

THE CHRYSANTHEMUM THRONE



A Screen or Teleplay

By

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FADE IN:

OPENING SHOTS WITH TITLES OVER - MORNING

CAMERA HOLDS on an elaborate black lacquer THRONE with thousands of inlaid yellow chrysanthemum FLOWERS covering it. CAMERA MOVES slowly to a WINDOW behind throne.

A magnificent SUNRISE is coming up over the Sea of Japan. The sun is a large red ball of fire, rising through a background of misty mountains and tall pines. Yokohama Bay and Mount Fuji are in the distance.

[Titles]

EXT. TOKYO, JAPAN - MORNING - JANUARY 7, 1989

AERIAL VIEW of the city of Tokyo, same morning. It is still sunrise; the curved edged *Nihon kenchiku*, angled rooftops and cobbled streets are seen below.

The city is slowly coming to life, while the red sun continues to rise in the background.

INT. DR. AKIRA'S BEDROOM - MORNING

It is pitch dark in the room as the telephone rings. DR. TAKI AKIRA, 80's, switches on a light then he answers the phone. He is in his mid-eighties, clean-shaven with gray hair, but still remarkably astute and nimble for his age.

TAKI

Hai. Yes...What is it?

(pause)

DR. AKIRA listens to the caller. His WIFE, 80s, awakens next to him.

TAKI (CONT'D)

I will be there as fast as I can. *Domo arigato*, thank you.

DR. AKIRA looks at his watch then jumps out of bed, puts on his clothes, kisses his wife and leaves quickly.

EXT. THE IMPERIAL PALACE, TOKYO - SAME MORNING

HOLD SHOT TO ESTABLISH THE PALACE

INT. THE EMPEROR'S QUARTERS - SAME MORNING

DR. AKIRA is rushing down the Grand Hall past a row of GUARDS. He stops and enters through three huge dragon decorated doors, and finally reaches a room painted entirely white.

Two ATTENDANTS bow to greet the doctor.

In an elaborate four-poster bed lays the dying EMPEROR HIROHITO, 88, with closed eyes. DR. AKIRA goes to his side, checks his pulse.

The EMPEROR opens his eyes and there's a faint sign of joy in seeing AKIRA'S face. The EMPEROR motions slightly with his hand to come closer.

DR. AKIRA smiles at the EMPEROR, notices something in his clenched fist, a small scrap of PAPER.

EMPEROR

Is it finished...I shall travel
to meet my great ancestors soon.

TAKI

Don't say such things, Highness.

EMPEROR

We've come along way together,
Taki.

TAKI

Yes, it has been a long journey.

DR. AKIRA gazes out the window.

EMPEROR

Why do you hesitate to speak the
truth? If I am to die, then so be
it! Do you remember what Monk Ju
taught us?

TAKI

Hai, I remember...It was snowing
that day.

TAKI smiles to himself, reflecting.

TAKI(CONT'D)

They were wonderful times...

DISSOLVE:

EXT. THE WINTER PALACE IN KYOTO - 1912 - DAY

FLASHBACK - HOLD SHOT TO ESTABLISH PALACE.
It is snowing outside.

INT. BUDDHIST TEMPLE IN THE WINTER PALACE - 1912 - DAY

CAMERA PULLS BACK from an elderly Buddhist. MONK JU-
60s, is teaching a small class of five young Japanese
BOYS around the age of twelve.

MONK JU is kindly, has shaved head and wears a red robe.
He speaks to the boys as though they were adults. The
children wear green robes, except for PRINCE HIROHITO,
who wears a black-silk kimono with gold trim.

MONK JU

People speak about changes in
their lives as if this were a
problem...But you see this is
the essence of life and the
very foundation of Buddhism.

MONK JU notices two of the small boys, PRINCE HIROHITO
and TAKI AKIRA looking out a small crack in the window,
fascinated by the falling SNOW.

They are watching six saffron-robed MONKS pulling on a
gong rope for a large BLACK BELL at a pagoda shrine.

MONK JU

Yes, my young Prince, like
the falling snow, everything
is subject to change...

The monk opens a window, lets some freshly fallen snow fall to his palm.

MONK JU (CONT'D)

The snowflake falls from the heavens turns to water -- only to return again to heaven. The process repeats itself much like our souls in reincarnation.

PRINCE

Why do I need to know such things?

MONK JU

Because one day you will be the Great Emperor. You will also be the spiritual leader of the people, and for this reason you must learn.

PRINCE gets to his feet in his black robes, pulling TAKI up with him. The rest of the boys stay seated.

PRINCE

(to Monk Ju)

I'm tired of this now. I'm taking Taki out to play with me.

Old MONK JU says nothing, only bows in acceptance.

The PRINCE takes TAKI by the hand and leaves.

Two lovely young GEISHAS, 20s, with eyes cast down, bow as TAKI and the PRINCE leave the temple.

One of the women whispers to the other Geisha.

GEISHA 1

Who is the new boy?

GEISHA 2

Ah... He's the one Emperor Meiji found in the palace gardens.

GEISHA 1

Yes, the Emperor was strolling when he came across the baby. He and the Empress decided to adopt the child.

GEISHA 1

The Emperor has a great heart.

They nod, leave the temple together.

INT. COURTYARD IN THE WINTER PALACE - DAY

As TAKI and the PRINCE walk through the open garden path to the Grand Hall, rows of SAMURAI SOLDIERS bow in reverence, their black enamel armor gleaming in the sun.

In the background dozens of GARDNERS attend to the lush palace gardens filled with roses, chrysanthemums, and lilies.

An elderly, gray-haired GARDENER, 50's, glances around from a side trellis, trying to get a peek at the PRINCE.

In the next second, the swift sound of a sword blade WOOSHES by, and the Gardener's head rolls amongst the chrysanthemums he was tending, staring out with a frightening expression, eyes wide with shock.

TAKI sees it and is startled by his first encounter with such stark violence.

TAKI

(to Prince)

Did you see..?

The Prince seems unfazed.

PRINCE

They know the rules. Forget these peasants.

TAKI

Yes, my Prince.

They continue their walk.

INT. GRAND HALL IN WINTER PALACE - DAY

TAKI and PRINCE HIROHITO walk down the massive, richly decorated halls with rows of SERVANTS and SOLDIERS bowing as they pass.

The little PRINCE is aloof, takes it for granted.

An elderly gentleman, MR. WILFRED DAWSON, 60's, in western dress, black suit with tails, white shirt with button down collar and tie is walking down the hall toward the boys with another white-haired Japanese MAN in his 60s. He is KATO TAGADO, the Japanese Foreign Minister.

Both men stop, and bow respectfully to the PRINCE.

KATO

How are you today, your Highness?

PRINCE

Quite well, thank you.

KATO

Have you met, Mr. Dawson, the U.S. Ambassador?

PRINCE

Yes, we met briefly last week.

DAWSON bows, as KATO turns to TAKI.

KATO

I have something for you...

He reaches into his pocket and produces a small silver COIN on a chain. KATO places it gently around TAKI's neck.

KATO

This was left by your mother when we found you. The Emperor wanted you to have it.

(bows)

Well, Taki, what do you want to be when you grow up?

TAKI fondles the ancient coin curiously. But his attention quickly shifts to a TOY PLANE in his hand. He sails it in the air, excitedly.

TAKI

I want to be a pilot and fly an airplane!

MR. DAWSON

A pilot? That's good, little one. I'm sure you will be one day.

KATO

(turns to Prince)

Now, for the bad news... Your grandfather is very ill. He wants to see you.

PRINCE

Is grandfather going to die?

KATO

It's for the Gods to decide.

They bow again to one another, and the PRINCE and TAKI hurry down the hall to EMPEROR MEIJI'S bedroom.

INT. EMPEROR MEIJI'S BEDROOM - DAY

PRINCE and TAKI enter the darkened room. TAKI stops at the door, looking down at the floor. PRINCE continues into the spacious room next to the EMPEROR'S bedside.

The old EMPEROR is laying stretched out on a large golden bed with white-silk draped canopy. He's in his mid-eighties and looks weak and frail.

Four LADIES-IN-WAITING attend him, placing hot towels on his forehead and arms. Another one helps by lifting his head to drink tea.

Two male NURSES in white enter the room with fresh towels, keeping their gaze to the floor to avoid looking at the EMPEROR.

As the PRINCE approaches the bed, the EMPEROR manages a faint smile.

EMPEROR MEIJI

Hirohito... glad you have come.

PRINCE

Are you very sick, Grandfather?

EMPEROR MEIJI

It appears so, my boy.

The EMPEROR clicks his finger, all quickly leave.
TAKI stands quietly at the door, listening as they talk.

EMPEROR MEIJI

There is much we must discuss
before I journey to our ancestors.
Your father's mind is tormented by
devils. His reign will be short-
lived. So, it is you who will be
the new hope of Japan.

PRINCE

Oh please, grandfather, don't talk
of such things... you are greatest
of all Emperors.

The PRINCE falls into the EMPEROR'S arms and they embrace
lovingly.

EMPEROR MEIJI

You must be strong and gain
admiration through your deeds.
You must achieve respect and know
everyday problems of the lowest
peasant -- You see, for only then
will you become one with the people.

PRINCE

Yes, Grandfather, I understand.

TAKI quietly closes the door as they continue talking,
leaves down the hall.

EXT. MAMOYAMA ROAD (NEAR KYOTO) JULY 1912 - NIGHT

A magnificent night FUNERAL procession in progress.

The golden casket and catafalque is borne on an
elaborately decorated wagon, drawn by five white OXEN.

A ceremonial SWORD is placed at the head of the casket with four red lanterns lighting the corners of the dais, all in accordance with Shinto ritual.

The procession is followed by hundreds of DIGNITARIES, PRIESTS, and COMMONERS alike.

At the head of the procession is MONK JU, wearing all white robes, sashes and ceremonial stove pipe hat. He offers prayers as he walks along while MUSICIANS play soft drum rolls and reed flute music.

At the flank of the procession are rows of Samurai warriors on horseback and thousands of peasants, kneeling in prayer beside the road.

A lone FARMER, 30's, is standing at the edge of a cliff overlooking the procession, dressed in a white kimono. He drops to his knees, weeping in quiet desperation, then reaches down, picks up a knife and shoves it into his stomach, committing hara-kiri.

An OLD WOMAN and her DAUGHTER weep at the side of the road as the casket passes. They push forward with out stretched arms, but the Samurai soldiers hold them back in line.

CAMERA TRACKS TO back of the procession, behind the foreign dignitaries, to a detachment of officers on horseback from the U.S.A., France, Germany and Britain.

CAMERA PULLS IN on two of the officers on horse back; MAJOR EDWARD SIMMS, 30's is British, with thin moustache. The other is COLONEL THOMAS HART, 40's, clean shaven with flecks of gray at his temples. The two men are dressed in full regalia; swords, epaulettes, spit-shine boots, etc.

COL. HART

Well, now that the old boy's gone
we're going to see some problems.

MAJOR SIMMS

How's that, Sir?

COL. HART

The new Emperor, they say he's going
to be difficult to deal with.

MAJOR SIMMS

What about the Shogun? I thought he held the real power here.

COL. HART

That may have been so ten years ago. That is, until the damn Germans taught the Emperor the use of standing army and navy. The Shogun lost power.

MAJOR SIMM

Then who holds the real power?

COL. HART

It's the fearsome Samurai and other clans united under the next Emperor we have to worry about.

MAJOR SIMMS

If those clans unite, they'll be quite a force to reckon with.

COL. HART

Exactly. But don't worry, we've kept them in line by displays of force now and then. And we've made it clear to the Kaiser we won't allow anymore German intervention -- Bloody Krauts!

MAJOR SIMMS

There seems so much to learn, Colonel. I've only been here two weeks now and my head's spinning.

COL. HART.

Relax, Simms. You'll get used to it.

EXT. BEACH AT YOKAHAMA BAY - 1912 - DAY

A large ROYAL BARGE is landing at a secluded beach. The ship is gold and red, flying white mourning flags. The barge pulls into shore, and the little PRINCE, his MOTHER, 30s, and MONK JU are carried ashore in sedan chairs.

The chairs are lowered on the beach and a red carpet is rolled out for them. The PRINCE looks sad, followed by MONK JU and his MOTHER.

The three walk along the shore together in quiet discussion. Three servants hold rice-paper umbrellas over their heads from behind.

PRINCE

(to Mother)

If Grandfather was God, why did he die?

MOTHER

That is a question for Monk Ju.

PRINCE

I miss him so much. Why does anyone have to die?

The PRINCE walks over to a tide pool and gazes in at it. MONK JU comes up next to him and also gazes into it. CLOSE ON the water with a starfish, a crab, a dead fish, small minnows swimming around eating seaweed.

MONK JU

(to Prince)

It is said that all life began in pools such as these. The endless cycle can be seen, if one were able to watch long enough. Life, death, rebirth is all part of an evolving process...

(beat)

Just as the fish eats the plant, the crab will eat the fish and so on... It is all nature at work, and your Grandfather is part of this process.

The PRINCE spots a jellyfish washing up near the tide pool.

PRINCE

Mother, come quick...What is it?

PRINCE goes to pick it up, but is stopped by his MOTHER.

MOTHER

Don't touch it. It will sting you.

MONK JU

Ah yes, but there is one exception to the evolving process- the jellyfish. For millions of years this species has somehow defied change.

The PRINCE gets down on his knees fascinated with the jellyfish. MONK JU takes a stick and drags it onto the sand for a closer look.

PRINCE

I want to keep it... Can I take it home, Mother?

MOTHER

Don't be foolish.

PRINCE

I said, I want to take it home!

MOTHER

My son, your wish is my command.

MOTHER snaps her fingers to the servants and gives them orders to put the jellyfish in a bucket from the barge filled with water. The PRINCE follows them, and they all return to the barge to leave.

INT. IMPERIAL COURT IN YEDO PALACE - AUGUST 1912 - DAY

CAMERA PULLS BACK from the face of newly crowned EMPEROR TAISHO, 20s, seated on the chrysanthemum throne, he's holding a scroll up to his eye, peering through it like it's a telescope.

TAISHO'S P.O.V. - He sees different Japanese and foreign dignitaries lined up in rows, trying not to look at him directly, except out the corners of their eyes. The dignitaries appear distressed, wondering what the EMPEROR is doing looking through the rolled scroll.

EMPEROR finally puts down the scroll. He is thin with elongated face and short hair with mustache and goatee. He is twenty-seven years old and already shows signs of insanity.

He wears a long red velvet-cloak with a coat-of-arms over left breast, a thick gold chain with medallions hangs around his neck, holding his head high, feigning supremacy.

One of the Japanese officials breaks the silence. He is LORD YAMAGATA ARITOMO of the powerful Choshu Clan. YAMAGATA is portly and bald, in his late seventies, in black Kimono dress, wearing a sword in his cummerbund. YAMAGATA approaches the EMPEROR, bows his head and speaks to him as if he were a child.

YAMAGATA

Your Highness, there are important matters to discuss. I suggest you dismiss the foreigners.

