and it only lasts thirty seconds, ending when -

The young upstart Kotonotsuki steps out of the way as Hakuryuzan charges - Kotonotsuki gives an extra push and -

Hakuryuzan rolls out of the ring. The crowd can't believe it, aghast, but as the judge points his fan at the young victor -

They *cheer*. Sanga looks at Nick, grossly offended. But Tetsu has something else in his eyes. Curiosity.

INT. THE ARENA - KURAMAE KOKUGIKAN HALL - LATER

The fans file out of their seats. The tournament is over. Nick and Kiyoshi stand with the family at the top of the arena steps. They watch as -

AKIHIRO, TETSU and SANGA are still sitting together in their seats by the empty ring. Alone. In discussion.

CUT TO:

EXT. KURAMAE KOKUGIKAN HALL - NIGHT

The Matsuoka family walks through the dissipating crowd outside the sumo hall. Nick keeps his distance as Kiyoshi walks Akihiro to a black Bel Air.

But Akihiro stops at the car door. Turns right to Nick:

AKIHIRO

<Come here.>

Nick comes close. The other family members continue on to the other cars. And Nick is alone with Akihiro.

AKIHIRO

<The match was fixed.>

NICK

<I know.>

AKIHIRO

<Tetsu fixed it, that bastard.>

(beat)

<He was impressed by you. Instead of buying stock, we're splitting sumo rights 50-50. The Tokyo families won't be the only ones fixing matches.>

(dry)

<Don't ever talk out of line again.>

And it's only as he takes his hand away that Nick realizes Akihiro had his hand on Nick's shoulder. The Bel Air pulls away and Nick turns, proud of himself.

He walks alone toward a waiting CHEVY a hundred feet ahead. TAKESHI and KIYOSHI getting inside it and -

AN AMERICAN VOICE (O.S.)

Nick? Nick Lowell?

Nick turns to look.

PAULIE BOWERS (29), an American in a Marine service uniform. He's standing fifteen feet away on an adjoining side street - a narrow walk of shops and ramen houses lit up bright and crowded after the tournament. Nick stops dead.

PAULIE
Captain.

NICK
Paulie.

PAULIE
You're fuckin' kiddin' me.

Paulie smirks. Nick looks back, Takeshi and Kiyoshi don't see him so he steps out of view, toward Paulie, onto -

THE SIDE STREET

PAULIE
You look fuckin' good for a dead man. They said you blew your brains out, no offense.

NICK
What're you doing here?

PAULIE
What are you doing here? Where you been for five years?

NICK
I don't know. Putting the brains back in my head.

A man passes, looking at them. And Nick unconsciously pulls Paulie further from the main road, into a dark corner by a Ramen house. Paulie sees Nick's hand, missing two fingers:

PAULIE
Your hand.

NICK
It's nothing.

PAULIE
Nothing? The fuck happened?

NICK
...Grenade.

PAULIE
(dubious)
Alright.

He notices Nick staring at his uniform and misunderstands why. So he shows off the silver stripe on his shoulder:

PAULIE (CONT'D)
Yeah, First lieutenant.

NICK
Congratulations.

PAULIE
It's bullshit. Three years in
Okinawa. There's no one to fight
anymore, y'know. So what's the
point a'this?

He flicks at his silver stripe. Something dark in his eyes:

PAULIE (CONT'D)
You ever miss the violence?

NICK
Not really.

PAULIE
Looks like you got a good life out
here.

NICK
I don't live here.

PAULIE
Yeah? Where you livin' that you
dress like a fuckin' lounge singer?

Nick's reply is cold. He wants the questions to end here.

NICK
Osaka.

PAULIE
Osaka? Well, you're in Tokyo now.
And I'm on leave for another...
(checks watch)
Eight and a half hours. That's
enough time to regret somethin'.

NICK
I can't, Paulie.

PAULIE
Ten beers, that's all.

NICK
I said I can't, alright? Do me a favor, stay here.

PAULIE
"Stay here?" You tellin' me where to stand? You're not my *Captain* anymore.

NICK
No, I'm not. Do what you want. Just don't follow me.

Nick nods his goodbye Japanese-style, Paulie scoffs:

PAULIE
Don't *follow* you? You can't talk to a guy from your own fuckin' unit?? You're acting so goddamn squirrely if I didn't know better, I'd say you were dodging court martial.

NICK SLAMS PAULIE AGAINST THE GLASS OF A RAMEN RESTAURANT.
The patrons inside turn in shock. Paulie seethes.

PAULIE
Don't mess up your *suit*.
(dry, digging at him)
I'm just *playin'*.

NICK
Don't play with me.

Nick lets go. Knows his temper got the better of him. But he walks off. And Paulie straightens his roughed-up uniform, glaring as Nick leaves.

EXT. NICK'S APARTMENT BUILDING - MORNING

Nick climbs out of the Chevy after an all night ride. Tired. Takeshi watches him go.

TAKESHI
<You look like shit.>

INT. NICK'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Nick sits on the bed and looks out the window. Osaka. The sunlight is oppressive coupled with his anxiety. He turns on the radio:

AMERICAN MUSIC. Unnerved, he changes the station.

TRADITIONAL KOTO MUSIC. Nick lays back. Closes his eyes. At home now. And the koto takes over the soundtrack until we -

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - KISHIWADA - NIGHT

MAYHEM IN THE STREETS.

The Kishiwada Danjiri Matsuri is a street festival but it's better described as a mad frenzy. People line the streets, packed shoulder to shoulder. They wait, cheer and watch as wooden shrines on wheels (*danjiri*) roll through the streets loaded with paper lanterns and *DRUMMERS*. Each *danjiri* is pulled by a crew of about 100 people with ropes. The crews pull the *danjiri* slowly at first and then ready themselves, *SHOUTING...* before *RACING* them through the streets.

It's dangerous as hell and every year since 1703, people die.

Nick, Kiyoshi and Takeshi watch from inside a bar that has been taken over by the Matsuoka family:

INT. STREETSIDE BAR - SAME

Bottles everywhere. A *TRASHY GIRL* sits on Nick's lap, drunk. Her hand pays too much attention to his upper thigh but he doesn't seem to notice, maybe because *GIRLS* are also sitting on Kiyoshi and Takeshi's laps.

They all race to the bottom of a round of drinks.

TAKESHI

<If your dad made textiles you must know all about them. What's this?>

THE GIRL ON TAKESHI'S LAP

<That's cotton.>

TAKESHI

(his hand slides to where skirt meets stockings)

<And this?>

THE GIRL ON TAKESHI'S LAP

<Nylon.>

(as his hand moves up)

<That... I can't say out loud.>

KIYOSHI

(to the girl on *his* lap)

<Sorry for my friend.>

Nick just stares out the window at the insanity.

NICK

They do this every year?

KIYOSHI

Since 1700.