The EMPEROR holds the scroll up to his eye again, then points as he looks at different British, American, German and French envoys, ordering them out, one at a time. COL. HART and the MAJOR are among them.

EMPEROR TAISHO

(to envoys)

You USA, you go. France you also go!

After they leave, YAMAGATA continues.

YAMAGATA

(to Emperor)

I have discussed with Prime Minister Saionji the allotment I need from the treasury for two more army divisions.

PRIME MINISTER SAIONJI, 60s, comes forward and stands next to YAMAGATA. He is wearing western dress, suit and tie. He is articulate and soft-spoken.

P.M. SAIONJI

Your Highness, the treasury can no longer afford such extravagant expenditures. The people are already upset with the high rice tax they pay. Besides this, if Lord Yamagata were to get his two new army divisions, it would be seen as a threat by the foreigners.

YAMAGATA

We must counter the foreign devils sooner or later. They have already gained a strong hold in Japan. They must leave.

P. M. SAIONJI

The 'foreign devils', as you call them, have been quite good for development of our country. They teach us many things; the Germans, how to train our armies, the Americans, how to set up our congressional Diet. the British, import-export, and the Dutch, how to build better ships. Why should we antagonize them?

YAMAGATA

It is a matter of honor! If we do not expel them now, Japan will never be a sovereign power on its own.

EMPEROR TAISHO appears restless and bored, looks around. His attention starts to wander to two of his seventeen year old CONCUBINES as the discussion continues.

P. M. SAIONJI

Power is all you are concerned with. Your Choshu clan and the Satsuma clan have taken control of the Diet, and the people are furious because they know you have exported much of their rice to Britain and America. And now you want to raise their taxes and the price of rice. I warn you, you are playing with fire, Lord Yamagata.

The EMPEROR stands from his throne and shouts at YAMAGATA and P.M. SAIONJI.

EMPEROR TAISHO

Enough..! I have heard enough.
I want you both out of my sight.
We are finished for today...

The two men bow respectfully and walk away as the Imperial Court breaks up.

As SAIONJI walks away, YAMAGATA gives a nod-signal to one of his Samurai soldiers.

CUT TO:

EXT IMPERIAL PALACE GATES (YEDO PALACE) - DAY

COL. HART and MAJOR SIMMS are on horses riding out of the huge palace gates, guarded by armed Japanese soldiers in khaki military uniforms.

COL. HART
(to Simms)

You have to understand Major, that the Emperor holds little power in the long run. It's the clans that really run the show behind the scenes, so watch out for Yamagata.

When the massive timber gates are pulled open, they see a German Officer riding in towards them. The Officer is FIELD MARSHALL VON STROUT, 60's, sporting a large white handle-bar mustache.

They salute one another as they meet.

VON STROUT
Well, Colonel, how are you today?

COL. HART
Very good, Field Marshall von Strout.
My lumbago is much better these days.
(beat)
Let me introduce you to Major Simms..

MAJOR SIMMS
My pleasure, Field Marshall.

COLONEL HART looks down at a microscope VON STROUT is carrying under his arm.

COL. HART
What on earth are you doing with a microscope? Don't tell me you're interested in science?

VON STROUT

By no means, it's a present for the Prince. Now that he is Regent and second line to the throne, we thought it a good idea to pay our respects... How's that lovely daughter of yours?

COL. HART

Fine, give my regards to your wife.

VON STROUT

I certainly will. Well, I must be going. I have an appointment with the Prime Minister at three. Good bye, Colonel.

They salute and VON STROUT rides on toward the palace.

MAJOR SIMMS

He seems a good natured old sod.

COL. HART

Don't be fooled. Ever heard the old adage: Beware of Greeks bearing Gifts? In this case it's the Germans.

MAJOR SIMMS

How do you mean?

COL. HART

The Germans are pretty clever and von Strout is nobody's fool. They're grooming Hirohito for their needs. I know for a fact they're already working on Yamagata.

MAJOR SIMMS

I see... Could be an unholy alliance.

COL. HART

Now you've got the picture, Major.

INT PRINCE HIROHITO'S BEDROOM, PALACE - 1914 - DAY

TAKI is playing with a wooden rubber-band wind-up airplane, sailing it around the room. PRINCE calls him over to see something he's looking at under the microscope. The boys are aged about fourteen now.

PRINCE

Taki, come look... Algae-plankton,
a most marvelous sight; In it we
can see a miniature ocean!

TAKI comes over and looks. He's fascinated. The PRINCE wants him to look at another slide, when in his hurry, PRINCE accidentally cuts his finger on the edge of the glass. PRINCE lets out a painful sigh. TAKI turns to look.

TAKI

You bleed?

PRINCE

You will tell no one -- If you are
my true friend, you will say nothing.

TAKI

I will tell no one, my Prince.

PRINCE puts another slide under his microscope.

PRINCE

When I am Emperor, you will always
be by my side. You will be my most
trusted confidant.

TAKI

Most trusted, your Highness?

PRINCE

Yes, and you must tell me if I start
to become crazy like my father...
You will tell me, won't you?

TAKI

I will tell you, sire.

Some servants bring in a large toy Chinese paper DRAGON for them to play with. The boys abandon the microscope, go chasing after the dragon.

PRINCE and TAKI are playing chase with some of the ladies-in-waiting, chasing the snake-dragon around the room.

They laugh and dance as the toy serpent swirls and wriggles to the sound of clashing noises made by a pair of cymbals. It's a fun scene until TAKI bumps into the PRINCE accidentally, causing him to FALL to the ground.

Everyone goes deathly QUIET, as the PRINCE is sprawled out on the floor. He looks stunned, and everyone in the room is glaring angrily at TAKI, who's frightened what will happen next.

Two stern looking MAN-SERVANTS grab TAKI by the collar, while the ladies-in-waiting comfort the PRINCE who is teary-eyed, about to cry. But TAKI, in uncontrollable fear, suddenly BREAKS WIND.

The PRINCE starts to laugh and the women giggle as well. PRINCE points to TAKI and everyone starts LAUGHING...

INT. EMPEROR TAISHO'S BATHING ROOM - NIGHT

LAUGHTER CONTINUES into this scene -- Two 17-year old CONCUBINES are in a redwood hot-tub bathing with the EMPEROR. They're laughing, frolicking around in the nude, splashing water at each other. Then the EMPEROR looks bored, climbs out of the tub as the two girls begin to wash one another.

EMPEROR throws on his kimono and disappears into another room.

The two concubines continue washing one other's back, humming a sweet Japanese song, as the EMPEROR reappears wearing a grotesque Japanese ceremonial MASK.

EMPEROR starts chanting, dancing around the tub, with a spear in one hand, Samurai sword in the other. EMPEROR begins singing loudly over the girls, almost comically.

The girls are startled at first sight of the mask, then begin laughing at the EMPEROR's off-key singing.

The EMPEROR stops, looks perturbed, moves in on the girls, making growling noises.

EMPEROR raises his sword over the girls. The blade comes SWOOPING down...

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE BATHING ROOM - NIGHT

BLOOD-CURDLING SCREAMS are heard! - Then stop abruptly.

TWO MAN-SERVANTS come running in to the Bathing Room to see what's happened.

INT. EMPEROR TAISHO'S BATHING ROOM - NIGHT

When they look in they're shocked, repulsed -- The two lovely concubines have been brutally murdered!

They watch as the EMPEROR casually takes off his mask, and calmly climbs back into the hot-tub with the bloody decapitated girl's bodies.

EXT. THE DIET PARLIAMENT, STREETS OF TOKYO - 1914 - DAY

The Rice Wars are raging out of control; People are running, shouting in the street carrying torches and protest signs. An unruly CROWD breaks through a police cordon, breaking windows and setting shops on fire.

Another group is throwing stones at FOREIGN MINISTER KATO TAKAKI as he exits his carriage and runs into the Diet building for safety.

INT. THE DIET PARLIAMENT AUDITORIUM - DAY

It's a chaotic situation in the Diet House: Everyone is shouting at one another. The SPEAKER is an elderly statesman in his eighties, dressed in western suit and tie, etc. SPEAKER calls for order, slams his gavel down three times.

SPEAKER

Gentleman, gentleman... Order, order!

Slowly Diet members take their seats and quiet down.

SPEAKER (CONT'D)

I will not stand more of this kind of behavior. The next person who breaks the rules of the House will be expelled.

SPEAKER looks out to the audience, points to a wiry little man in his fifties, in suit and tie.

He is OZAKI YUKIO, a parliamentarian. OZAKI rises from his seat, bows to the SPEAKER.

SPEAKER

Representative Ozaki Yukio, the floor is yours...

OZAKI

Thank you, Mr. Speaker...Now as I said before, I accuse Lord Yamagata and his lackey, General Katsura, who is now Prime Minister, of using the throne and this House to raise prices of rice for their own material gain.

YAMAGATA and GEN. KATSURA, in their early-sixties in uniform, are sitting next to one another, displeased with OZAKI's accusations. YAMAGATA is the epitome of the aged, powerful Shogun.

OZAKI (CONT'D)

I further more blame Lord Yamagata of arranging the assassination of Prime Minister Saionji, so he could appoint General Katsura to control the Diet.

The members start hissing and booing OZAKI, shouting. physical fights start breaking out in the audience.

SPEAKER

I SAID ORDER ... ORDER IN THE HOUSE!
(beat)

I can only see one recourse: To take a vote on choice for Prime Minister. Go to your voting stations.

The Diet members leave to vote on a new Prime Minister.

DISSOLVE:

The House convenes again, and Diet members are taking their seats. SPEAKER calls the session to order.

The SPEAKER holds an envelope in his hand, opens it to announce the new Prime Minister.

SPEAKER

Members of the Honorable House, your choice for new Prime Minister is Admiral Yamamoto Gombei.

Members of the house begin to boo the new choice. OZAKI stands from his seat, addressing the unruly House.

OZAKI

Once again the powerful clans have managed to control our government through bribery. But this time it's not Yamagata's Choshu clan it is the Satsuma, and now with Admiral Gombei as Prime Minister, we will no doubt see some big naval contacts with his German comrades... I submit my resignation!

OZAKI storms out as the SPEAKER hammers his gable - more fights break out among the members - It's total chaos!

EXT. MT. FUJI FOOTHILLS (NEAR TOKYO) 1918 - DAY

CLOSE ON twenty SAMURAI SOLDIERS, lined up in a row with swords drawn and raised. Twenty peasants are kneeling before them, hands bound behind their backs, ready for execution. CLOSE ON a SAMURAI as his sword comes swiftly down.

EXT. COL. HART'S RESIDENCE IN MITO (NEAR TOKYO) - DAY

CAMERA PANS the roadside where rows of peasants are impaled on sharp bamboo poles run up their backsides.

MAJ. SIMMS is standing on HART'S porch, staring in awe at the gruesome site. COL. HART comes out to console him.

HART

Mustn't distress yourself, Major.

SIMMS

WHY?! Why must they do such vile acts?

HART

They want to make an example, punish people for the Rice Riots. Come now, come inside.

INT. HARTS HOUSE ON ESTATE - DAY

COL. HART and SIMMS take a seat at a low table. They kneel and sit Japanese style.

HART

Years ago the 'Daimyo' or landlords, had power to stop such things, but now all power has been given to the 'Bakufu' military government who now control everything.

SIMMS

I can go to the Emperor. Surely he'll put an end to this madness?

HART

You must never do such a thing. Emperor Tashio is stark raving mad, he'll have you killed for interfering.

SIMMS

How about the Prince? I'll go to him.

HART

The Prince has no real power.

HART gets up from the table slightly amused.

SIMMS

Is there nothing we can do?

HART

The Riots will be over soon. The Bakufu is already trying to keep the people's mind's busy by starting a war with China.

(beat)

You see, now that the lands are barren from so much export of their rice going to the west, the Japs want China's rice crop, as well.

(beat)

The Bakufu military holds all the keys as long as they're in power.

SIMMS

My God, Colonel, I feel totally helpless in this infernal country. Their whole system is a complete reverse of ours -- It's bloody frustrating.

HART

Very good, Simms... I see you're finally beginning to understand the Japanese.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. YOKAHAMA BAY - DAY

A quiet, placid scene on the Bay with the Royal Imperial Barge coming toward us with man-servants rowing.

The PRINCE and TAKI are now about age 20. The Royal Barge stops next to four Japanese women PEARL DIVERS, who wave at them from the water, topless, wearing only a white doily cloth for a suit bottom. One of the girls, MIKO, swims to the barge.

MIKO's about 17, young and beautiful. She flirts with TAKI and the PRINCE, throws them each a pearl.

PRINCE nods reservedly, TAKI smiles and thanks the girl. TAKI has become a tall, handsome young man now. The PRINCE in contrast, is short, thin and wears wire-rimmed glasses.

MIKO, goes down for another dive, while the other three girls start to flirt with the boys. MIKO comes up a few moments later with more pearls in her hand, throws another to TAKI, which he catches.

TAKI

Please, you are too kind. At least tell me your name.

MIKO

I am called Miko.

The girls begin to laugh and giggle swimming nearer to the Imperial barge. TAKI whispers to the PRINCE conspiratorially, eyeing the beautiful girls.

TAKI

Perhaps if we invited them on board,
we could initiate them to the joys of
love making.

PRINCE

But they're common peasants.

TAKI

Common or not -- they are women!

PRINCE

I have better things to do...

PRINCE turns away from the girls, goes to a large bamboo chest on the deck. He lifts the lid and pulls out his microscope, sets it up on a table.

PRINCE (CONT'D)

Taki, have one of the girls fetch me a
small clam for a specimen.

TAKI leans over the side.

TAKI

Of course, your highness.

(to girls)

The prince needs a piece of a clam.

Can one of you fetch it for us?

MIKO nods, then dives down with the other girls.

EXT. UNDER WATER, YOKAHAMA BAY - DAY

The girls are swimming down to the bottom. A few performing water ballet through a school of fish, etc. A few dolphins swim by, it's a playful, picturesque scene.

MIKO is seen prying open a giant clam with her knife. As it opens, she goes to cut the meat inside when suddenly the large clam CLOSES on her arm! Terror comes over her face, trying to free herself.

The other girls see what's happened and go to assist her, but they can't budge the clam. One of the divers goes to the surface for help.

UNDERWATER -- MIKO is still fighting for her life.

The other girls try to stall for time and help by swimming to the surface in intervals, taking a breath of air and rushing back down to MIKO, blowing into her mouth.

Breaking the surface, one of the girl divers pleads to TAKI on the barge. She's shouting frantically, pointing downward.

EXT. THE ROYAL BARGE - DAY

The PRINCE is preoccupied, looking into his microscope. TAKI sees the girl shouting, nods, goes to the PRINCE.

TAKI

My Prince, you must send down two of the servants. A girl's in trouble!

PRINCE

It's only a peasant girl. Perhaps it is her karma.

TAKI glares at him, quickly takes off his kimono, ready to jump in the water. PRINCE is unconcerned, glances up from his microscope.

PRINCE (CONT'D)

If you jump in the water, I will leave you here.

TAKI pays no attention, dives over the side.