TAKESHI

<Akihiro used to pull those things when he was a kid so every year he buys out a shitty bar and makes us all come and watch. He even invites our fucking card dealers.>

KIYOSHI

<At least he foots the bill.>

OROCHI

(sarcastic)

<Akihiro looks out for us. He puts girls in our laps.>

(directly to Nick)

<But the world is full of easy girls.>

Orochi blows smoke rings. Smirks at Nick from behind his sunglasses. No girl in his lap. And Nick is suddenly aware of the girl in *his*, she's rubbing his hair. He moves her hand.

NICK

Why don't you sit with him?

THE GIRL

<I like *your* lap.>

She rubs his hair. Kiyoshi smiles. Nick hides discomfort.

ACROSS THE BAR. MIYU enters with her co-worker, the hostess Orochi shoved past before assaulting Miyu.

THE HOSTESS FRIEND

<I told you. All yakuza and hookers. I don't wanna get groped tonight, thanks.>

But Miyu seems distracted. She's looking for something.

NICK. The girl in his lap grabs his hand, slides it along her thigh, making him feel her stockings.

THE GIRL (CONT'D)
<You know what *this* is?>

And she turns his face toward hers as -

TAKESHI
<Your sister's here.>

NICK JERKS AWAY FROM THE GIRL. *DRINKS SPILL AND CRASH.*

KIYOSHI
<What the fuck!?!>

NICK
<She pulled my hand.>

Nick hurries away from the booth, wiping his pants with a handful of napkin. Kiyoshi stares, suspicious.

THE GIRL
<I think I made him nervous.>

NICK sees Miyu. She's heading toward the exit. *Shit.* He can't follow, everyone's eyes are on him. He heads to the bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Nick locks the door behind him. Finds the open window...

EXT. STREET - MOMENTS LATER

He emerges on the street, scanning wildly for Miyu. The danjiri race down the streets of Kishiwada, people shout. A cacophony and it's impossible to find anyone here.

Nick presses through people so forcefully that he leaves near fist-fights in his wake. But he sees her ahead. She's crossing, right in front of a moving danjiri -

Nick runs after her, in danger of being stampeded -

NICK
Miyu!

As they get to the other side, she finally turns to face him. She doesn't even look upset. It puts Nick off-balance.

MIYU
Your pants are wet.

NICK
I spilled.

MIYU
I know.

NICK
Let me explain.

MIYU
Why?

NICK
You're upset.

MIYU
No, *you're* upset because you feel
guilty. But you're wrong to feel
that. You should fuck whoever you
want. That's what I do.

The words hurt.

NICK
It isn't what *I* do.
(off her shrug)
You can't pretend you don't care
about me.

MIYU
I *care* about you. But that's all. I
don't know what you think this is.

He looks in her eyes. There's *no feeling there*. Did he
imagine all of it?

NICK
Why'd you leave the bar?

MIYU
My friend wanted to leave.

Nick sees Miyu's hostess friend, standing impatiently in the
crowd twenty feet ahead, wondering what all this is about.

MIYU (CONT'D)
Go have fun. Get drunk. Someone
might see you with me.

NICK
I don't care.

MIYU
You *should*.

NICK
Don't fucking walk away from me!

MIYU
Why not?!

NICK
Because I'm talking to you!

MIYU
<You're yelling at me.>

NICK
No, don't do that! Talking Japanese
like I'm just some guy.

MIYU
You're the fourth guy I've been
with. There will be a fifth.

NICK
Bullshit. Marry me.

MIYU
Fuck you!

NICK
Fuck me??

MIYU
I DON'T LOVE YOU.

NICK
The fuck does that matter!? In this
country, you people marry each
other because you think you're
getting too old, no one's gonna
want you. Or maybe the guy's gonna
be rich some day and the girl's
young and pretty and that's enough,
right?

MIYU
That's not who I am.

NICK
I know. So marry me.

The world around them is a blur. Her eyes are wet. Suddenly -

THUMP! KIYOSHI grabs Nick by the collar - Takeshi tries to pull him back but Kiyoshi is pure drunk violence -

MIYU
<Get off him!>

Kiyoshi *SLAMS* Nick against a danjiri, the drummers stop, everyone turns to watch -

KIYOSHI
<Defend yourself!>

NICK
I'm not gonna hit you.

He drives Nick to the ground, slamming his back to pavement.

MIYU
<Get the fuck off him!>

KIYOSHI
<Why shouldn't I kill him? Huh?>

MIYU
<Because we're getting married!>

Kiyoshi stops. Looks up at his sister. Sees her eyes. And -

HE LAUGHS. Drunken violence becomes joy. He slams Nick down again, playfully this time. And again. And then he pulls Nick back up to his feet and -

HUGS HIM.

KIYOSHI
<We're gonna be brothers?>

But Nick just stares at Miyu. Is she for real?

EXT. SHINTO SHRINE - DAY

OROCHI'S SUNGLASSES reflect a wedding procession.

It's spring and the cherry blossoms are out. The Matsuoka family, in their suits and sunglasses, watches outside as -

A SHINTO PRIEST and two MAIDENS lead Nick and Miyu, in their kimonos, into the shrine. Kiyoshi and some OLDER RELATIVES with them.

INT. SHINTO SHRINE - DAY

The maidens dance their ritual to deliver sacred evergreen sprigs to Nick and Miyu, who sit before the shrine. They look in each other's eyes as they exchange the sprigs.

Kiyoshi watches his sister stare at Nick, nervous.

INT. GATHERING ROOM - LATER

Laughter and clinking glasses. Everyone drinks and eats in one of the shrine's anterooms. Some are drunk. OROCHI watches across the room as -

NICK SITS WITH AKIHIRO. *THUD.* TWO SHEATHED SAMURAI SWORDS BOUND TOGETHER BY ROPE. One long, one short at just two feet. Akihiro puts them on the table in front of Nick.

AKIHIRO

<You know what that is?>

NICK

I think so.

AKIHIRO

<When I married my first wife, my father gave me a gift. I hadn't seen him in six or seven years, he was drunk as usual. But he sat me down after the wedding and he put two swords on the table. Like this. We were alone. He said, "Do you know what that is?" I don't remember what I said but it was something smartass cause he hit me hard across the face, which he hadn't done since I was a boy.>

The story is vivid for Akihiro. Nick finds himself staring.

AKIHIRO (CONT'D)

<He grabbed me by the collar and he said, "This is a daisho. Long and short. One for war and one for honor. One to kill and one to decapitate. One for murder, one for suicide." Katana and wakizashi.>

(re: wakizashi)

<This never left a samurai's side, even in sleep. It was his honor.>

(beat)

<You have a home to watch over now. Take it.>

As Nick feels the weight of the gift in his hands, Kiyoshi talks across the table, a joke with meaning behind it:

KIYOSHI

He's trying to say the short one's
for cutting off anyone's dick who
goes near her.

BACK WITH OROCHI. He turns to Banjo beside him.

OROCHI

<Do you remember when the emperor
surrendered?>

BANJO

<I was ten.>

EIICHI sits next to Orochi. Pours them both drinks. Nods knowingly. A suspicious camaraderie as they both drink.

And Orochi just stares at Nick.

INT. NICK AND MIYU'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Nick and Miyu walk into their new single-story home. It's Miyu's first time here. The place is small and typical but she's in awe because it's *theirs*.

MIYU

Is this going to be different now?
We were just... sex. And now
there's this *house*.

NICK

I chose it cause it looked like a
good place to have sex.

That pushes her anxiety away. She looks at his shirt.

MIYU

Can I see it?

Nick knows what she means. He stands there as she unbuttons his shirt. Gently pulls it off him. And looks at his back:

COVERED IN TATTOOS NOW. The Mizuchi design is finished. The shading is dark and intense.

MIYU

Do you feel like a dragon now?

CUT TO:

INT. THEIR BEDROOM - NIGHT

Miyu lays on Nick. They're asleep, or at least Nick is until -

MIYU
Do you want a baby?

NICK
...what?

MIYU
Do you want a baby?

NICK
I don't know.

He starts slipping back to sleep.

MIYU
I'm pregnant.

NICK
What?

MIYU
I'm pregnant.

NICK
You're pregnant? With a baby?

MIYU
Yes.

He sits up. Wide awake now.

MIYU (CONT'D)
Do you want a baby with me?

NICK
Do I have a choice?

MIYU
Yes.

The silence is oppressive.

NICK
Jesus. Yes. Yeah.
(beat)
Do you want a baby with me?

She nods. Wipes her eyes, the only indication that she might have been crying.

NICK
Okay, can we go to bed now?

She climbs on top of him. Puts him inside her. And as she moves, he looks into her possessed eyes, for the first time his mind goes to Japanese before English:

NICK
<You're crazy.>

But that's what he wants.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - KITA, OSAKA - DAY

A lone CICADA *chatters* as it clings to a tree. Osaka is green now, the cherry blossoms long gone.

INT. ENTRYWAY - SILK TAILOR - SAME

A KADOMATSU PLANT sits in the entry to a SILK TAILOR's shop. The tailor watches anxiously through the storefront:

OUTSIDE. A CHEVY BEL AIR pulls to a stop. Nick and Kiyoshi step out. They help Akihiro climb out. The old man seems tired as Kiyoshi opens the door for him and they step -

INSIDE.

THE SILK TAILOR
<Matsuoka-san.>

The tailor bows. Sweating despite the fan behind the counter.

AKIHIRO
<Don't bow.>

Akihiro starts walking back into the workshop. And the tailor escorts him, nervously nodding to Nick and Kiyoshi as they sit in the chairs by the counter.

They wait alone.

The cicadas *buzz*. And Nick watches through the storefront as -

A YOUNG WOMAN (20) walks by the store. She's tall, thin, pretty, enough makeup to be a little tasteless. And she glances in as she passes. Smiles suggestively at Kiyoshi.

Kiyoshi doesn't smile back. Just coldly watches her walk by.

NICK
You're gonna die alone.

KIYOSHI
(dry)
I only like virgins.

Nick smiles. Watches the girl as she crosses the street to -

A PARKED YELLOW AND WHITE '53 FORD CROWN VICTORIA. A shiny American import. The girl leans in the window, talking to someone. Nick sits up, suspicious now and -

INT. CHANGING ROOM - SAME

Akihiro stands alone in a small changing area partitioned off by silk. He tries on a kimono, examines the fabric. Lost in his own world, oblivious as -

INT. SILK WORKSHOP - SAME

The tailor sweats in the dark of the workshop. He watches:

THE BACK DOOR OPENS QUIETLY. A figure enters, face in shadow. In his hand - a length of CORD. The tailor nods and looks away. And the figure stalks right for the changing area.

INT. ENTRYWAY - SAME

Nick stares out the storefront, wary, he stands up.

KIYOSHI
<What?>

NICK
Crown Victoria.

Kiyoshi looks out at the car. Anxious now as Nick signals him to watch it and walks back into the dark of the workshop -

INT. SILK WORKSHOP - CONTINUOUS

NICK
Akihiro? <Tailor?>

No response. Just the *LOUD BUZZ OF CICADAS*. Loud because -

THE DOOR AT THE BACK OF THE SHOP IS OPEN. Adrenaline pulses now as Nick senses the presence of the enemy and bolts for -

THE SILK PARTITION. Nick rips silk down -

AKIHIRO IS CHOKING - a GARROTE PULLED TIGHT AROUND HIS THROAT
BY A YOUNG KILLER and -

Nick grabs the killer by the throat, shoves him back -
Akihiro is freed, *gasping* - as the killer CLAWS at Nick and -

NICK
Kiyoshi!!!

SILK RIPS from its hangers and Nick and the killer are
wrapped up, as they -

SLAM! against the loom. The killer shoves at Nick's face,
forcing his chin up -

SILK THREADS TANGLE AROUND THEM as suddenly -

SHIK! SHIK! SHIK! BLOOD EVERYWHERE because KIYOSHI STABS the
killer over and over and over -

The killer goes limp - *SHIK! SHIK! SHIK!*

Blood pouring out, over Kiyoshi's hands, Nick's suit, it runs
and drips along silk threads -

Kiyoshi finally stops stabbing and sees the killer's face:

BANJO. Dead. Kiyoshi grips BLOODY SHEERS in his hand.
Speechless until he looks at Nick, covered in blood.

KIYOSHI
<You okay?>

Nick nods. And Kiyoshi moves for Akihiro, helps him up. Nick
extricates himself from the tangle of silk and lends a hand.
The old man processes the fact that he's not dead.

And then he sees Banjo's face. It breaks his heart.

EXT. ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

The cicadas are incessant as Nick and Kiyoshi walk Akihiro
through the narrow alley behind the silk shop. Just a small
walkway between backs of buildings that seem to be
haphazardly crammed up against each other.

Only one way to go, they follow the path quietly to a GATE
that separates the alley from the main street beyond. They
stop a moment. Akihiro sitting, holding his bruised throat.

KIYOSHI
<Fucking tailor ran.>

Kiyoshi leans against the gate, peers out between the cracks - all clear. So he opens the gate, steps out -

B-B-BANG-B-BANG! Gunfire blasts through the streets - disorienting as Kiyoshi goes down and Nick lunges for him, pulling him back from the gate and covering him as -

B-B-B-B-BANG! WOOD SPLINTERS off the sides of buildings. TWO YAKUZA with snub-nosed revolvers who run out of bullets and bolt back into THE IDLING CROWN VIC, *SHOUTING* -

TIRES SQUEAL -

The Vic screams away - ONE OF THE GUNMAN hanging out the window, RED-TINTED GLASSES AND A FACE NICK WON'T FORGET. But -

KIYOSHI. Blood pumps out from a hole in his ribcage -

NICK
NO!

Nick holds Kiyoshi in his lap, presses his hand hard against the wound but the blood just courses out between his fingers. Kiyoshi looks up at him, trying to speak but can't -

He knows now that he's dying. He grabs Nick's hand. Locks eyes with his friend. Kiyoshi actually looks at peace as he pulls Nick's hand away from the wound. *Let it happen.* The blood runs.