EXT. UNDERWATER, YOKAHAMA BAY - DAY

SERIES OF SHOTS

TAKI's swims down to the bottom, sees MIKO struggling to free herself. He tries to pry the clam open with his bare hands. MIKO is weakening. He budges it open a little, enough to get MIKO's arm free and help her to the surface.

TAKI and MIKO break the surface, gasping for air.

Two of MIKO's diving companions come over in a small rowboat to assist. The girls pull MIKO into the boat. She's coughing up water, as TAKI lays back exhausted. He turns to see the royal barge leaving.

The PRINCE is standing at the stern, glaring back at him with a cold, disapproving stare.

The girls row the small boat toward the coastline while the sun slowly sets on the horizon. TAKI covers MIKO with a blanket, stroking her long black hair.

INT. MIKO'S MOTHER'S HOUSE IN KAMAKURA - NIGHT

CAMERA PULLS BACK from burning logs in a fireplace. It's a cozy scene. TAKI and MIKO huddled in front of the fire.

MIKO'S mother, EIKO, 30s, comes into the room with a tray of hot tea. She's humble and appreciative and speaks in a soft, wispy voice in the manner of a Geisha. She bows as she serves the tea.

In the background, there is an elderly man, SHIN, 60s, seated mending a fishing net with a bone needle.

EIKO

(to Miko)

I have brought you some warm tea.
It will help bring your strength
back.

(to Taki)

I owe you a great debt for saving
my daughter. She is the only thing
I have left after her father died.
I owe you *giri* now.

TAKI

Please, you owe me nothing...

MIKO

He was wonderful, mother. I thought
I was going to die!

MIKO gently takes TAKI by the hand and leads him to a quiet corner where they can talk more intimately.

MIKO (CONT'D)

Why did the Prince leave so suddenly?
I thought you were friends.

TAKI

Prince can be very selfish sometimes.
He was raised around foolish people
with old ideas about ancient customs.
Most of our people see him as God, but
I know better...I want to be a free man
and live my own life.

TAKI turns away from her.

TAKI (CONT'D)

Even as a child, I have always been
alone, never had any family of my
own.

She kisses his forehead.

MIKO

Oh, Taki. I am so sorry.

TAKI's curiously watching the old, white-mustached SHIN
seated in lotus position on the floor on the other side
of the room mending his nets. He resembles a Zen-Buddhist
monk, in meditation weaving.

MIKO goes to tend the fire.

TAKI

(to Miko)

Who's the funny old man over there
in the corner?

MIKO

Oh, that's Shin. He's a fisherman
and our boarder.

TAKI

Where is your father?

MIKO

He died fighting soldiers in China
two years ago.

TAKI

So you live with the old man and
your mother now?

MIKO

Yes. It's been very nice with Shin
living here. He gives us peace and
tranquility.

TAKI

How so?

They hear a commotion outside. Some villagers run by the
house in a panic, shouting, knocking on people's doors.
There's a frantic KNOCK, and MIKO opens it, finds a
frightened, jittery FISHERMAN.

FISHERMAN

They are coming! Run for your
lives!

The FISHERMAN runs off to warn the others. TAKI's
wondering what's going on.

TAKI

Who is coming?

SHIN looks up at him, cool and calm.

SHIN

Hired killers of the worst kind;
They come to the villages every
month, take fish from the people
to give their boss, Lord Yamagata.

MIKO

Yes, it's terrible. They beat the
people until they give them money or
goods...Sometimes they kill to make
an example.

The door flies open, and three fearsome looking NINJAS
come rushing in, dressed in black, faces covered except
for the eyes, holding sharp samurai swords in hand.

The NINJAS start shouting at EIKO in Japanese, demanding
tribute in money or goods.

EIKO gives one of the NINJAS a bowl of rice and some fish, but he knocks it out of her hands angrily. It's not enough! NINJA #1. starts to drag her outside--

But TAKI boldly intervenes, stepping between them.

TAKI

Let the woman go. I am a friend
of the Emperor... I'll have you
all punished for this!

NINJA #2. can't believe what he's heard, laughs.

NINJA #2.

Friend of the Emperor? Everyone
knows the Emperor is mad! Ha, ha.
Now you can come too, so we can
teach you obedience.

He grabs TAKI, then gives a signal to his other men.

NINJA #1. (CONT'D)

Get the girl. Leave the old man to
rot here.

The NINJAS push them through the door into the streets.

EXT. KAMAKURA HARBOR - NIGHT

The brutal NINJAS are shoving TAKI and the two women
along a small pier to the harbor, where they tie them to
pier posts while the Local villagers watch in fear.

NINJA #1. calls out to a gathering crowd, carrying fire
torches in their hands.

NINJA #1.

Let this be a lesson to you all
for trying to hide your money and
goods from us!

The NINJAS ready their bows with steel tip arrows,
pointing them at TAKI, MIKO, and EIKO. They slowly draw
back their bows, drawing a bead on their targets.

Suddenly there's a loud shout, all stop to see who it is.

Old man SHIN stands in the open doorway illuminated by torchlight, wearing only his doily-shorts; His upper torso is covered with wild TATTOOS of dragons, snakes, all except his arms. He's a formidable vision, holding a samurai sword gripped firmly over his head. Orange firelight flickers over his tattoos, giving them an animated appearance of coming to life.

NINJA #2.
YAKUZA..!

The NINJA LEADER isn't impressed.

NINJA LEADER
(to his men)
He's no Yakuza, he's just a silly
old man... KILL HIM!

The NINJAS obey, and shoot their arrows at SHIN.

SHIN is in a crouched stance, deflecting all the arrows with his sword as they fly at him. Frustrated, the NINJAS throw razor-sharp *Shuriken* throwing stars, but also miss.

NINJA LEADER
USE YOUR SWORDS...USE SWORDS!

The NINJA LEADER and two other NINJAS rush SHIN with raised swords, but SHIN cuts them down, killing all three. The villagers shout with joy.

SHIN goes to TAKI, MIKO, and EIKO and cuts their bindings loose.

SHIN
More will come. We must dispose of
the bodies -- Dump them in the sea.

SHIN, EIKO, and some village fishermen drag the bodies to a row boat, while TAKI escorts MIKO back to her house.

EXT. MIKO'S HOUSE - NIGHT

TAKI walks MIKO up to her loft bedroom above the living room. She climbs in her bed and he chastely kisses her on the cheek. But as he's about to leave, she pulls him in, kissing him on the lips.

TAKI kisses her back, passionately.

TAKI

You know, they say you should never sleep with anyone you tell your deepest secrets to. They say, then that person will hold power over you.

MIKO

Taki, I would never hold power over you. I want you to know you can trust me always. Good night... Dream of me.

She kisses him and he leaves. TAKI descends from the loft, as SHIN puts on his kimono, then throws his white-dooly into the fireplace. He is about to throw his sword in as well, reciting a quiet prayer.

TAKI

Wait! What are you doing with your sword?

SHIN

It's a promise I made along time ago.

TAKI

What promise?

SHIN

Never to kill another man again.

TAKI

Have you killed many men?

SHIN sets the sword down.

SHIN

Too many to remember...

TAKI

But tonight it was an honorable kill. They would have murdered us all! Have you no sense of understanding that? You saved our lives! What happened to you?

SHIN

It was about honor in the beginning...

FLASHBACK: Visuals of his story come into focus:

SHIN (CONT'D)

The Yakuza is a secret society where one lives and dies only by his sword. We started out as protectors of the people some 350 years ago. We fought against tyrants and marauding bands of criminals who terrorized the land.

(beat)

Soon even the Shogun and his Samurai warriors were set against us, so we had to go underground. It was at this point that the only way one could know a true Yakuza was by his tattooed body. That is, all except for the arms which were left bare for obvious reasons- When we wore our kimono robes no one could tell us apart from other men.

TAKI

What became of these brave Yakuza?

SHIN

After two hundred years of hunting us down like animals, we slowly lost our foundation and original purpose: To live for the people and die by *bushido*'- no surrender. Eventually our numbers dwindled and we were forced into hiding... We kept on the move working as con-men or traveling sellers at fairs and side shows.

TAKI

Who taught you to be Yakuza and to use a sword like that?

SHIN

A great Yakuza warrior; I was a lost boy looking for purpose in life- A petty thief going no where in and out of prisons. But luckily, I was always open to learning... That is when I met my great teacher.

TAKI relates to SHIN's sense of isolation.

TAKI

Shin, I also have no purpose in life.
I have a desire to learn too -- I
want to learn the way of the Yakuza.
(Taki picks up Shin's sword)
Will you be my great teacher?

SHIN

(smiles)

You have asked me -- Now I am bound.

TAKI

What do you mean?

SHIN

One of our sacred vows is when an
honorable man asks to learn our way,
he must be given the chance.

(beat)

You see, it was just as I had asked
my teacher. I also owe you *giri* for
saving Miko.

TAKI

Then you will teach me?

SHIN

I'm afraid so...I must.

SHIN hands him the sword.

SHIN (CONT'D)

I am also obliged to give you my sword
as part of your initiation. You must
protect it and never turn it over to
another, for it has been blessed and
protected from evil spirits -- Keep
it covered and hidden until needed.

TAKI

Hai, I will. When will my instruction
begin?

SHIN

Patience's, my son; This is your first lesson -- There is a place in Tokyo, I will take you to where I will introduce you to many other young apprentices. They will be learning 'Bu', the basis of martial arts from their teachers.

SHIN notices TAKI's necklace with the ancient coin on it. He lifts it up, inspecting it with great curiosity.

SHIN

Where did you get this necklace?

TAKI

It was a gift from my mother.

SHIN

Do you know what it is?

TAKI

No one seems to know since you can hardly read the engraving anymore. I suppose it's just a worthless old coin. Apparently it was all my mother had left. She put it in the basket Emperor Meiji found me in when I was a baby.

SHIN

Ah, but the question is not the worthlessness of the coin, but of the sentimental value attached. Very good! Your first instruction begins. We go to Tokyo next week.

INT. IMPERIAL PALACE LABORATORY - ONE YEAR LATER - DAY

The room is a make-shift laboratory set up with boiling beakers, rows of jars with various animal specimens, racks of test-tubes, slide samples, etc.

PRINCE HIROHITO is looking into the eye-piece of a large brass microscope. Seated next to him in gray military uniform is the dubious FIELD MARSHALL VON STROUT, 50s, gray hair, big white handlebar mustache, cajoling the young PRINCE with the new microscope he has given him.

VON STROUT

With this powerful new microscope
we gave you, your Highness will
soon discover the wonders of German
advanced technology.

The PRINCE says nothing, as a court MESSENGER approaches.
The man bows, and delivers Prince a sealed letter.

He sees it's from TAKI, smiles.

The PRINCE looks at VON STROUT and regains his composure.

PRINCE

(to von Strout)

Thank you for your gift. You may
go now...

VON STROUT bows and leaves somewhat slighted, as the
PRINCE hurriedly opens the letter and reads.

CLOSE ON LETTER-- It reads:

'Your Highness, it has been one year
since our unfortunate disagreement
and now I have much to tell you; I
know our friendship has been as such
that I can write you and speak openly
and freely. And I also remember, as you
once said, 'you will always need me...'

CUT TO:

INT. A KENDO TRAINING DOJO - TOKYO - DAY

The letter continues with Taki's VOICE OVER, telling the
story with VISUAL OF KENDO CLASS in progress.

A group of eight STUDENTS in their late teens in black
judo *gis* attire are lined up wearing steel-mesh face
masks, training with long bamboo Kendo sticks.

The boys, going through pre-samurai sword training.

TAKI's letter VOICE OVER continues:

TAKI (V.O.)

'My Prince...I have decided to spend some time in Tokyo to heighten my education...After our disagreement I had the good fortune to meet a wise and learned old fisherman, who as it turns out, is a master in the ancient arts of the Yakuza. I am now in training at the school of Kendo here in Tokyo to enhance my capacity in 'bu' and the martial arts...'

As his VOICE FADES OUT, CLOSE ON Taki in Kendo class, working out with Kendo sticks.

Standing behind each student are their respective teachers or sponsors. SHIN is coaching TAKI, and he's getting a good workout with his opponent. TAKI takes a hit now and then, as SHIN looks on and advising him on defensive moves.

TAKI's fumbling, trying to defend himself, doing a poor job of it. The class is watching, laughing in the background.

CLOSE ON the Kendo SENSEI OVERSEER, head of the Dojo. He's a big portly, bald, hard-looking man in his 40s. He sees TAKI fumbling and the class laughing at him.

The OVERSEER throws his Kendo training stick down angrily, shouts at the class. He orders them all to come to center floor. The students abruptly stop laughing.

TAKI takes his face mask off, looks to SHIN for guidance. SHIN nods to TAKI, giving him encouragement. The OVERSEER chooses another opponent for TAKI -- He is an 18 year old boy named, SHIETO. He brings them together in center the floor. The other students surround them.

The OVERSEER speaks loudly so all can hear.

OVERSEER

You can't get it right? We'll see. First opponent to take three hits to the head is loser... And first one to fall to floor, is no longer member of this dojo. Prepare to fight... *REI!!*

TAKI prepares to put his facemask on, but the OVERSEER slaps it out of his hand, and it rolls across the floor.

OVERSEER (CONT'D)

No. Both fight without facemask!

TAKI looks worried and even SHIN seems concerned. The whole class looks dismayed, start mumbling amongst themselves.

OVERSEER (CONT'D)

(to class)

SILENCE!

(to Taki and Shieto)

Get into first position... *REI!*

TAKI and SHIETO bow respectfully to one another, assuming fighting positions.

OVERSEER slaps TAKI hard on the back then moves away.

OVERSEER (CONT'D)

Ready... BEGIN!

The two Kendo fighters go at it and TAKI's doing a bad job of it -- Right off, he gets hit in the face with the Kendo stick, his cheek is cut and bleeding slightly.

SHIN is concerned watching, looking utterly disappointed.

TAKI glances over at SHIN, and takes another blow to the head. He's stunned for a second. SHIETO stops, but the OVERSEER shouts for them to continue.

TAKI gets a hit to the stomach which takes his breath away and almost falls to the floor. SHIN's seen enough. He approaches the OVERSEER.

SHIN

I think they've had enough for today, don't you, *Sensei?*

OVERSEER

Mind your own business, old man.
Go sit on the floor or leave!

SHIN reluctantly takes a seat.

OVERSEER (CONT'D)

(to Shieto)

CONTITNUE...!!!

SHIETO looks dismayed, but knows he must continue the match. He strikes TAKI in the face for the third time. TAKI's face is badly cut and bruised. He staggers, losing his balance.

OVERSEER goes to them, holds up SHIETO's stick, declaring him the winner, and walks away. TAKI is about to collapse, when SHIN grabs him and carries him away.

INT. DRESSING ROOM OF KENDO CENTER - DAY

SHIN is attending to TAKI'S facial wounds. His face is cut and bruised, but he'll survive. SHIETO walks over to them, looking terribly guilty. TAKI can hardly open one of his eyes.

SHIETO

I am so sorry...

SHIN

You had no choice in the matter.
Don't worry, he'll live.