KIYOSHI
Brother.

Kiyoshi fades. And he looks into Nick's eyes even in death.

INT. THE SMOKE ROOM - MATSUOKA HQ - NIGHT

Akihiro's hands shake as he lights a cigarette. An emergency meeting. But his soldiers don't quite seem to fill the room.

AKIHIRO
<Who's missing?>

RYO
<Besides Orochi?>
(he reads a list)
<Yasushi, Hiro, Shuichi, Kanji...>

The soldiers listen in disbelief to the number of defectors.

RYO (CONT'D)
 <Taro, Ichiro, Kazuo, Kon.>
 (this one for emphasis)
 <And Eiichi.>

AKIHIRO
 <He'll come.>

Akihiro looks at Eiichi's empty desk. Ryo's not so sure.

AKIHIRO (CONT'D)
 <That car was full of Seizu, not
 our people.>

RYO
 <Because Orochi made a deal with
 them. He wants to seize power for
 himself by allying with the Seizu.
 It would be dangerous to go to war
 now with a fifth of your soldiers
 defected.>

NICK
 Fuck you. <Dangerous? It would be
 dangerous *not* to go to war.>

RYO
 <You're emotional.>

No shit. Nick boils, still covered in Kiyoshi's blood. But
 Akihiro stops a fight before it starts.

AKIHIRO
 (re: Nick)
 <I'm making him my second in
 command.>

RYO
 <He's a *wakagashira* now?>

AKIHIRO
 <Who else?>
 (beat, Ryo has no answer)
 <When my *wakagashira* says we should
 go to war, I listen.>

RYO
 <What about your senior advisor?
 What about the rest of the family?>

AKIHIRO
 (to all)
 <Who wants to go to war?>

The men look at him, nervous. But TAKESHI steps forward. SATORU too. Subordinates follow, they can't turn down the boss. And Ryo is resigned to his fate as always. It's war.

INT. FURNACE - DAY

KIYOSHI lies in a box in the dark. Dignity even in death as -
FLAMES RISE UP AROUND HIM. An inferno.

INT. CREMATORIUM - SAME

Nick stares at the closed furnace. Miyu next to him. He looks at her expecting tears, but instead she speaks breathlessly:

MIYU
Kill them for me.

CUT TO:

INT. A DARK TATAMI ROOM - NIGHT

Nick, Takeshi and Satoru sit cross-legged around a table in a small, dark tea room. They look at each other with shared purpose. On the table before them -

AN URN.

Takeshi takes the top off the urn. Picks it up with both hands, and brings it up above his chin. He opens his jaw -

POURS SOME ASH INTO HIS MOUTH. Stops. Swallows the ash whole. He passes the urn to Satoru.

Who performs the same ritual. And passes on to -

NICK holds the urn. He stares into the abyss inside. Lifts it up. And pours Kiyoshi's soul into his own.

He sets the urn down. Stares at it. Filled with power.

CUT TO:

EXT. A HIGH-RISE HOTEL - TOKYO - NIGHT

A TAXI pulls to a stop outside an expensive western-style hotel in Tokyo. And out from the backseat steps -

A man in RED GLASSES. The gunman from the Crown Vic. A tall, blonde woman steps out after him: a RUSSIAN PROSTITUTE.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - LATER

The gunman lays on the bed as the woman unbuckles his belt, unzips his pants. And pulls something out of her bag -

HANDCUFFS.

THE GUNMAN

<What the fuck is that?>

THE PROSTITUTE

<It's fun.>

THE GUNMAN

<You think I'm gay??>

THE PROSTITUTE

<You can put them on *me* later.>

He likes that. So she raises his hands behind his head, her big-bra-clad-breasts hanging in his face. And -

SHE LOCKS HIS HANDS together behind the headboard. And steps away from him. He follows her eyes to the bathroom:

The bathroom light flicks on and -

NICK AND TAKESHI POINT SILENCED .22'S AT HIM. The gunman eyes his 9MM, on his jacket all the way across the room. *Shit.*

Nick points the .22 at the bastard's head.

NICK

<Who was in the car with you?>

The gunman just looks Nick in the eyes. Smirks.

THE GUNMAN

Gaijin.

NICK

<Name them.>

THE GUNMAN

<Fuck you.>

TWIP! TWIP! TWIP! BLOOD SPITS ACROSS THE PILLOW as Nick unloads into the gunman's face. Dead in an instant.

Takeshi looks down at the guy as blood spreads through the pillowcase like spilled ink and he raises his own gun -

TWIP! TWIP! The head jerks subtly with the impact of bullets.

Nick hands the Russian girl a thick envelope, wrapped with a black bow. They exit. She stares at the body.

INT. MEETING ROOM - SEIZU HEADQUARTERS - NIGHT

Orochi and Eiichi sit with Hiromitsu Seizu at the Seizu headquarters. Everything is gold and glass and gaudy. Hiromitsu hangs up a phone. Livid with the bad news.

HIROMITSU

<Your man was supposed to kill him.>

OROCHI

<I made a promise to you and I'm going to keep it. Unlike Akihiro, I'm a man of honor.>

HIROMITSU

<We're on the verge of a war now! Don't patronize me.>

Orochi bristles, but he lowers his head. Eiichi interjects.

EIICHI

<The Matsuoka family is too small and disorganized to pose a threat. Trust me, there will be no war.>

BOOM! The windows SHATTER, the building SHAKES. Lights flick out. The explosion came from downstairs.

EXT. SEIZU HEADQUARTERS - MOMENTS LATER

Hiromitsu hurries out onto the street, Seizu soldiers flank him protectively as he watches -

FIREFIGHTERS put out the blaze in the entryway.

EXT. NICK AND MIYU'S HOUSE - MORNING

A BLACK AND WHITE IMAGE of the aftermath of the Seizu bombing dominates the front page of the OSAKA MAINICHI NEWSPAPER.

Miyu picks the paper up from the doorstep. Looks at the image, tired in her work clothes as she steps inside -

INT. NICK AND MIYU'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

But before she can close the door -

A WOMAN'S VOICE (O.C.)

Excuse me.

A WHITE AMERICAN WOMAN (30) stands in the doorway. Long brown hair expensively done-up. An air of education and wealth.

THE WHITE WOMAN (CONT'D)

Do you speak English?

(off Miyu's silence)

I'm looking for Nick Lowell. Does he live here?

MIYU

Yes.

The woman's eyes seem to immediately mist. And Miyu's eyes narrow. Who is this slut looking for her husband?

THE WHITE WOMAN

I'm sorry. Mary. Cartwright. I'm his sister.

Miyu looks at Mary's hand. A wedding ring. Her heels are expensive. Her purse patent leather. From a different world.

MIYU

He doesn't have a sister.

Mary looks pained. But then she reaches into her purse. Pulls out A PHOTO. We see just a glimpse as Miyu takes the photo in her hand: NICK IN A UNIFORM. She stares at it, breathless.

MARY

You must live with him.

MIYU

He's in Tokyo.