SHEITO

(to Taki)

I would never have joined this dojo if it weren't for my father. He was Samurai and forced me to come here. I never thought it would be like this.

TAKI

It's alright. I'll be fine.

SHIETO

Yes, but this Sensei Overseer is evil, full of bloodlust.

SHIN

Then Taki had better learn fast!

SHIETO

Then we must help him.

TAKI

What do you think, Shin?

SHIN nods.

SHIN

This boy is good. His moves are
exceptionable. I say, yes.

INT. THE KENDO CENTER GYMNASIUM - NIGHT

The dojo is empty except for SHIETO and TAKI. TAKI'S forehead is bandaged. They are in the center of the gym surrounded by a circle of lit candles in the darkness. Both are without facemasks, holding kendo sticks in hand. SHIN watches calmly in the background.

SHIETO

Taki, move into your first
defense position...

TAKI gets into a crouch, holding the stick in front of his body.

TAKI

Hai!

SHIN

Now as Shieto attacks, watch his
wrist pivot from the corner of your
eye. The secret is all in the pivot!

SHIETO attacks gently as TAKI watches the wrist. TAKI crouches, moving around the circle, fending SHIETO off.

SHIN

Very good. Keep your eyes on his
wrist. Keep your eyes on the pivot.
Where it goes, so goes the point of
his stick.

TAKI takes a couple of leg and body hits. SHIN shouts at him, irritated.

SHIN (CONT'D)

The wrist! The wrists!

TAKI'S trying hard to concentrate, watching SHIETO's wrist. He stops frustrated.

TAKI

I can't! It's too dark in here!

SHIN

Better for you. Then you'll be extra aware in the light of day. Continue...

They start again.

MONTAGE SEQUENCE

TAKI & SHIETO working-out, late into the night. Both are exhausted and sweating, until TAKI is unable to go on any longer. SHIN wraps a towel around TAKI and pats him on the back for encouragement.

INT. THE KENDO DOJO - NEXT MORNING

The Kendo class is back in session, and the abusive OVERSEER is in the middle of the dojo floor, performing a ritual prayer with incense before class begins. All are on their knees. The OVERSEER glares at TAKI out of the corner of his eye. SHIN catches the look.

OVERSEER bows his head down in solemn reverence, finishes the prayer then claps his hands and all rise to their feet.

OVERSEER

(to class)

Into your positions...!

The class gets into their Kendo fighting stances, facing their opponents, pulling on their facemasks.

OVERSEER (CONT'D)

We start with defensive parries;
One and two first... Begin.

As the workout begins, the OVERSEER walks around the room correcting students, tapping them with a kendo stick.

TAKI and SHIETO are paired together again, and TAKI's improvements are obvious to everyone.

The OVERSEER comes up behind them, grabbing the two boys firmly by the arms.

OVERSEER
STOP! All except for these two.

OVERSEER drags TAKI and SHEITO to center room.

OVERSEER (CONT'D)
(to Taki and Shieto)
Take off your facemasks.

The students stir uncomfortably at his harshness.

OVERSEER (CONT'D)
SILENCE... ALL OF YOU!
(to Taki and Shieto)
Get in positions!

SHIN walks up to the OVERSEER.

SHIN
Why pick on this boy again?
Perhaps you will show us what
you can do against an opponent
such as myself.

OVERSEER looks at SHIN annoyed and with amazement.

OVERSEER
What, with you grandfather? You are
hardly a match for me. Ha, ha.

SHIN
I take full responsibility for what
happens to me, and perhaps the students
will learn something from us in the end.
Well...?

OVERSEER smiles, looks at his students...

OVERSEER

Hai! Yes, perhaps it would be good for the class. Get your mask, we'll go three hits.

SHIN

No, no...Like the students, without masks.

TAKI

What..?!

The class looks excited, starts talking amongst themselves with agitation.

OVERSEER

SILENCE!

SHIN

If it's good enough for the boys, then...

OVERSEER

Hai! Get your weapon, old fool!

With Kendo sticks in hand, they move to center floor. The students take their seats on the floor in a large circle around the fighters, look on anxiously, as SHIN and OVERSEER crouch into starting position to begin the match.

SERIES OF SHOTS IN FAST & SLOW MOTION:

It is an exciting and well-executed fight, and the OVERSEER is taking the worst of it.

CLOSE ON SHIN scoring a blow to the side of OVERSEER'S head. The second one hits SHIN, grazing his cheek.

SHIN looks remarkably calm and centered. The OVERSEER is trying desperately to keep up with the old man.

SHIN toys with him for a minute, then finishes him off with two hard blows to the head- CRACK! CRACK!

The OVERSEER stumbles, falls hard to the wood floor with a thud, knocked unconscious.

The class goes wild with applause. TAKI and SHIETO smilingly congratulate SHIN, the other students do the same, patting SHIN on the back.

INT. DRESSING ROOM/KENDO CENTER - DAY

TAKI, SHIN and SHIETO are in a large hot-tub, the usual ritual after a day's workout. In the steamy background, other students are getting massages by MALE TRAINERS, while others are dressing to leave.

TAKI, SHIN and SHIETO climb out of a hot-tub, drying themselves with towels.

SHIETO

(to Shin)

You were brilliant, old man!
Where did you learn such moves?

SHIN

Old man..?

TAKI

Better be careful, I don't think
he takes kindly to be called old.

SHIETO

Oh no, don't get me wrong. It was
merely a figure of speech, a phrase
the English use. It wasn't meant
in a derogatory sense.

SHIN

Ah, then that's better, old boy!

Their laughter is interrupted by a commotion coming from the background. There's shouting and they see men running, covering themselves protectively with towels.

CAMERA FOLLOWS CLOSE ON a WOMAN'S SHAPELY LEGS, walking in.

SHIN and TAKI turn to see what's going on and watch as a beautiful, blue-eyed, tall Japanese girl, early-20s, storming over to them.

There is something very different about her, her manner, her walk, and her Euro-Asian look. She's wearing a tight red 'Flapper' dress. Her hair is blue-black and cropped short in Roaring Twenties style. Her name is YOKO.

SHIETO

(to Taki and Shin)

Oh no... here she comes!

TAKI

Who? Doesn't she know women aren't allowed in here?

SHIETO

Oh, she knows...

YOKO arrives, scolding SHIETO.

YOKO

Where the hell have you been?
You left me waiting for an hour
at anatomy class.

TAKI's desperately trying to cover himself with a towel.

SHIETO

(to Taki)

Don't worry about being embarrassed,
she's studying medicine.

SHIN

A woman doctor?

YOKO looks TAKI over, then SHIN, who comically pulls his towel up to cover himself somewhat puritanically.

YOKO

So who are these two guys?

SHIETO

They're the ones I was telling you
about -- My new friends at the school,
Taki and Shin.

She pinches SHIN's cheek.

YOKO

The little guy's kinda cute.

SHIETO

(to Taki and Shin)

This is my friend, Yoko. We went together at Tokyo University... She's what you call a 'Moga Girl'.

TAKI

'Moga Girl'?

YOKO

Yeah, you know, 'Modern Miss', the latest in western fashion; short skirts with the bob, 'shingle', or Eaton crop. Get it? The old styles are so boring.

(to Shieto)

So look, let's get out of this dump, I'm starved. How 'bout Madame Lings?

SHIETO

Sure, sounds good.

(to Taki and Shin)

Come join us? -- Best sushi and sukiyaki in town.

SHIN notices TAKI is taken with YOKO.

SHIN

Why not?

(to Taki)

Perhaps it may further your education.

SHIETO

Excellent...

(to Yoko)

But you must wait outside... Let the men get dressed, please!

YOKO

Oh, you're such a prude. I'll be waiting on the porch.

YOKO (CONT'D)

Ciao, guys...!

She winks, hikes her skirt, showing off her leg, and leaves blowing them a kiss.

INT. MADAM LING'S TEAHOUSE - DAY

TAKI and SHIN stroll into a crowded, dimly lit teahouse with YOKO and SHIETO. STUDENTS are jammed together at different tables, deep in discussion, eating and drinking tea, etc.

The students, both boys and girls, are in their early 20s and dressed in the latest 'Moga' modern fashions. TAKI and SHIN are in their traditional kimonos. SHIETO himself wears western pants with shirt and tie.

They take a seat at a table in the corner and watch the action.

SHIETO

(to Taki)

So what do you think?

TAKI

I like it, but I feel a little out of place.

YOKO

Don't worry silly, soon we'll turn you into a real 'Mobo Boy'.

TAKI

...And what's a 'Mobo Boy'?

SHIN

Don't tell me... Modern Boy?

YOKO

You're catching on.

TAKI

Why do all these people hang around here? I mean, what do they do?

SHIETO

They discuss politics or talk about their studies and meet friends.

YOKO

Some of our elders and politicians think these places are the breeding ground for dangerous thought -- They are afraid of new revolutionary views we've learned from Marxism and think we're becoming left-wing or communists. Can you imagine? Most of us are all from wealthy families! We'd never give up our materialistic way of life.

SHIN

I see. You're all sort of weekend radicals...

YOKO

That's right. Hey, as a matter-of-fact, there's going to be very big demonstration on campus this weekend. Want to come?

TAKI

Shin, what do you think?

SHIN

The question is not whether we shall go, but what the nature of the demonstration is about?

YOKO

Who cares! There's two or three every weekend, usually for a good cause... It's fun, great place to meet people.

SHIETO

I think the demonstration she's talking about this weekend concerns the Emperor. Students are angry about the growing strength of the military. They think the Emperor could stop them, if he wanted to.

TAKI

I don't think so...

SHIETO

Why not? He's the Emperor, isn't he?

YOKO

(to Taki)

And what makes you such an expert?

SHIN

(interrupts)

He's a good friend of the Prince.

YOKO

Really..?

TAKI

Prince Hirohito and I grew up together, and I can tell you, his father is quite unable to control the military because he is mentally incapacitated.

SHIETO

Insane?

TAKI

I'm afraid so.

YOKO

Fascinating. So, you must also come from royalty?

TAKI

Not quite. I was an orphan Emperor Meiji found in the palace gardens. When he died, of course I was still treated like one of the family. The Imperial Family raised me as one of their own and the Prince is like a brother to me.

YOKO

My Goodness, then this must be the first time you've been on your own.

TAKI

Yes, actually.

YOKO

Well, we're going to have to show you Tokyo-by-night. We know all the good spots. We'll we do the town over tonight, yes?

TAKI appears to be smitten by YOKO.

TAKI

Shin?

SHIN

Taki is in training...The boy needs his sleep and concentration.

YOKO

Oh, don't be such an old spoil sport. The boy will get his rest. Come on...

SHIETO

Don't worry Shin, I'm usually the one She drags around and it hasn't affected my training.

SHIN

Not yet, you mean.

TAKI

Look at it this way, Shin- it will be good for my education.

YOKO

So, are you coming tonight or what?

TAKI looks once again to SHIN.

SHIN

What can I say? I'm out numbered.

TAKI

(whispers)

By the way, Shin, after meeting Yoko, I think I'm going to take up medicine, too!

SHIN laughs and they continue sipping tea, talking, surrounded by all the youthful and animated students enjoying themselves.

EXT. CITY OF TOKYO - NIGHT

MONTAGE SEQUENCE with TAKI'S OFF SCREEN narration, in another of his letters to PRINCE HIROHITO.

TAKI and YOKO holding hands, walking with SHIETO and SHIN going in and out of night clubs and bars with flashing marquee signs. People are dancing flapper style to the 'Fast-step' of the Charleston, etc.

TAKI (O.S.)

'My Prince, Tokyo is a fascinating place with as many diversions as there are delights; I have met some very modern students from the University and they have offered to show me the city by night. I can tell you it has opened a whole new world to me and one which I am certain you would approve of as well. I only wish your status were such that you could join us in our thoroughly enjoyable adventure...'

INT. THE ROYAL PALACE, TOKYO - NIGHT

The PRINCE wears his round wire-rimmed glasses, under a low lit lamp, seated at a large oriental desk, reading the letter from TAKI...

TAKI (V.O.)

'...And I must tell you all about my new friends; There's Shieto, a very astute and intelligent student at the Kendo school whom I have become good friends with, and Yoko, a thoroughly modern 'Mogo Girl'... She's beautiful, witty, and I think the most independent woman I have ever encountered. I can only say, my dear Prince, I wish it were possible for you to be here to enjoy this experience with me.
...Yours Respectfully, Taki.'

The PRINCE angrily crumples the letter and throws it on the floor -- TAKI'S having a good time without him, and he's become an official captive in his own palace.

He rings for his MAN-SERVANT, who enters and bows.

PRINCE

Get your quill and take a letter...

Man-servant goes to the desk and gets out paper and quill, while PRINCE paces the room dictating.

PRINCE (CONT'D)

'To his Royal Highness, Edward
the Fifth, king of England...

(beat)

Your Highness... Greetings and
salutations. After careful consider-
ation I have found your invitation to
visit Great Britain acceptable. I
have also decided it would indeed
coincide with my proposed tour of
Europe. My entourage will consist of
twelve servants, ten bodyguards, and
two personal friends. The proposed
trip will begin the end of this month,
so I look forward to your prompt reply.
I remain...
Sincerely, Crown Prince Hirohito'

(to Man-servant)

Now get the letter off to the King
at once.

His servant bows, and leaves as the prince settles back into his chair at the desk, self-satisfied.

EXT. VITAPHONE NEWS REEL (STOCK FOOTAGE)

A news reel from 1931 shows Japanese soldiers invading China. There is no sound, only caption cards that read:

Card 1. - News on the March- September 1931
- Japan Invades China!'

Card 2. - 'Japan Establishes a foothold in
Manchuria, via capturing the
cities of Tsingtau and Shantung.'
(Clip of Jap soldiers rushing in)

Card 3. - 'The Japanese are brutal to the defeated Chinese soldiers.' (We see mass executions)

Card 4. - 'America and England react angrily but are now well caught up in troubles of their own as World War I breaks out in Europe'. (News clip of English soldiers fighting Germans on the Maginot Line)

EXT. STREETS OF TOKYO - DAY

It is early morning. Birds are chirping as dawn breaks over a middle-class district of the city. Shop windows and doors are opening, HAWKERS and VENDORS are selling their wares in the streets.

INT. TAKI AND SHIN'S APARTMENT IN TOKYO - DAY

TAKI is just getting out of bed with a tremendous hangover. He's still in his clothes, which are notably western in attire; pants, shirt, socks, etc.

He holds his head in agony walking to the toilet when a knock comes at the door. He winces at the sound, goes to see who it is.

He opens the door to find MIKO standing there alone.

TAKI

Miko? Oh, I'm so glad to see you!
What brings you here to Tokyo?

MIKO

Mother told me I would find you here with Shin. I have come to sell pearls to one of the big buyers. I thought it was a good opportunity to visit you -- I hope I am not imposing.

TAKI

Of course not, don't be silly.

There's a movement under TAKI'S bed sheets behind him. YOKO props herself up, just awakening. MIKO and YOKO eye one another, curiously.

YOKO

(to Taki)

And who's this lovely creature?