MARY

Would you mind if I...

Mary peers inside past Miyu, who steps out of the way, in a daze. And Miyu watches as Mary enters, her heels click across the floor, American custom not to take them off.

ON MARY. Her eyes are wet and she takes in her surroundings like she's in a museum. Everything at a distance, not to be touched. Vague. Until she reaches the door to the bedroom -

She looks down at the bed. Slept in. And then she sees -

THE SAMURAI SWORDS on the wall. The place is decidedly Japanese. Decidedly foreign and unfamiliar.

MIYU
You're in our room.

Mary looks at Miyu. And then she sees it... Miyu's belly and oh-my-god. She's *PREGNANT*. It takes time to find words.

MARY
I'm sorry. Do you know when he'll be home?

MIYU
I said he's in Tokyo.

Miyu waits for Mary to get out of their bedroom.

MARY
I understand.

Mary moves past. But as she steps back into -

INT. THE MAIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

She stops dead. NICK stands in the doorway.

Neither can speak. She just stares, studies his face, older than she remembered. In shock.

MARY
You're alive.

NICK
Why'd you come here, Mary?

Miyu sees the raw emotion in both of them.

MIYU
<You know her?>

NICK
<She's my sister.>
(to Mary, true concern)
You shouldn't be here.

MARY
You got older. You're a *man*.

NICK
What should I be?

MARY
We thought you were dead.

NICK
(re: the ring on her hand)
What's your name now?

MARY
Cartwright.

There's a distance between them. The name makes it wider.

MARY (CONT'D)
He works for the state department.

NICK
Did he pay for this trip?

MARY
You don't have to hide here
anymore. We can make a court
martial go away. You can come home.

NICK
I *am* home.

She looks in his eyes. A dark history unspoken but understood. And she knows it was a mistake to use the word.

NICK (CONT'D)
When did I die?

MARY
What kind of question is that?

NICK
If you thought I was dead, when did
I die? You remember what day? What
month?

MARY
You married one of them.

Nick looks at Miyu. And he sees the NEWSPAPER in her hand, the BOMBED SEIZU HEADQUARTERS on the front page.

NICK
(to Mary)
You don't belong here.

For the first time, she sees the .22 IN HIS WAISTBAND. She just studies him. Her brother, so long separated now, is utterly foreign to her. An orphan raised by wolves.

She looks at Miyu, nods an embarrassed apology. And she gathers her dignity, tears in her eyes. She walks outside -

EXT. NICK AND MIYU'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

And she turns to Nick -

MARY

You died on May 2nd, 1948.

NICK

I died a long time before that.

She looks at him for the last time, sees a trace of something familiar, something vulnerable. And then she walks away. Heels clicking and fading until she's gone from them.

INT. NICK AND MIYU'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Nick closes the door. He just stands there. His back to Miyu. Head heavy and he knows the questions are coming.

MIYU

You were in the army?

NICK

Does it matter?

MIYU

Did you kill Japanese?

NICK

Yes.

(off her silence)

And I killed an American.

MIYU

Why?

NICK

Because he deserved it.

He turns to face her. She stares, wondering who he is.

NICK (CONT'D)

You've got scars on your neck. They run down your back and they're rough to the touch. And I never asked you where they came from.

MIYU

Why not?

NICK

Because it doesn't matter.

(beat)

(MORE)

NICK (CONT'D)
Because I know who you are without
knowing that.

She looks in his eyes and sees truth in there. Puts a hand on
the .22 in his waistband. Both afraid and enamored with it.

MIYU
Did you use this in Tokyo?

His silence is an affirmation. He sees the NEWSPAPER on the
table behind her. The bombed Seizu headquarters.

NICK
Seizu wants a meeting with Akihiro.
If it doesn't go well, they'll
bring in more guys from Kobe. I
want you to be safe. Don't answer
the door for anyone.

MIYU
Are you going to the meeting?

NICK
Yes.

MIYU
Because you're a wakagashira?

NICK
Yes.

MIYU
Will you bring this?

She looks at him, her hand on the gun. Vengeance in her eyes.

NICK
He was my brother too.

EXT. SEIZU HEADQUARTERS - MORNING

It's raining. Gray skies. A Seizu brother holds an umbrella
over Hiromitsu's head as he escorts the old man into a
waiting Buick. Meanwhile -

I/E. CHEVY BEL AIR - SAME

Akihiro slides into the backseat of the Bel Air. Takeshi and
Ryo get in on either side of him. Satoru shuts their door and
gets in the driver's seat while Nick waits in shotgun.

Rain splatters the windows.

AKIHIRO

<It's a beautiful day to watch an
old bastard grovel for peace.>

Satoru pulls away from the curb.

NICK'S ANKLE: A BULGE. Nick stares forward, inconspicuous.

I/E. BUICK - MOVING - SAME

Hiromitsu looks out the windows of the Buick's backseat,
flanked by his silent soldiers on their way to the meeting.

EXT. TENNOJI ZOO - DAY

The rain falls over the gate at Osaka's TENNOJI ZOO. The
place is almost empty due to the weather. A mother and her
young daughter walk the footpaths.

EXT. PARKING LOT - SAME

The Bel Air pulls into the parking lot, puddles of rain water
sloshing. It comes to a stop a few spaces from a BUICK.

Car doors open. The Matsuokas climb out of the Bel Air and
Satoru opens an umbrella over Akihiro as -

TWO SEIZU BROTHERS get out of the Buick.

TAKESHI

<Where's Seizu?>

SEIZU BROTHER

<You think we'd leave him sitting
in a parking lot for you? He's in
the zoo. There're kids in there, so
leave your bombs in the car.>

Fuming, Takeshi opens his jacket and lifts his shirt to show
he has no weapons. The others follow suit. The Seizu too.

SEIZU BROTHER

<Okay.>

They don't see the bulge at Nick's ankle. Akihiro signals
Satoru to return to the car as the rest of the group walks to
the only open TICKET BOOTH.

The CASHIER tries not to betray his nervousness as the Seizu
brother buys six tickets for six yakuza.

EXT. TENNOJI ZOO - MAIN CONCOURSE - MOMENTS LATER

The Seizu yakuza step to the sides as the Matsuokas walk onto the sparse, main concourse at the zoo. Far ahead, beyond an archway, two men hold an umbrella for the third behind them, waiting. Akihiro glares at the trio as he walks.

CLOSE ON HIROMITSU. Umbrella over his head, he stares patiently through the rain, stone-faced -

And as the Matsuokas pass through the archway -

A MAN JUMPS AKIHIRO -

SHIK! SHOVES A KNIFE IN HIS THROAT - Akihiro goes down, BLOOD COURSING, horror in his eyes.

Nick lunges forward but FOUR YAKUZA are on him. In fact, there are four yakuza for each of the Matsuokas. An ambush:

SIXTEEN SEIZU YAKUZA. Nick and the others struggle but the Seizu force them to their knees. They can only watch as Akihiro bleeds. And -

HIROMITSU just stares coldly through the rain, but he isn't looking at Akihiro. Because he isn't at the zoo. He's at -

A BUDDHIST TEMPLE. Looking at the big BUDDHA in front of him. He drops coins in the offering box. Prays. While, far away -

AT THE ZOO. Akihiro bleeds out from the throat.

SEIZU BROTHER (CONT'D)

<The Matsuoka family doesn't exist anymore. But Hiromitsu wants you to live. On Eiichi's recommendation, he extends an offer to Ryo and Takeshi to work with us.>

Ryo stares hatred up at the man talking. Akihiro's eyes, glassy and weak, turn up to see Nick. And the Seizu brother turns his attention to Nick as well:

SEIZU BROTHER

<For you, on your brother Orochi's recommendation, we offer peace if you leave Osaka and your wife behind. We make no promises for her safety if you stay.>

(to Ryo)

<Do you accept?>

Akihiro gurgles softly for air as his lungs fill with blood. Nick watches him die, well aware of THE GUN STRAPPED TO HIS ANKLE but just as aware of how outnumbered he is.

TAKESHI

<Yes.>

Nick and Ryo look at Takeshi. Can't believe what they just heard him say. Takeshi's face is blank.

SEIZU BROTHER

<Then get up. Get out of here. We know where to find you.>

The men holding them all loosen their grip. But the three of them - Nick, Ryo and Takeshi - hold for a moment. Eyes on their dead oyabun.

SEIZU BROTHER

<I said get out of here.>

They stand. Nick is seething, doesn't understand the complacency and that's when -

TAKESHI JUMPS A SEIZU like a wild animal. Choking, frenzied - the Seizu swarm him and Nick acts fast, reflexes -

HE PULLS THE GUN - SHIT! Duct tape blocking the trigger -

A SEIZU sees him with the gun - aims his 9MM just as Nick rips the tape off, it's a race and -

BANG! BANG! NICK FIRES - bullets RIP through the guy but -

K-BANG! THE GUY FIRES BACK as he falls - Nick's shin blasts open and he falls and -

BANG! BANG! Fires at another Seizu who's pulling a gun - the man's KNEE IS DESTROYED, blood bursting - the Seizu scramble out of the way of the gunfire -

And RYO pulls Nick back to his feet as Nick realizes that -

TAKESHI LIES BLEEDING, THROAT SLIT on the ground. Nick struggles toward Takeshi but Ryo drags him the other way, supporting Nick on his bloody leg. The Seizu close in but -

BANG! Nick fires indiscriminately, fury in his eyes.

The Seizu hit the deck as Ryo pulls Nick away fast. Rounding a corner, he helps Nick heave over a fence into -

A SAVANNAH-STYLE ANIMAL ENCLOSURE. Ryo hops the fence too. Giraffes watch unmoved from within their sad, tall cages as the rain comes down and Nick trails blood across the dirt.

A YOUNG GIRL (7) stares, her head following the bizarre sight of a bleeding white man being dragged by a Japanese man through a space normally reserved for African mammals.

TWO-HUNDRED YARDS BACK. The Seizu have scattered, leaving bloody bodies to be pummelled by the rain:

Akihiro. Takeshi.

It's quiet now but for the rain. LIONS prowl, defending their small, fenced-in domain against nothing in particular.

CUT TO:

INT. RAMEN RESTAURANT - DAY

Customers eat ramen. A KADOMATSU PLANT sits by the cash register. No indication of what's going on in the -

INT. KITCHEN - SAME

Ryo kneels by Nick as a COOK wraps Nick's bleeding leg. Nick winces, talking through gritted teeth.

NICK

I don't want your fuckin' money.

RYO

What do you want?

NICK

Whaddayou think I want?

RYO

<If you don't leave Osaka, they
will find you. They won't care that
she's pregnant. Take it.>

(beat)

Take it.

Nick reluctantly takes crumpled cash from Ryo.

RYO (CONT'D)

<They'll go to your house. Go home
and take her far away from here.
There is no war without you here. I
will not protect you.>

(MORE)

RYO (CONT'D)
 (to cook)
 <Get him a cab.>

Ryo leaves.

EXT. NICK AND MIYU'S HOUSE - DAY

The small garden behind Nick and Miyu's house soaks in the rain. Nick stalks through the wilting flowers, bandages already bloody, paranoid as hell. He moves to the back door -

KNOCKS ON IT. And ducks back against the siding, gun in hand. He listens and stares at -

THE WINDOW adjoining the door. A faint reflection that allows him to see -

THE DOOR. It opens slowly, quietly. Nick ready to shoot but -

It's MIYU. She sees his ghostly face. His shin -

MIYU
 You're bleeding.

He limps inside, dripping water -

INT. NICK AND MIYU'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

NICK
 I told you not to open the door for anyone. You remember that??

MIYU
 What happened?

NICK
 Pack your clothes, okay?

MIYU
 What's going on??

NICK
 Just pack your fuckin' clothes!
 (re: the gun)
 You wanted me to bring this, right?
 You wanted me to bring that!?

He opens the cylinder and dumps out the bullets - all of them SPENT CASINGS. She watches them jingle out on the counter.

NICK (CONT'D)
 <Akihiro's dead.>

She's never seen Nick like this. Pale, the rain water drips heavy off his nose like sweat off a death row inmate.

NICK (CONT'D)
Would you rather live without me?

MIYU
What?

NICK
Would your rather *live without me*
or *die with me*?

He's dead serious. It's frightening. She answers, disbelief:

MIYU
Neither.

NICK
Then we gotta leave here.

INT. ROOM 513 - DAY

A HOTEL ROOM PHONE *RINGS*. And *RINGS*. And *Rings*. And *click* -

MARY
...Yes... I'll take it.

INTERCUT: NICK AT A PAY PHONE, BLEEDING IN THE STEADY RAIN.

NICK
You're still here.

MARY
I'm still here. Don't worry, I'm
leaving.

NICK
You're my sister, right? You're
still my sister?

His breathlessness worries her. Fear behind it.

EXT. MATSUOKA FAMILY HEADQUARTERS - DAY

POLICE swarm outside the Matsuoka headquarters. The black market is closed but the shifty characters who still mill out in the rain slink away at the sight of the cops.

INT. MATSUOKA GAMBLING HALL - SAME

The cops raid the gambling hall but there isn't a yakuza in sight. Just empty tables, empty offices, empty glasses.

CUT TO:

INT. OKONOMIYAKI RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Ryo and the remaining Matsuokas sit in a familiar Okonomiyaki restaurant. They've taken over the second floor room.

RYO

<Akihiro's gone but we *still* have a family. You still have a kumicho.>

The room around him is a roiling mourning and anger. But as he speaks, the brothers look up to Ryo. The man has power. He's different from Akihiro. Younger, more assured.

RYO (CONT'D)

<We still have money. *That's* what gives us power. Not guns and knives and swords. While the Seizu and the other families in Osaka and Kobe are cutting each other down in the streets, when the cops are clamping down on them and they're running scared, we'll be winning the *real* war. Soon, Japan will be run by corporations. And we will own 51% of their stock.>

He fans out cash like a magician. He has their attention.