TAKI

An old friend...

YOKO

Old friend...or girl-friend?

MIKO feels self-conscious, begins to back away as if to leave.

MIKO

I'm sorry. I shouldn't have come.

TAKI

Don't be ridiculous. Come in and have some tea with us.

TAKI takes her by the hand and leads her inside.

YOKO

Yes, dear girl, don't be silly. Come in and have a cup of tea. We're going out to my father's house later... Perhaps you'd like to come along?

MIKO

Thank you, but I don't know...

TAKI

Nonsense. You don't know anybody in Tokyo. We'll take you along and show you some of the sights on the way.

YOKO

Just relax, honey. Come over and sit next to me.

TAKI goes to make tea, as MIKO takes a seat on the bed next to YOKO. YOKO notices her pearl necklace.

YOKO

Where did you get the lovely pearls?

MIKO

I dive for them.

YOKO

Ah, I see, you're one of the divers.

YOKO starts to stroke her hair tenderly.

MIKO

Are you and Taki together now?

YOKO

Not really. Why, were you and he lovers?

MIKO

No... Not exactly.

MIKO gets up from the bed nervously, changing the subject.

MIKO (CONT'D)

Are you sure it's alright? I mean, taking me along to visit your father?

YOKO

Of course.

YOKO gets up from the bed, holding the sheet in front of her to cover herself. She goes to the closet for her clothes.

YOKO (CONT'D)

My father is the American Ambassador to Japan.

MIKO

Ambassador to Japan? But you're Japanese aren't you?

YOKO

My father's American, my mother was from Osaka. She died when I was six.

MIKO

I'm sorry to hear that.

YOKO

Anyway, father raised me, however I still feel very attracted to all things Japanese.

TAKI comes back in with the tea on a service tray. MIKO instantly takes over serving the tea, as a traditional Japanese woman.

TAKI

(to Miko)

No, no...You're our guest. You don't have to do that with us.

YOKO

That's right, kiddo. I'm going to turn you into a thoroughly modern girl, if you stay here long enough. By the way, how long are you staying in Tokyo?

MIKO

Five days. I have a small room just a few blocks from here.

YOKO

Oh no, that won't do. A girl all alone in a big city like this. You're moving in with us, honey. Besides, we'll save money.

TAKI

Yes, why not?

MIKO

I really don't think...

YOKO

It's settled then. We'll go by and get your things this afternoon.

MIKO

You are all too kind. I don't know how to thank you.

TAKI

Don't. And I'm sure Shin will be glad to have you here too.

MIKO

Where is Shin?

TAKI

He's in the park practicing his morning Aikido exercises. He'll be back later. So, let's drink up and visit Yoko's rich and famous Papa!

EXT. AMERICAN AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE, TOKYO - DAY

HOLD SHOT ON a splendid Japanese-style wooden castle nestled among the hillside with trees, etc. It's a quiet, peaceful area on the outskirts of Tokyo with Mt. Fuji backdrop.

Two American MARINE GUARDS stand at attention at the entrance of the Ambassador's house, as TAKI, YOKO and MIKO arrive in a taxi.

INT. AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE, TOKYO - DAY

Standing on the porch is U.S. Ambassador COL. THOMAS HART and his old friend, Englishman MAJ. EDWARD SIMS. They have aged a bit, both showing a few extra gray hairs.

YOKO runs to her father, COL. HART's open arms, hugs him.

HART

(to Yoko)

Where on earth have you been child?
I hardly see you these days.

(jokes)

Except, of course, when you need money.

YOKO

Oh father, stop it.

HART

(looks at Taki)

Aren't you going to introduce me to your friends?

YOKO

Yes, this is Taki and Miko. Taki has just decided to take up medicine at school with me.

TAKI and MIKO bow, HART bows back.

HART

Fine. Well now, I've prepared lunch on the terrace... Shall we?

The group moves inside for lunch.

EXT. AMBASSADOR HART'S TERRACE - DAY

They are all taking their seats at an elegantly laid out table with fine silver, candelabras, and china. Two Japanese SERVANTS move around in the background serving saki and the first food courses.

AMBASSADOR HART raises his glass to make a toast, suddenly they hear a rumbling sound. The table begins to SHAKE, things begin falling over, glasses, etc.

One servant woman drops a full plate of sukiyaki from her hands, frightened, when the rumbling stops.

SIMMS

That was a close one...

YOKO seems unconcerned, takes a sip of wine, laughs.

YOKO

You know, old Japanese superstition it says, under the surface of Japan there lives a giant catfish. And from time to time becomes angry with the wickedness of human beings living above him, he would heave his back violently in retaliation for our wicked deeds!

HART

Yes, I've heard that one before from the fishermen. And who knows, the heated political climate Japan is facing now, there may be some truth to it. Ha, ha.

YOKO

Father, did I tell you Taki is a close friend of the Crown Prince?

HART

Is that so, Taki...?

TAKI

Yes, sir.

SIMMS

Then you must know Emperor Tashio. They say he's, shall we say, incapacitated?

TAKI

Yes, sir, I think it is common knowledge in the inner court.

HART

Quite a big problem for Japan, I'm afraid. Generals around him are taking advantage of the situation, placing Japan on a course of expansionism, no matter what the cost. They've already moved troops into Manchuria and Russia... Who knows when they'll stop.

The servants bring in the desert tray.

SIMMS

Our British, American, and French Consuls have lodged protests, but to no avail.

YOKO

It's the same old story of military power and corruption... Soooo boring, Daddy.

HART

I'm afraid, I agree. So let's change the subject. Simms and I were thinking of a game of tennis this afternoon. Anyone care to join? -- Taki, do you play ?

TAKI

I'm afraid not.

HART

Sorry to hear that, we could have played doubles.

YOKO

Father, Taki is a student of martial arts at the Kendo school in Tokyo.

SIMMS

Interesting. Now there's a sport I'd like to learn something about.

HART

It's not exactly a 'sport', old man. It's more of a religion.

TAKI

Perhaps I could explain?

SIMMS

By all means, I'd like to hear it.

TAKI

In Japanese culture, most sports centers, as you call them, have Shinto 'kamidana' or 'God Shelves'. It's a small shrine on the wall like a miniature Buddhist temple where one prays.

SIMMS

They pray to God?

TAKI

Not to the one God as your Christians in your country believe, but to our deceased relatives and ancient ancestors... Beyond that, we pray to the greatest Gods of all; our line of Emperors going all the way back to the sacred, Sun Goddess... In martial arts ritual, one always begins with a prayer and all his acts thereafter, even in sport, in war, or at work become a fine-tuning of body and spirit.

HART

Which of the martial arts have you chosen to study?

TAKI

All. You see, my teacher is Yakuza.

HART

Ah, now that's a fascinating clan.

YOKO

Well, I think I've had enough to eat. May I be excused, Father? I hope I'm not offending anyone, but I'm going to play some records in the parlor.

They rise, as Yoko leaves for the parlor.

INT. THE PARLOR ROOM - DAY

YOKO is putting a record on the wind-up phonograph as SIMMS comes up behind her. He carefully closes the door. He stops for a moment, looks around then suddenly puts his hands around her waist. His hands move from her waist to her breasts then back down to her ass, sensually.

SIMMS

(whispers)

We don't have much time...

YOKO turns slowly.

YOKO

Don't worry, father will keep them busy. He never stops talking.

SIMMS starts kissing her passionately, unbuttoning her dress as fast as he can. They continue kissing madly, there's an urgency to make love. She's pulling at his clothes. CAMERA PANS DOWN TO THEIR LEGS, his pants drop, then her dress.

DISSOLVE:

INT. TAKI AND SHIN'S ROOM, TOKYO - NIGHT

TAKI, YOKO, and MIKO come through the door half-drunk, singing, laughing, etc. They're all feeling loose from the wine, and fall onto the bed, bottle in hand, as TAKI lights a candle next to them.

YOKO

Oh, father's such a scream. You know Taki, I thought he'd talk your head off if I didn't come rescue you.

MIKO

I liked your father. I thought he was a very nice man.

YOKO strokes MIKO's hair.

YOKO

Yes, he is, but he has this one problem; he loves to gab.

TAKI

Speaking of talk. Where did you and Mr. Simms sneak off to?

YOKO

Ha, none of your business!

MIKO

Is Major Simms your secret lover?

YOKO chuckles.

YOKO

Maybe.

TAKI

Ah, ha. It's been going on for some time. Don't you think he's a little old for you?

YOKO

An older man can teach a younger woman quite a lot about pleasing and being pleased.

MIKO lays back on the bed next to TAKI. YOKO begins massaging MIKO's shoulders. YOKO pulls TAKI over and gives him a sensual kiss as MIKO watches lying on the bed. Then YOKO moves down to MIKO and gives her a kiss too.

MIKO looks apprehensive, but kisses her back, then more passionately. TAKI lays down next to them and joins in the action. He reaches over and puts out the candle with his finger.

FADE TO BLACK

FADE IN - Early Morning

The door to TAKI'S room opens slowly letting in the light -- It's SHIN coming in. SHIN goes to the windows, opens the curtains. He startled to find TAKI, YOKO, and MIKO sprawled out in bed, nude.

SHIN

(to himself)

Oh my... Three naked bodies?!

SHIN wonders what to do. He takes the sheets, looking away, tries to cover them up. But TAKI awakens with MIKO, smiles at him.

TAKI

Ha! I thought we lost you...

Where did you go off to?

SHIN

To visit my Master on mountain.

(looks at them in bed)

Is this what you call furthering your education? I thought you were studying to become doctor?

MIKO giggles, sits up.

SHIN (CONT'D)

(to Miko)

You should be ashamed of yourself.

SHIN goes to the dresser, takes an envelope out of the drawer.

SHIN (CONT'D)

(to Taki)

This letter came for you yesterday
by special messenger from the Palace.
It might be important.

SHIN hands the letter to TAKI, looking curiously at it.
He gets up from the bed and opens the sealed letter for
all to hear.

TAKI

'Dearest Taki, I hope this letter finds
you in good health. As of recently, I
have decided to take a tour of Europe.
King George V of England has agreed to
our staying at his Brighton Pavilion
as a base for our visit. Perhaps we'll
even learn to fly a plane on this trip.
As your old friend and confidant, I must
insist you make the trip with me, and
if you wish, bring those interesting new
friends of yours. All costs will be paid
by Imperial Court -- R. S. V. P.
Fondest Regards,
Your Prince, Hirohito.'

YOKO pops up from bed, excited.

YOKO

What? European tour?! Let me see...

TAKI hands letter to her, Yoko reads it to herself.

TAKI

So, he insists again, does he? I
suppose he'll never learn.

MIKO

But Taki, when a member of Royal Family
insists, it is our duty to obey.

SHIN

Don't forget, one day he'll be Emperor
of all Japan.

TAKI

Don't tell me you want to go on
the tour as well?

They all look at one another with a gleam of excitement
in their eyes.

YOKO

What, are you crazy? A chance for a
Royal European tour? A stay with the
King of England... All for free? It's
the chance of a lifetime!

SHIN

Now this is something to benefit your
education. Hirohito will be the first
member of the Royal Family ever to leave
Japan!

TAKI

Fine. We go then...

CUT TO:

EXT. JAPANESE PROP-PASSENGER PLANE - 1921 - DAY

An old twin-engine plane with Rising Sun emblem on the
side is flying through clouds, on their way to Europe.

INT. JAPANESE PASSENGER PLANE - DAY

The Japanese PILOT is teaching TAKI how to fly, showing
him the instruments, etc., as YOKO looks on. The PILOT is
teaching TAKI how to execute various maneuvers, such as
climbing, banking, etc.

CUT TO:

EXT/INT. ORIENT EXPRESS - DAY

HOLD SHOT TO ESTABLISH MOVING 'ORIENT EXPRESS' TRAIN

TAKI, SHIN, MIKO, and YOKO are looking out the windows,
pointing to the sights from their luxuriously furnished
train compartment. All are dressed in western attire.

A STEWARD, 50s, comes into their compartment, serving them tea on a silver service cart.

EXT. CITY OF PARIS - DAY

AERIEL VIEW: a large orange-sun sets over the lovely city, the Eiffel Tower, etc. - The Orient Express train is moving toward the Station Gare de Lyon.

INT. GARE DE LYON TRAIN STATION - DAY

The Orient Express pulls in among the other older trains. NEWS REPORTERS flock around it, titillated, ready to converge on the PRINCE with cameras, etc.

The train DOOR swings open and four stern looking Japanese BODYGUARDS exit, pushing reporters aside, clearing a path.

A French MARCHING BAND arrives with various DIGINITARIES waiting to greet the PRINCE. It's a thrilling spectacular historical moment for all attending.

CLOSE ON TRAIN DOOR AS STEPS COME DOWN. A red and gold carpet is rolled out, extending all the way down to the quay. Ten French SOLDIERS march up and take up flanking positions at attention along the red carpet.

The reporters look vaguely amused by all the pomp and circumstance.

Finally the PRINCE appears, dressed in white Japanese officer's uniform, with gold braid trim and hat. Gold medals and battle ribbons decorate his chest.

The PRINCE appears stoic and reserved descending the steps, immediately followed by his entourage, which consists of many SERVANTS, four GEISHAS, and six LADIES IN WAITING. Most are in traditional Japanese dress. The reporters go wild taking photos, lurching forward at times toward the PRINCE, trying to get an interview.

TAKI, SHIN, YOKO and MIKO come out the train door last, marveling at the crazy scene, with reporters pushing and shoving, marching bands playing, flashbulbs popping off, while the PRINCE is moving down along the line of French dignitaries, shaking hands, bowing, etc.

A young DIRECTOR with a PATHE movie camera mounted on a truck is taking news footage of the event. TAKI looks to MIKO amused.

TAKI

I never thought it would be like this...

EXT. THE LOUVRE MUSEUM - DAY

HOLD TO ESTABLISH LOUVRE BUILDING

A black LIMO-SEDAN pulls up with Japanese flags on the front fenders. The PRINCE and TAKI get out, both are in western suits and ties.

INT. THE LOUVE MUSEUM - DAY

TAKI and the PRINCE are strolling through the painting galleries, accompanied by four BODYGUARDS, whom stay several paces in front and back of them at all times.

TAKI and The PRINCE are in discussion, looking at the Impressionists paintings.

PRINCE

I'm very pleased you came, Taki.

TAKI

I am honored, your Highness... Perhaps now you realize how much friendship means.

The PRINCE stops at a Van Gogh self-portrait. He looks disturbed by Van Gogh's crazed face.

TAKI

What's the matter?

PRINCE

Taki, do I seem alright to you?

TAKI

Yes, I don't understand...

PRINCE

It's my father...He's gone insane.
Sometimes I think I'm going mad too.
I don't know when it will happen...
Do you suppose a person knows when
they go mad?

TAKI

Stop talking such nonsense. You're
not mad, and you're certainly not
going to be.

PRINCE

Thank you, old friend. That's what
I always like about you, you have
a way of lifting people up, and you
always tell the truth. But promise
me if I do start showing signs you
will tell me.

TAKI

Of course, my Prince.

They continue walking, looking at the paintings.

EXT. STREETS NEAR NOTRE-DAME CATHEDRAL - DAY

The PRINCE, TAKI, MIKO, YOKO and SHIN are walking along
enjoying the sights, followed by the four bodyguards.
They stop in front of the Notre-Dame Cathedral at the
banks of the Seine to take photographs. The PRINCE seems
smitten by Yoko, cozying up to her for some shots.

PRINCE is thoroughly enjoying himself, when he notices a
number of PEDESTRIANS descending into a stairwell near
him. He wanders off over to investigate the stairwell,
sees a sign over it reading: 'METRO'

His bodyguards panic when they realize he's gone. Then
catch sight of him going down the stairwell mingling with
pedestrians. They try to keep up with him, but a surge of
Metro commuters are coming up the well, blocking them.

INT. PARIS METRO UNDERGROUND - DAY

The PRINCE descends in the Metro underground, amazed by
the subway trains and activity. It's the first time he's
been free on his own.

He smiles to himself, rubbing his hands together like a mischievous child. He looks at a subway map on the wall, then watches people get on and off the trains. He quickly figures it out, jumps on the next train pulling in.

INT. METRO TRAIN - DAY

The PRINCE is elated, even though he's squeezed in with all the commuters.

The train stops at the next station and the car is packed with people.

A big FAT FRENCH LADY, 30s, pushes her way in the car with two heavy shopping bags filled with fruit and groceries. The short little naive PRINCE finds his face buried, somewhat comically, between her huge breasts. PRINCE smiles up at her politely, unable to move from the crush. She looks down at him, disdainfully.

FAT LADY

Do you mind, Monsieur..?!

PRINCE starts to bow out of habit, but goes deeper into her breast cleavage and she lets out a yell, slaps him on his head. He quickly tries to turn around to get out of her way, then notices everyone holding onto the handrail loops up overhead.

He sees one extending from a RED-BOX, grabs for it and the whole train comes to a screeching stop -- everyone's jostled forward, glaring down at him for pulling the emergency cord! -- He bows politely, and gets off train.

INT. METRO SUBWAY STATION - DAY

The PRINCE is getting off the subway train at the very same station in Notre-Dame. He exits, feeling jubilant- a old hand of the subway system now. He casually strolls past the ticket turnstile without paying.

A Metro TICKET-TAKER is sitting in his booth watching. He's a big burly brute, who looks a little like a boxer. He spots the jaunty little PRINCE smiling, obliviously walking past the turnstile. TICKET-TAKER comes out from behind the booth, frowning.

TICKET-TAKER
 HEY, YOU LITTLE RUNT !!! WHERE DO
 YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING?

Everyone hears his loud, angry voice. Pedestrians and commuters alike gather to see what's going on. The PRINCE turns around, realizes the TICKET-TAKER is talking to him. He stops, as the TICKET-TAKER walks up to him, shaking his big fist.

TICKET-TAKER (CONT'D)
 LISTEN HERE, COOLIE...WE HAVE RULES,
 YOU KNOW? IF YOU THINK YOU CAN COME
 DOWN AND USE ZEE METRO WITHOUT PAYING,
 YOU'AVE ANOTHER THING COMING!

PRINCE doesn't understand and shakes his head, smiling.

TICKET-TAKER (CONT'D)
 Oh, I see, cat got you tongue, eh?
 Well I got news for you, you've going
 to pay anyway or I'm going to break
 your scrawny little neck!

TICKET-TAKER points to the stack of tickets in his hand. PRINCE finally gets it, bows in acknowledgement.

PRINCE
 Ah... so-so-so.

PRINCE reaches in his pocket and pulls out a hundred franc gold coin, shoves it in the TICKET-TAKER'S hand. TICKET-TAKER looks at it in amazement, realizing the coin's worth a small fortune. He looks around to see if anyone's watching, quickly pockets the coin, and hands the PRINCE a Metro ticket.

The PRINCE smiles, bows again to the TICKET TAKER.

TICKET-TAKER
 Now get out of here and don't
 let it happen again!

The PRINCE glances happily at his ticket, folds it neatly and puts it in a handkerchief and in his breast pocket. He then ascends up the stairs to the busy street above.

EXT. STREETS OF TOKYO - NIGHT

A brown Mercedes LIMOUSINE is speeding along a residential street on a rainy evening with thunder and lightning rumbling in the distance.

DISSOLVE:

INT. YAMAGATA'S LIMOUSINE, TOKYO - NIGHT

LORD YAMAGATA has aged, now in his late-70s. He's with two other Japanese MEN in the backseat of car driven by a chauffeur. The two men are, GEN. TERAUCHI, an evil looking heavy set man in his 60s, and HARA TAKASHI, late-50s with small pencil mustache, whom is the newly elected Prime Minister of Japan.

YAMAGATA rolls up the divider window so the chauffeur can not overhear their conversation.

YAMAGATA

(to Gen. Terauchi)

So, while the Prince enjoys his folly in Europe, we shall decide Japan's fate. After all, it was Japanese industry that provided most of Europe's lethal arsenal for World War I -- Now, it is time for us to build our own weapons stockpile.

GEN. TERAUCHI

The English and the Americans will try to stop us... They still think they can manipulate us with their worthless Treaty of Versailles. They will try to prevent us from producing too many warships, then try to curb our desire for expansion in China and the south Pacific -- But they will not succeed.

HARA

Gentlemen, I stress caution and reserve. It is dangerous to upset the Americans, they have the strongest fleet in the Pacific.

GEN. TERAUCHI

Yes, for the present. But one day we shall change that.

YAMAGATA

(to Hara)

Do I detect your disapproval?

HARA

I can only say, my Lord that it is not only the English and Americans you will anger, but our own people. Just as Gen. Terauchi was forced to resign his post as Prime Minister over his handling of the rice riots, so it will be with your new military policy.

YAMAGATA

Let me assure you, as long as the people believe the Emperor is God, they will follow him, believing they can not fail!

HARA

Maybe so, my Lord, but soon you will have to deal with the Crown Prince. The Emperor's ill, and the Diet is already assigning some of his duties to Prince Hirohito. The Prince may have some ideas of his own about Japan's future... We must let the Prince decide.

YAMAGATA

Hara, as member of the 'Genro Circle of Elders', I take part in the direction of this country. When a country stops growing, it is in decline. How do you think the English and Americans become such great nations?

(smiles)

By expansionism, my friend! The American States were taken one-by-one in wars. And the English are the biggest expansionists of all, taking territories all over the world by force, and intimidation of their military might!

(angry)

So, do not annoy me about upsetting the people or the Prince. We will deal with the Prince when the time comes.

CUT TO:

EXT. PUTTING GREEN AT BRIGHTON PAVILLION - DAY

TIGHT SHOT ON: GOLF BALL- A PUTTER taps ball and it goes in the hole.

ON PRINCE: He's in tweed cap with glasses, wearing plus-fours. Next to him is KING GEORGE, a pleasant, happy-go-lucky monarch with graying hair, in his mid-40s. Behind them are a small crowd of people watching, including four REPORTERS and two CADDIES.

The KING bends down, takes the ball out of the hole as the crowd cheers.

KING GEORGE

(to Prince)

I say... bravo, good putt. Now let's move to the next green.

PRINCE

(bows)

You really think I'm learning, Your Grace?

KING GEORGE

Quite so, old man. Why last week you couldn't hit the ball with a driver!

TAKI and YOKO come running up the green.

KING GEORGE (CONT'D)

Ah, your friends are here...Lovely girl, that Yoko-san.

PRINCE nods, as TAKI arrives out of breath, waving a piece of paper in his hand.

TAKI

(to Prince)

This just arrived by wire... Prime Minister Hara was stabbed to death at Tokyo main station. He was assassinated!

PRINCE

Oh, no..?!

TAKI

The people are outraged.

PRINCE

I must return to calm the situation.

KING GEORGE

So sorry to hear that, old boy...
It looks like you have your work
cut out for you. Such are the
unpleasantries of royalty. Remember
what I said: 'A country is only as
good as its Regent.'

YOKO

(to Prince)

Do we really have to leave?

PRINCE

I'm afraid we must. My duties of
office are forced upon me.

TAKI

I'll make the necessary arrangements
immediately, your Highness.

TAKI & YOKO leave.

KING GEORGE

Well at least we can finish our game.

PRINCE looks worried, distant.

PRINCE

Yes, of course, George. We must
finish our game.

They move to the next green, followed by their caddies
and the crowd.

DISSOLVE:

INT. GRAND HALL, IMPERIAL PALACE, TOKYO - 1926 -DAY

CLOSE ON: PRINCE HIROHITO seated high on the black chrysanthemum throne, wearing his white imperial robes.

CAMERA PULLS BACK to reveal The PRINCE'S coronation ceremony in progress with many Japanese officials and foreign dignitaries in attendance.

PRINCE looks straight ahead, solemnly, as a SHINTO HIGH PRIEST ceremonially hands the new EMPEROR the imperial state seals, then the imperial treasure symbolizing the throne, which is a crescent-shaped jewel of the sun goddess Amaterasu, a samurai sword, and a silver mirror.

The new EMPEROR HIROHITO slowly rises to his feet and places the treasures on the table next to him.

He turns his back to the crowd momentarily, facing a large blank piece of rice paper on the wall next to the throne, picks up a paintbrush on the table and begins to draw two large Japanese letter-characters.

A SHINTO HIGH PRIEST, 60s, begins to sing out the meaning of the characters he's writing.

SHINTO HIGH PRIEST

The Emperor has named himself,
Enlightened-peace - 'Showa'. Let
the Showa era of Emperor Hirohito,
the 124th Living God commence !

EMPEROR HIROHITO takes his seat once again on the throne and all officials and dignitaries line up to bow before him, one-by-one, including AMBASSADOR HART, MAJOR SIMMS, LORD YAMAGATA, GEN, TERAUCHI, THE SPEAKER OF THE DIET, OZAKI, TAKI, etc.

A procession follows the dignitaries, carrying gifts for the new EMPEROR. There's precious gold jewelry, silver votive objects, gold statues, fine China vases, etc.

A pageant of Japanese Court members enters, wearing colorful kimono costumes, followed by forty Samurai Warriors in black lacquer armor with swords and spears.

The pageant is followed by burning spices and incense.

Last, enters the EMPEROR'S potential new virgin BRIDES, escorted by their mothers with hope to become the new EMPRESS. They're Geishas with white-faces.

The EMPEROR puts on his glasses, inspecting the BRIDES. He spots one rather plain girl in particular. Her name is, PRINCESS NAGAKO. The EMPEROR questions her as she steps up to the throne to meet him, bowing obediently.

EMPEROR

What is your name?

PRINCESS NAGAKO

Princess Nagako, your highness.

Her elderly mother interjects, delighted.

MOTHER

She's a good choice, Your Highness.
She plays the lute and is an
excellent dancer!

EMPEROR

Good. I shall consider it.

The EMPEROR snaps his fingers and they leave, bowing, as the next girl is presented.

DISSOLVE:

INT. EMPEROR'S CHAMBERS, IMPERIAL PALACE - NIGHT

A group of Government Officials and Generals are seated at a large oval CONFERENCE TABLE, in a closed session.

The men are new PRIME MINISTER WAKATSUKI, FOREIGN MINISTER SHIDEHARA, GENERAL TERUCHI, GENERAL MINAMI, and FINANCE MINISTER INOUYE JUNNOSUKE. They are the most powerful figures in government and the military, and are in discussion with large MAP OF CHINA on wall.

As the EMPEROR arrives with TAKI, they stop talking, rise to their feet, bowing respectfully. TAKI and the EMPEROR are in western suits and tie, the MINISTERS are in kimonos, and GENERALS in military uniform.

The EMPEROR takes a seat at the head of the table, as TAKI stands behind him. Everyone begins to talk at once to the EMPEROR, but the EMPEROR raises his hand slowly and they stop.

EMPEROR

Gentlemen, be patient. You will all have your chance to speak.

GEN. TERUCHI

We say, the situation calls for war!

P. M. WAKATSUKI

And what purpose would that serve? Japan is economically unable to support a war with China. We do not have the finances.

GEN. MINAMI

We do if we move off the western gold standard. We could build our munitions and stocks to a point of great military power!

EMPEROR

Foreign Minister Shidehara, what is your opinion on Manchuria?

The old white-haired Foreign Minister takes off his thick lens glasses, thoughtfully.

F.M. SHIDEHARA

I must say, that as Foreign Minister, I know China very well. And to make war with her would be like awaking a sleeping dragon. It could be a great catastrophe. They are basically a good people, and not very unlike ourselves. I suggest reserve and calm until the Manchurian problem is resolved.

GEN. TERUCHI

Good people ? What do you know? I have taken the liberty to summon a guest to our meeting who has witnessed the massacre.

GEN. TERUCHI ushers in a medium built man, 50s, balding, with pencil-thin mustache. He is LIEUTENANT GENERAL TOJO.

GEN. TERUCHI (CONT'D)
Gentlemen, let me introduce you to
Lt. Gen. Tojo, our man in Manchuria.

Hushed whispers around the room.

GEN. TERUCHI (CONT'D)
Lt. Gen. Tojo, how many men did we
lose in the recent Manchurian Train
Incident?

TOJO bows to EMPEROR.

LT. GEN. TOJO
Two hundred-seventy-eight.

GEN. TERAUCHI
Lt. Gen. Tojo, as head of Imperial
Forces in Manchuria, would you say
the Chinese are... 'good people'?

More mumbling from the disgruntled audience.

LT. GEN. TOJO
After they wrecked the Manchurian
Railway they hacked our soldiers to
death. Not only that, afterwards
each man's head was cut off and hung
on spikes around the train as a warning
for us to leave Manchuria.

GEN. MINAMI
JAPAN MUST SAVE FACE! WE SAY- WAR!

P.M. WAKATSUKI
We are a civilized nation... We can
not just attack mainland China. We are
a peaceful member of the international
League of Nations. They would cut our
trade, cripple us with an embargo.

F.M. SHIDEHARA

Gentlemen, gentlemen, we have already been considering a solution to the problem in Manchuria. We are arranging an agreement to appease the Chinese by placing one of their emperors, Pu-Yi, in Manchuria as the figurehead for a puppet government there. Of course, Pu-Yi thinks he will be in charge, but we will pull the strings! Furthermore, we have decided to change the name of Manchuria to 'Manchukuo' to further disorient them.

EMPEROR

I do not agree with your methods, Foreign Minister. Why not simply give up this useless province in China?

LT. GEN. TOJO

That would be impossible, your Highness. For whoever controls Manchuria, controls the flow of Russian military advances through Korea -- Which means they could easily take China, and veritably move into Japan thru Korea next. You must understand- Manchuria is of utmost importance to Japan as a buffer.

F.M. INOUE

And our trade with China is substantial; cheap labor and cheap goods, which we in turn export. Japan, as we all know, is already suffering side-effects of the U.S. Great Depression -- We can not afford to leave Manchuria for our own economic survival, not to mention the vast mineral wealth there.