INT. THE SMOKE ROOM - MATSUOKA HQ - DAY (EARLIER SCENE)

The cops continue their raid into the empty smoke room. The lead DETECTIVE stops dead in his tracks at the sight of:

GUNS SPLAYED OUT ON THE MEETING TABLE. Dozens of them. And A THICK ENVELOPE. A name on it, in kanji, translated for us:

DETECTIVE FUKUI

INT. LOBBY - HOTEL NEW OSAKA - NIGHT

The receptionist watches as Nick and Miyu approach, bags in hand. She tries not to react to Nick limping on a bloody leg.

RECEPTIONIST
You are staying with us?

NICK
Room 513.

RECEPTIONIST
Mary Kattorighto. You call before?

NICK
Yeah.

RECEPTIONIST
Sign here prease, sank you.

He does. She points to the elevator. They head for it.

A private moment: the receptionist looks at Miyu, sees that she's pregnant, walking with a white man. Disapproves in the most glancing, polite, Japanese way possible.

INT. HALLWAY - FIFTH FLOOR - HOTEL NEW OSAKA - NIGHT

513. Nick *KNOCKS* on the door. Waits. *KNOCKS* again. Tries the door and it opens to -

INT. MARY'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Empty. Bed made. The bathroom door is open. Light on. Nick walks in, approaches the bathroom door and the sound he makes is inhuman - wailing, the word "no", cried and unfinished, choked by his own throat. Miyu sees what he sees -

MARY SITS UP IN THE BATHROOM LIKE A PORCELAIN DOLL. We don't get the whole picture. Just images. Her face: pale and heavy with death. Blood spilt from her slit wrists.

Nick can't stand anymore. He can't move. He just stares at her, breaking down. Miyu tries to hold him together.

INT. LOBBY - HOTEL NEW OSAKA - NIGHT

The receptionist smiles at nothing as she sits pert in her chair alone. *Ding*. She sees Nick coming from the elevator, Miyu following. And Nick looks every kind of wrong.

He walks right up to her sign-in book and starts reading down it. He stops on an entry.

NICK
Who's this?

RECEPTIONIST

Sir?

NICK

Who was this? They came before me.

RECEPTIONIST

Ah... two salesmen. Very young.

NICK

Yakuza?

She's taken aback - that isn't something you *talk about*. And now Nick is holding a .22 like it's nothing, checking that he has bullets in the chambers, waiting for her response.

NICK (CONT'D)

Gimme your phone.

She slides the phone toward him. As he dials:

NICK (CONT'D)

I want you to give her a room. No one visits her, understand, unless you have them call up first and she says okay to you *directly*.

He palms cash out on the reception desk as someone picks up his call and he talks into the phone now:

NICK

<Get Ryo.>

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

NICK HANDS MIYU THE .22 in a fresh hotel room. He's talking fast, mind on fire.

NICK

You use that if you have to.

MIYU

Where are you going?

NICK

I'll be back.

MIYU

Let's leave together.

NICK

I'll be back tomorrow night. Look at me, hey. You aren't safe with me until then. They're sending someone to wait with you, you're gonna be okay.

He pulls another gun, a 9MM, from his bag. And then he grabs the WAKIZASHI - the short sword of honor. He stuffs both through his belt. She grabs him. Makes him kiss her.

NICK

Remember the day I broke your door?
...Who hit you?

She stares back at him, afraid now what he might do. But her fear betrays the truth. Nick knows now.

NICK (CONT'D)

I'll see you tomorrow. I promise.

She watches him go. And she locks the door, sits back, looking at the gun in her hand like it weighs the world.

EXT. YODO RIVERBANK - MORNING

No cicadas today. Just the river softly lapping and the *kchuk-kchuk-kchuk* of a subway car crossing the bridge.

Osaka is at peace so early in the day.

EXT. HOTEL NEW OSAKA - SAME

A BLACK BEL AIR pulls to front of the hotel. Ryo and Satoru get out.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - MORNING

A *knock* at the door. Miyu gets up from where she sits by the phone, still holding that gun. She approaches the door and -

CUT TO:

INT. TEA CEREMONY ROOM - DAY

The very same room where Nick severed his fingers. The room is filled with members of the Seizu family. A long roll of paper down the center of the room. Hiromitsu sits at one end, his kyodai kneeling in two long columns along the paper.

It's familiar, more so when -

A MAN enters the room carrying a BOTTLE OF SAKE and a WOODEN BOX. He kneels next to Hiromitsu and sets the box down. Begins pouring SAKE into a sakazuki cup. And we see now -

OROCHI. He kneels among the others along the paper. Awaiting the sakazuki ritual.

EXT. TEA HOUSE - DAY

NICK walks past stunned hostesses in the garden outside a tea house complex. Limping, his leg bandaged, saturated with dried blood, sleepless, gun in his waistband, wakizashi in his hand. The women scatter off, terrified.

He just marches straight for THE MAIN TEA HOUSE.

INT. TEA CEREMONY ROOM - DAY

The man pouring sake sets the bottle down. And as Hiromitsu reaches down for the cup -

SEIZU BROTHER

<Boss!>

Hiromitsu looks ready to break the man's face for interrupting the ritual, but the man looks scared and now it's too late as -

THE DOOR AT THE END OF THE ROOM SLIDES OPEN.

NICK STANDS THERE. But only for a second as -

SHOUTING - MAYHEM - FLASHES OF MOTION -

YAKUZA TACKLE HIM, THEY WREST THE GUN AND SWORD from him and in seconds he finds himself disheveled on his knees at the end of the long paper, A DOZEN GUNS AIMED AT HIS HEAD -

He just smiles to himself. Almost dizzy.

HIROMITSU

<You think you can just walk in here??>

Nick looks up at Hiromitsu at the far end of the paper from him. Long rows of yakuza staring back along the periphery.

NICK

You know you have a newspaper? A
yakuza newspaper where you
advertise this shit. Your
ceremonies and your *meetings*.
You're all so *fearless* and *proud*.
That's your tradition, right?

HIROMITSU

<You came here to kill me?>

Nick's eyes are locked with Hiromitsu.

NICK

<No.>

Hiromitsu stares back, confused, as Nick stands. Slowly, leg
in blinding pain. Nervous yakuza shout and press their guns
to his head. But he doesn't even flinch. No fear of death.

He takes a step. The men follow, anxious with their guns
cocked but Hiromitsu signals them to hold any fire.

As Nick walks -

HIROMITSU

<Stop.>

Nick ignores him. STILL IN HIS SHOES, he steps onto the
paper. It crinkles underfoot as he makes his way. The kyodai
all staring up at him as he slowly passes until he gets to -

OROCHI. Eiichi sits next to him, practically shaking. But
Nick stares down into Orochi's eyes, guns still at his head:

NICK

Get up.

OROCHI

<I gave you a deal.>

Nick's words are meant for Hiromitsu, but he doesn't take his
eyes off Orochi for a second:

NICK

<He hasn't had sakazuki yet. He
isn't a member of your family.>
(beat)
<He's still my *brother*.>

HIROMITSU

<What do you want?>

NICK

<I want my fingers back.>

Hiromitsu scoffs. Nick holds his hands up, fingers missing:

NICK (CONT'D)

<I gave you my respect. I thought
you cared about justice.>

Hiromitsu stares at Nick, standing in his shoes on the clean sakazuki paper, bloodied and offensive.

HIROMITSU

<More than you do.>

NICK

<Then let me kill him.>

HIROMITSU

<I can't let you kill him.>

NICK

<Give him a weapon.>

Hiromitsu is silent. He processes the idea. Orochi's getting nervous. He notices some of the Seizu looking at *him* now.

NICK (CONT'D)

<If I kill him, I'll leave your
country. If he kills me, I'll be
dead.>

Dead silence. Hiromitsu looks to Orochi for his response. Orochi knows that backing down means losing face.

He stands. Time to be an alpha dog. He looks Nick dead in the eye. And then he takes Nick's sword from the yakuza holding it. He smirks at the quaint thing in his hand.

OROCHI

<You think you're a yakuza with
this? You aren't yakuza. You're an
outsider. Wherever you go now,
you're an outsider. With those
fingers and that dragon on your
back you think you can go back to
America? They don't let you through
"customs" if you've been cut.
Without a yakuza family, you'll
have to run far. No cities for you.
Can't get a job in Japan with a
tattoo.

(MORE)

OROCHI (CONT'D)

If you steal to survive, cops'll arrest you and with fingers like that they won't treat you like the other white men. If Yakuza see you, forget it, they'll kill you on sight for being an abomination. Let me guess, even Ryo told you to run. Maybe he gave you some cash to help you out, send you far away?>

Orochi puts the wakizashi back in Nick's hands. He's almost sympathetic:

OROCHI

<Akihiro was crazy. Ryo knew that. Everyone knew that. So no, I won't kill you. The world will do that.>

The room is hostile with stares.

NICK

You think I don't know that? You think I'm here because I wanna be a part of your world?

(beat)

<You think I'm here for my honor?>

OROCHI

What are you here for, gaijin?

Nick looks into Orochi's eyes, a long beat and -

SHIK! HE SLICES OROCHI'S THROAT OPEN -

BLOOD POURS OUT. A steady stream flowing over skin sliced open. Orochi's eyes staring back in horror as he knows he's dying and fast. He falls to his knees. Collapses at Nick's feet. And Nick sheathes the wakizashi.

Orochi's blood courses out over the paper. Nick looks around. Nobody moves. Everyone in shock. He faces Hiromitsu:

NICK

(re: Eiichi)

You should have him translate this.

No one flinches but as Nick speaks, Eiichi starts to catch up, translating as much as his shock will allow him:

NICK (CONT'D)

I know you're not gonna kill me here because your *honor* wouldn't allow that. So I want you to know that you *should* kill me, right now.

(MORE)

NICK (CONT'D)
Cause I'm gonna come for you and
I'm gonna slit your fuckin' throat
too. I'm not leaving this city.
Remember that when you try to sleep
at night.
(beat)
Here's my honor.

He drops the wakizashi on the paper. Blood sticky.

He turns and limps along the paper all the way to the door.
The men with guns don't follow, they just stare at what's
left of Orochi. Another quiet Japanese tea room.

EXT. YODO RIVERBANK - DAY

Finally the cicadas start buzzing as the sun is on the wane.

INT. LOBBY - HOTEL NEW OSAKA - EVENING

The receptionist stares in shock as Nick enters the lobby,
the colors of sunset outside but Nick's hands are ghastly.
Palms ruddy-red with blood. A spray of blood on his shirt.

But there is a look of peace on his face.

She watches in awe as he heads for the elevators.

INT. BEDROOM - SAME

CLOSE ON MIYU. She sits still, staring. The oak headboard
behind her, stale wallpaper behind it. A sad, empty space.

THE DOOR. It opens. Nick steps in.

NICK'S POV:

THE ROOM IS EMPTY. BED MADE. He knows it before we do -

BANG! A BULLET BLASTS THROUGH THE BACK OF HIS HEAD. He falls
forward onto the carpet. Dead in an instant. And his shooter:

SATORU. His heart is broken. But he forces himself to watch
as the blood spreads out. Nick's eyes, lifeless.

CUT TO:

INT. TRAIN STATION - SAME

MIYU sits in front of that headboard, but as we circle round, we realize it isn't a headboard, it's a bench along the wall of a train station. And next to her sits -

RYO. He's somber, ashamed. She's dead inside.

RYO
<I made a promise to your brother a
long time ago.>
(beat)
<You're both safe now.>

He nods toward her belly. She doesn't respond.

A train screeches to a stop. And Ryo knows that's his cue, she still hasn't looked at him. He gets up. Walks away. An ENVELOPE OF MONEY where he sat. But Miyu ignores it. She just sits there, staring into an uncertain future.

CUT TO:

MONTAGE:

A BULLDOZER PLOWS OVER STALLS at the Juso black market.

Construction in Osaka. The skyline claws its way upward.

Streets are jammed with cars. But the cars have changed, no more muscle cars. More subdued. This is 1966.

INT. BOARD ROOM - DAY

A board room in a high rise - one of Osaka's first. A table full of WELL-DRESSED BUSINESSMEN pay attention to ANOTHER's presentation concerning OIL FUTURES. And RYO sits at the table, years older. An air of power and wealth about him. His KAIKEI (accountant) sits beside him.

As the presentation drones on, the businessmen turn their eyes invariably to Ryo. Intimidated, seeking his approval.

EXT. DOTONBORI - OSAKA - DAY

Dotonbori is not too different from how it is today. A shopping street dominated by electronics and technology sold wholesale. SONY RADIOS sell like mad.

But while Osaka teems...

EXT. SOMEWHERE IN RURAL FUKUI - DAY

A DIRT ROAD. The cicadas *buzz*.

WE FOLLOW A TWELVE YEAR-OLD GIRL on a BICYCLE. Her face unseen, she turns down a road, a ditch running along it -

A ROW OF PRISONERS HALTS WORK ON COMMAND. The guards keep a watchful eye as the girl bikes past. They bow to her.

EXT. RURAL TOWN ROAD - DAY

The girl turns onto a rural town road lined by traditional single-story homes. She stops at one of them. Hops off her bike and leans it against the house. Walks inside -

INT. THE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The house is empty, so the girl continues through to the back, through open shoji doors to -

MIYU. Thirty-one years old now. She sits at the back door, looking out at a small garden. Lost in thought. But she turns to see her daughter:

MARIKO. Half-white, half-Japanese. She looks smart for her age. Too smart, she might be trouble in a few years.

And Mariko can see that her mom is distant again. So she shows her mom her CLOSED HAND. Miyu watches her daughter adoringly as Mariko opens her hand to reveal -

A CICADA. Quiet and scared. But then it flies away.

END.