GEN. TERUCHI

Let me remind you, that this great economic Depression is being felt by our own soldiers and officers. We have dissension in the ranks of junior officers, some even plotting a coup against us. I say, keep them busy fighting in Manchuria.

EMPEROR

Is there no other solution?

F.M. INOUYE

The only other answer, your Highness, is to cut the army's budget completely, and let new officers and conscripts go.

GEN. MINAMI

WE CAN NOT DO THAT! WE MUST FIGHT TO SAVE FACE IN MANCHURIA!

GEN. TERUCHI

I propose we try the Pu-Yi plan first. If we were to cut our troop levels, it would be a green-light to Chiang Kai-shek and his rebels to attack again.

P.M. WAKATSUKI

Then I think we've all agreed on the plan to implement Emperor Pu-Yi as our official figurehead in Manchuria?

(beat)

Oh, excuse me... 'Manchukuo'.

ALL IN UNISON

Hai, Hai...!

The officials file out of the conference room. TAKI and the EMPEROR are left alone. TAKI takes a seat next at the table.

EMPEROR

What do you think about the decision on Manchuria?

TAKI

I think it will backfire. The Chinese won't be so easily fooled by Pu-Yi. But I think it's better than a war... But, I see our military quite ready at first opportunity to invade Manchuria.

EMPEROR

On the other hand, Japan faces economic ruin if we don't keep Manchuria... Perhaps the Generals are right. We have no other choice.

EXT. IMPERIAL PALACE GARDENS - DAY

SHIN and TAKI are practicing with samurai swords on the lawn of the lush Royal Gardens grounds.

SLOW MOTION of their graceful body movements with sunlight reflecting off their blades. They wear no protection, only white shirts and pants. Old man SHIN is instructing TAKI in the finer aspects of the art.

SHIN

That's it, never leave your guard down. Now, watch the point where my blade meets the hand-guard. As it pivots you will see where the blade is moving.

SHIN stops after nearly cutting TAKI several times.

TAKI

I can't. I can't follow. You're too fast !

SHIN

Let the mind go, boy -- Watch and wait for the right moment. It's in the pivot. Parry the blade aside, then attack!

The EMPEROR walks on the scene with YOKO and MIKO. He's proudly wearing a black and gold military uniform. TAKI and SHIN finish, turn and bow to the EMPEROR.

EMPEROR

I have some good news for you, we are all going for holiday at the Winter Palace in Kyoto for a week. Yoko helped make up my mind.

EMPEROR smiles at YOKO, takes her hand.

TAKI

That sounds fine, your Highness. When do we leave?

EMPEROR

Tomorrow morning.

YOKO

Oh, we're going to have such fun.
I've heard so much about the palace.
It was the original palace of all
the Emperors. I'm going to take
lots of photographs!

The EMPEROR gently releases YOKO'S hand.

EMPEROR

Well, I must be off. I have a
meeting with the German Ambassador.

He kisses YOKO and MIKO on the cheeks then leaves with
his bodyguards. TAKI goes to YOKO, takes her aside.

TAKI

What do you think you're playing
at? Don't tell me you're having
an affair with the Emperor?

YOKO

None of your business, lover.

TAKI

Yes, it is my business! The Emperor
and I are close friends. Besides, I
thought we had an understanding. I
thought you loved me.

YOKO

I do, Taki, but what woman wouldn't
want to be an Empress or a Queen?
He can give me anything I ever wanted.

TAKI

You're going to hurt him, Yoko.

He pulls her to him.

YOKO

Let me worry about that.

TAKI

He's a sensitive man, not just an
all powerful Emperor. Leave him be.

He pulls her tighter, she moves her lips to him, they
kiss passionately.

EXT. KYOTO WINTER PALACE - DAY

HOLD TO ESTABLISH the majestic mountainside palace,
shrouded in early morning fog.

INT. KYOTO WINTER PALACE, EMPEROR'S BEDROOM - DAY

Light's filtering in through the rice paper windows. On a
large four-poster bed, YOKO'S looking out at the fog.
She's sensual and radiant as she stretches, awakening.

The EMPEROR is lying next to her. He looks lovingly at
her, runs his hand down her long slender neck. Both are
naked from the waist up, half-covered in red silken
sheets.

EMPEROR

You are the only woman I wanted...
We will have the most beautiful
children the world has even seen!

YOKO gets out of bed and puts on her robe.

YOKO

Children? You can't be serious!

EMPEROR

(elated)

But I'm serious... I'll give it all
up for you. It certainly won't be the
first time in history a monarch has
given away his throne for the woman
he loved; Look at Edward and Simpson!

YOKO

Listen, let's not get in too deep
with this baby thing?

EMPEROR

It's Taki, isn't it?

She doesn't answer, only puts on her clothes, getting ready to leave. He gets out of bed.

EMPEROR (CONT'D)
IT IS TAKI... ISN'T IT!?

YOKO
I don't want to discuss it.

EMPEROR
You will answer your Emperor!

He picks up his microscope from the desk, throws it against the wall.

INT. PALACE HALLWAY - DAY

YOKO walks out into the hall, the EMPEROR charges after her, shouting.

EMPEROR
YOU WILL ANSWER YOUR EMPEROR!
I COMMAND YOU!

YOKO disappears around a corner. The EMPEROR notices the SERVANTS watching in the hall.

EMPEROR
BACK TO WORK OR I'LL HAVE YOUR HEADS!

EMPEROR storms down the hall to another door, pulls it open.

INT. TAKI'S BEDROOM IN THE PALACE - DAY

TAKI and MIKO are asleep in bed as the EMPEROR charges in, shouting, knocking over vases.

EMPEROR
OUT...OUT !!! I WANT YOU ALL OUT!
I HAVE SHOWN YOU ALL ENOUGH OF MY
HOSPITALITY !

TAKI and MIKO are barely awake, wondering what's wrong.

TAKI
What's the matter?

EMPEROR

Nothing! I'm just tired of giving,
giving all the time! Get your things,
go! I want you out of the palace.

TAKI looks at MIKO, confused.

TAKI

Is this a joke? I thought we were
friends?

EMPEROR

The Emperor HAS NO FRIENDS..!
(to a servant)
Send for Princess Nagako and her
Mother. I want to see them at once.

TAKI

You remember you once told me about
your father? -- His problem?

EMPEROR

YOU LEAVE...LEAVE NOW!

TAKI takes a deep breath.

TAKI

Of course, your Highness. Your
wish is my command - Everything
is subject to change, right?
(whispers to Miko)
It must have been Yoko. Come,
Miko, we must get Shin.

EMPEROR storms out of the room.

INT. GRAND HALL - DAY

The EMPEROR is dressed in white-Kimono with gold silk
head band walking slowly to the center of the hall. A
large group of dignitaries are once again present, lined
up to watch a wedding ceremony.

PRINCESS NAGAKO, 20s, in powder-blue kimono joins the
EMPEROR at center floor, escorted by two Geishas and a

SHINTO PRIEST. It is a brief, solemn, and quiet wedding ceremony with only one 'koto' thirteen-string Japanese musical instrument twanging gently behind them.

LORD YAMAGATA nudges GEN. TERUCHI in the lineup.

YAMAGATA

Marriage should keep the Emperor busy with raising a family.

GEN. TERUCHI

Let's hope it will give us enough time to organize our plan.

YAMAGATA

Move our agitators to Peking and Shanghai as soon as you can.

GEN. TERUCHI bows, the wedding ceremony continues in the background.

INT. EMPEROR'S BEDROOM, KYOTO PALACE - NIGHT

The EMPEROR'S brooding, sitting in the dark, toying with the broken pieces of the microscope when a court MESSENGER arrives. The MESSENGER bows and enters.

EMPEROR

Hai. Yes, what is it?

MESSENGER

Manchuria... Fighting has broken out between our troops and the Chinese. Full scale rebellion. General Tojo wants permission to send in troop reinforcements.

EMPEROR

Tell General Tojo to move with everything he has... We want a swift and clean defeat.

MESSENGER

Yes, your Highness.

MESSENGER leaves, as the EMPEROR goes back to playing with his microscope in the darkened room.

INT. THE CONGRESSIONAL DIET, TOKYO - DAY

Pandemonium has broken out in the diet, everyone's shouting and cursing across the aisles at each other.

There's a clear division in the Diet between the military in khaki uniforms and civilian government representatives in kimonos. The SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE bangs his gable.

SPEAKER
ORDER...ORDER...!!!

The situation calms down, people take their seats.

SPEAKER
I call on Prime Minister Wakatsuki
to take the floor...

WAKATSUKI bows, steps up to the podium to talk to the members of the Diet.

P. M. WAKATSUKI
Gentlemen, I am deeply distressed
to hear about our aggressive troop
movements in Manchuria, Peking,
and Shanghai.

WAKATSUKI looks towards GEN. TERUCHI and GEN. TOJO as he continues.

P.M. WAKATSUKI (CONT'D)
I can only say, that it seems
our military has decided to
take matters of our national
interest in their own hands
without informing members of
the Diet.

GEN. TERUCHI
THE EMPEROR GAVE THE COMMAND!
IF YOU GO AGAINST THE EMPEROR
YOU ARE A TRAITOR TO JAPAN...
THE EMPEROR IS SUPREME RULER!

Three-quarters of the Diet stand, cry out...

ALL IN UNISON
THE EMPEROR! -- THE EMPEROR!

P.M. WAKATSUKI
It is quite obvious, that since
Lord Yamagata's death, his power
has not diminished, but has been
transferred to his Generals...

(beat)

Therefore, Gentlemen...members of
the Diet, the only solution is for
these traitors to be dismissed and
punished.

Commotion breaks out in the Diet again. Soldiers begin
wrestling some of the opposition civilian government
officials out of the building.

GEN. TERUCHI comments to his AIDE next to him.

GEN. TERUCHI
This weakling will not hold us back.
We will deal with him and the rest
at our leisure.

EXT. P.M. WAKATSUKI'S RESIDENCE, TOKYO - NIGHT

In the early morning hours, a small detachment of
uniformed soldiers is sneaking up to a large Japanese
house, hiding in the bushes, behind trees, etc.
No lights are on. The pastel, pink sun is rising.

INT. P.M. WAKATSUKI'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

CLOSE ON: P.M. WAKATSUKI and his wife asleep in bed.

WAKATSUKI open his eyes. He hears something -- then all
hell breaks loose; Soldiers come running in with swords
drawn and start hacking WAKATSUKI to death. In the back
ground, only the screams of his terrified wife are heard.

EXT. THE DIET SPEAKER'S RESIDENCE, TOKYO - SAME NIGHT

It is the same night, as the group of uniformed soldiers sneak up to the SPEAKER'S house with swords drawn.

INT. THE SPEAKER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The soldiers burst in and hack the SPEAKER to death.

One soldier shouts:

SOLDIER #1.
DEATH TO ALL TRAITORS OF THE
EMPEROR!

EXT. THE SREETS OF TOKYO - DAY daks

The next morning the streets are buzzing with the news of the assassinations. People huddle reading at a newspaper stand, the headlines blare out:

"PRIME MINISTER AND GOVERNMENT
OFFICIAL ASSASSINATED IN MILITARY
COUP!"

An OLD MAN on the street is selling newspapers to passers-by like hot cakes. People look worried at the news as they walk away, reading the grim headlines.

INT. TAKI AND SHIN'S APARTMENT IN TOKYO - DAY

SHIN comes barging in the door awakening TAKI and MIKO.

SHIN
Have you heard? Now they've
done it! The army murdered the
opposition in the Diet last night.
Wakatsuki, the Speaker, Ozaki,
Takahashi -- they're all dead !

TAKI
No...

SHIN
They've taken full control of the
Diet and launched a full scale
invasion of China.

YOKO appears in the doorway.

YOKO

Have you heard?

TAKI

Yes.

YOKO

Father has orders from Washington to leave here at once. Japan has just broken relations with The League of Nations over China. They say it's not safe for Americans here.

SHIN

I should think not. I have just read the airforce accidentally bombed a U.S. gunboat in it's attack on Nanking.

TAKI

Sounds like the Generals have gone mad. The military is moving too fast.

YOKO

Father also received word from the US embassy that Japanese troops were moving into Southeast Asia; Burma, Malaya, and Siam have all fallen... What will you do?

SHIN

I for one, am going back to the mountains where I can find peace. If this is what they call the 'Showa Era of Enlightenment', I want no part of it. Let them fight it out.

MIKO

Taki, I'm so frightened.

TAKI

Don't worry, Miko, everything will be alright. You'll see... We'll go safe into mountains with Shin.

YOKO

I could arrange to smuggle you all

out on an American ship.

A unit of khaki-uniformed soldiers arrive and enter the front door, pointing their rifles with bayonets at them. All stop in their tracks, as a stern looking, young JAPANESE OFFICER pulls out a small scroll, reads aloud:

OFFICER

'By order of His Imperial Highness and the Military High Command, you are hereby conscripted into the Imperial Army, and will report at once for active duty.'

SHIN

What..?

OFFICER

(to Taki & Shin)

You two -- You will both report at once, I said! We will escort you immediately to your station of duty.

SHIN

I won't go. I refuse.

SHIN takes a seat on the floor and assumes lotus position. The irate OFFICER draws his gun and holds it to SHIN's head.

TAKI

(to Officer)

No! Let me talk to him...

(to Shin)

Shin, please... This is not the way. Give me a chance to talk to the Emperor. I know he'll sort this out.

The impatient Officer nods to a SOLDIER, 20s, standing in back of SHIN.

SHIN

(to Taki)

My son, there comes a time when a man must stand by what he believes in... I will kill no more.

The Soldier raises his rifle butt, hits SHIN in the back of the head, knocking him cold. TAKI stands to fight the soldier, but is restrained by two other soldiers.

The soldiers grab SHIN by his arms, drag him out the door, followed by TAKI under guard. MIKO and YOKO are left alone crying.

DISSOLVE:

STOCK NEWS REEL FOOTAGE:

'Movietone' News Reel Footage of World War II shows:

1. The bombing of Pearl Harbor - Dec. 7, 1941.
2. Invasion of South East Asia - March 6, 1942.
3. The Fighting in Europe - August 20, 1943
4. The Fighting in Burma - June 10, 1944.

EXT. THE BURMA ROAD - 1945 - DAY

A long line of Japanese soldiers are marching down the Burma Road, sweating in murderous tropical heat.

CLOSE ON TAKI: marching at front of the line, leading a ragged division. He and most of the men are tired, but keep in step with bayoneted rifles hung over shoulders.

CAMERA PASSES OVER A FEW MORE SOLDIERS, then to SHIN at the rear. He and other soldiers are pulling a damaged Jap-Zero airplane on long thick, rope-lines with twenty other American and English prisoners helping.

SHIN stares blankly ahead, mouth parched from the hot sun, then finally collapses. A wiry young Japanese CAPTAIN, mid-20s, comes over to him on his horse, jumps down, begins whipping SHIN with a riding crop.

CAPTAIN

GET UP YOU LOWLY MULE AND PULL!
WE WILL SHOW YOU WHAT WE DO WITH
CONSCIENCIOUS OBJECTORS !

SHIN looks up at the CAPTAIN with contempt. The CAPTAIN beats SHIN across his face with his riding crop, streaks

of blood trickle from the cuts. The crop comes down over and over.

CLOSE ON: a hand grabbing the CAPTAIN'S arm, restraining him. It is TAKI. He takes the crop out of the CAPTAIN'S hand, breaks it in half, throws it into the brushes along the roadside. The CAPTAIN'S enraged, pulls out his revolver, pressing it hard under TAKI'S chin.

CAPTAIN
WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU ARE DOING ?
HOW DARE YOU INTERFERE! YOU WILL
BE SHOT -- BOTH OF YOU !!!

The CAPTAIN looks to his men. Two soldiers grab TAKI.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
LET THESE LOWLY DOGS BE A REMINDER
TO YOU ALL! THE JAPANESE ARMY WILL
NOT TOLERATE DISOBEDIENCE!

The CAPTAIN nods and the two soldiers force TAKI to his knees, next to SHIN.

The vicious CAPTAIN moves in behind TAKI and SHIN, placing the barrel of the revolver at the base of TAKI'S head. The rest of the soldiers watch, eyes wide with fear, while the CAPTAIN smiles to himself, sadistically.

TAKI and SHIN are kneeling, look defeated, ready to die.

The CAPTAIN draws the hammer back on the revolver. CLOSE ON- the chamber turning slowly, showing a BULLET rolling into position. CLICK, CLICK, CLICK! A SHOT is heard...
BAM !

CLOSE ON CAPTAIN'S FACE: a look of shock -- There's a bullet hole in his forehead! He slumps, falls to the ground, dead.

Machine gun fire ERUPTS and mortar shells begin BURSTING all around them. Japanese soldiers run for cover. All hell's broken out. TAKI and SHIN run into the brush, as heavy-set JAP SERGEANT, 30s, chases in after them.

On the run, they manage to hide in the hollow of a tree. It starts RAINING, and they see a river STREAM nearby. TAKI points to it, SHIN nods in agreement.

They're walking along in the stream in tattered clothes, but feeling free, eating fruits and plants.

The rains are coming down heavy. They stop and take cover, using palms and make a shelter. Exhausted, they fall asleep under the palms.

CLOSE ON AN ARM: shaking them awake. It's the Japanese SERGEANT, who has tracked them. His rifle is on them.

INT. JAPANESE CONCENTRATION CAMP, BURMA - NIGHT

TAKI and SHIN are cramped into a 5x5 foot wooden 'Hot-box', diabolically exposed to the hot mid-day sun. Beads of sweat is dripping from their tired, haggard faces, while mosquitoes buzz around, biting them. TAKI looks forlorn, down at his necklace coin.

A Japanese guard looks in on them, checks the locks, then PISSES on them! After, he walks away, laughing.

TAKI

(to Shin)

I don't think I'm going to make it.
If I stay another day in here, I will
die - GOD, LET ME DIE !

SHIN

(reticent)

You'd be surprised what suffering man
can endure. In a situation like this,
my master would say: 'Desire is the
cause of all suffering'.

TAKI

What do you mean?

SHIN moves his legs into lotus position.

SHIN

'Desire is the creator, and desire
is the destroyer'; You see, if you

go inward, and give up your desire
to be free or give up your desire
for comfort, or for food, you will
find your suffering diminishes.

Taki swats a mosquito looks at him like he's mad.

TAKI

Are you are crazy? I'm starving!

SHIN

I have seen my master go for days
seated in lotus position, without food.
This was done to exorcise his attachment
to the material world. It is a method
commonly used by Buddhist monks. If
you wish to survive this ordeal, you
must go inward, change your thinking.

(beat)

Get into lotus position.

TAKI

But where does the mind go when you
say, inward?

SHIN

Thoughts are like clouds...Watch
them float by and disappear into
emptiness. The same is done with
thoughts of desire for food and
comfort -- let them drift by.

TAKI gets in lotus position.

TAKI

I'll try...

(beat)

If only the Emperor would get my
letter I know he'd get us out of
this living hell-hole. Why hasn't
he answered me?

SHIN

Ah, there you go again with your
desires. You must let it go, my
son. Let go...

SHIN closes his eyes, going into a world of his own, as TAKI follows, closing his eyes.

EXT. THE BURMA CAMP - DAY

The same big Japanese SERGEANT is walking through the encampment to the 'hot-box'. Shelling is heard in the distance. The SERGEANT kicks the door-bolt open.

SERGEANT

Come! We have work for you...

TAKI and SHIN climb out emaciated and pale. They squint from the sun and can barely stand up. Their lips are blistered and dry. The SERGEANT hands them a canteen, they drink from it shaking, spilling water.

SERGEANT

The Army needs medics... Too many of ours have died on the battlefield, so you will replace them. You will be trained and sent to the front.

(to Shin)

Since you refuse to fight, you will serve your country in this manner!

SHIN nods in agreement, TAKI does the same. In the background, twenty new American and British PRISONERS arrive under guard. SHIN and TAKI watch as the prisoners are led into a barbwire pen.

SERGEANT

Those are prisoners from the front to be shot. But you will live.

(to his guards)

You will take these men at once to Infirmary for briefing... Go now!

The guards lead TAKI and SHIN towards the INFIRMARY, walking past the barbwire pen holding the new prisoners. TAKI spots SIMMS, who is now a British Colonel, wearing rag-tag khaki shorts, torn shirt and officer's cap. The prisoners look tired, weary and some are wounded.

Four Japanese guards are seen DRAGGING two young British soldiers out into the center of the camp, where they are

executed by a cold-blooded OFFICER with a pistol. TAKI nudges SHIN, he can't believe its happening.

SIMMS lets out a loud shout of revulsion from the pen. While TAKI and SHIN are escorted by, they pass directly in front of the pen, and SIMMS spots them. SIMMS nods subtly, realizing he can't attract attention of the Japanese guards. TAKI and SHIN pass by without saying a word. TAKI eyes SIMMS as they continue on to the Infirmary.

INT. INFIRMARY TENT - DAY

TAKI and SHIN are cleaning bed-pans and changing sheets for the wounded Japanese soldiers.

TAKI steps outside for some air, looks over at the pen where SIMMS is being held with others.

SIMMS sees him and TAKI walks over, talks to a young naïve CORPORAL GUARD, 20s.

TAKI

It's very hot out here today,
isn't it?

CORPORAL

Hai, yes, it is.

TAKI

Here, I have something for you...

TAKI gives him some mangoes. SIMMS sees what he's up to.

SERIES OF SHOTS

As days go by, SIMMS and the other prisoners left appear to be in very bad condition from hunger and lack of proper medical attention.

Two more prisoners are taken out, forced on their knees and executed by Jap firing squad.

Some other prisoners are moved out to the 'hot box'. The situation looks extremely bleak.

INT. IMPERIAL ARMY HEADQUARTERS, TOKYO - DAY

GENERAL TOJO'S personal AIDE, in his 30s, comes racing down the busy corridor with some letters in his hand. As he approaches the General's door, two guards snap to attention.

On the door is a plaque reading: 'Gen. Tojo, Imperial Army Chief of Staff. The AIDE enters without knocking.

INT. GENERAL TOJO'S OFFICE - DAY

GEN. TOJO sits at his desk strewn with papers, shuffling through battle maps.

GEN. TOJO

Hai, yes, what is it ?

AIDE

More poste for the Emperor.

He lays three letters on the table. GEN. TOJO stops what he's going, picks up the letters and inspects their contents.

GEN. TOJO

From Taki Akira again? See to it that Conscript Akira stays at the front. No one receives preferential treatment while we're at war, not even close friends of the Emperor.

GEN. TOJO tears up the letters, throws them in the waste basket. The AIDE salutes, hands him a folded note. He looks at it.

GEN. TOJO (CONT'D)

No, it can't be! Rangoon, Manila, and Singapore have fallen?

AIDE gives him another note.

AIDE

The German high command is receiving complaints from the Swiss that we're

not adhering to the rules of the Geneva Convention.

GEN. TOJO

What are you talking about?

AIDE

It's concerning treatment of U.S. and British prisoners, sir.

GEN. TOJO

TO HELL with the Geneva Convention!
This is WAR!!! Our prisoners are lucky to be alive. Why the very fact that they are prisoners shows they are cowards and are entitled to very little consideration. If I had it my way, they'd have been shot on capture!

The telephone rings, the AIDE picks up the receiver and answers.

AIDE

*Hai...*Yes, Sir.

The AIDE hangs up.

AIDE (CONT'D)

The Emperor is ready to review the new troops, Sir.

GEN. TOJO

Call the Press Corps, I want to make certain this is recorded for our people and men at the front. They must believe the Emperor is with us.

AIDE

Hai, yes, General.

The AIDE picks up the phone to call the Press Corps.

EXT. JAPANESE ARMY HEADQUARTERS, TOKYO - DAY

Long lines of army DIVISIONS and array of armored VEHICLES are awaiting the EMPEROR to inspect the troops.

On top of an army truck, the 'Japanese Press Corps' is waiting to record the event with movie cameras.

The EMPEROR arrives in full dress uniform, medals, sword, etc., riding on a spirited white STALLION he can hardly control. Regardless, the EMPEROR holds his head high, parading past the Press truck.

CLOSE ON: camera flash-bulbs going off- POP-POP! A noisy old cameras start to roll. The EMPEROR'S horse spooks, rearing up VIOLENTLY. EMPEROR struggles with the horse to stay on, but eventually falls to everyone's horror!

An ARMY OFFICER runs to help the EMPEROR to his feet, while another runs to the Press Corps people, waving his hands in front of them to stop filming.

EMPEROR dusts himself off, and promptly mounts a different horse brought to him and continues his review, as if nothing happened.

EXT. JAP CONCENTRATION CAMP CINEMA - NIGHT

JAPANESE OFFICERS are watching the same footage of the EMPEROR on a horse on a movie screen, but it cuts out his fall, continuing with propaganda footage of the Japanese Army winning great victories in Burma, Rangoon, etc.

Towards the end of news reel, the EMPEROR is shown with his rearing white stallion, making him look like he's in control and an adept horseman.

The lights come on, and the Japanese soldiers stand in their places, bowing to the white screen, as if the Emperor had been physically in their presence.

TAKI and SHIN are standing behind the Japanese Officers and soldiers.

TAKI whispers to SHIN.

TAKI

That newsreel was strange.

SHIN

How so?

TAKI

The Emperor hates horses.

TAKI and SHIN walk out.

TAKI

Did you get the cigarettes and
saki?

SHIN nods with a wry smile.

EXT. CONCENTRATION CAMP PRISONER PEN - SAME NIGHT

The lone young CORPORAL is stationed outside the barbwire pen, standing guard for the British and American prisoners.

SIMMS moves wearily in the corner, sits huddled with a few other of his men, emaciated for lack of food.

TAKI approaches the young CORPORAL with SHIN at his side.

SHIN

(to Corporal)

Hello my friend. Guess what I
have for you tonight?

TAKI shows him a small bottle of saki wine.

CORPORAL

No, it is not allowed.

TAKI

No one has to know. It will help
pass the lonely night.

TAKI pours a small cup of wine, takes a sip, then he offers it to the CORPORAL. He looks nervously around, takes a sip, savoring every drop and nods for more.

TAKI (CONT'D)

Wait. Now for my part of the deal;
We want to make some trade with the
Prisoners -- You know, black-market
things; watches, rings, jewelry...

CORPORAL

I don't know...

The CORPORAL looks suspiciously at SHIN.

CORPORAL

You didn't say you were bringing
Someone. Who is he?

TAKI

My friend, Shin. I need him
because he speaks English.

CORPORAL

Alright, but make it fast or we
may all be shot. Go...go!

SHIN and TAKI scurry around to the corner where SIMMS is sitting with his men. They squat down next to him on the opposite side of the barbwire fence.

TAKI

Mr. Simms, what have they done
to you?

SIMMS

Taki, Taki, it's good to see you!

TAKI reaches in his bag and takes out some fruit for SIMMS and his men.

The prisoners grab it, eating like starving animals.

SIMMS

(to his men)

Keep the food out of sight. If
the Japs see it, they'll kill us.

(to Taki)

They're trying to starve us to
death.

TAKI

We've got to get you out of here.
There's a small airstrip on the
other side of camp with a cargo
plane. I can get to it, we'll
get you all out of here tonight.

SIMMS

You can fly it okay?

TAKI

I hope so.

SIMMS

Hope? If our escape should fail,
they'll finish us off for sure.

One of MAJOR SIMMS' men interjects, he's a big brawny 2ND LIEUTENANT, 30s, with arm in a sling and a patch over one eye.

2ND LIEUTENANT

(to Simms)

I can fly that plane if we have to.
It's certainly better to make a go
of it than slowly rotting away here.
The men can't take anymore, Major.

SIMMS notices the young CORPORAL coming over.

SIMMS

(to Taki & Shin)

The Corporal's coming...

TAKI looks around.

TAKI

(to Simms)

Quick, give me some watches,
rings, whatever. The Corporal
thinks we're here to do some
black-market dealing..

SIMMS and the 2nd LIEUTENANT take off their rings and watches and hand them to TAKI through the barbwire just as the CORPORAL approaches. TAKI stands up, shows him the booty. He hands the CORPORAL a watch.

CORPORAL

Alright, alright, but you must
leave soon...Hurry up.

The CORPORAL walks away. TAKI and SIMMS continue talking.

TAKI

What do you think, Mr. Simms? You will die in here anyway. We have to try, it's our only chance.

SIMMS

...But we've heard that the Japs have lost the war after the big Battle of Midway; Japs lost four aircraft carriers and two heavy cruisers. Their supply lines have been cut off...

TAKI

They may also not know we're here. How do you know this?

SIMMS

Word came from some of our new in-coming prisoners.

TAKI

That means you will be at the mercy of the Officer's and they'll probably execute all of you soon.

SIMMS thinks about it, weighs it over with a determined look.

SIMMS

(to 2nd Lieutenant)

Right then... Pass the word.

2ND LIEUTENANT

(nods)

Aye, aye, sir.

2nd LIEUTENANT goes to tell the other men.

SHIN

(to Taki)

Now for the Corporal...

SHIN gets up, heads toward the Corporal. He casually walks up to the unsuspecting kid, quickly grabs a pressure point on his neck and he drops slowly to the

ground. SHIN catches him, gently lays him down. He takes his helmet, shirt and rifle.

SIMMS

(to Taki)

That was relatively painless.

SHIN returns, throws the CORPORAL'S keys to Taki, and unlocks the pen.

TAKI

(to Simms)

Have your men follow me single file. We'll go into the jungle and circle the camp's perimeter until we reach the airstrip... Understood?

SIMMS

Right.

As SIMMS assembles his men, TAKI turns to SHIN.

TAKI

Simms told me the Japanese were losing the war. How could the Emperor not know? Why would he allow this killing to continue?

The pen-gate swings open and the rag-tag bunch of Prisoners slip silently out into the night. TAKI waves them along to follow him into the cover of jungle.

EXT. BURMA JUNGLE - NIGHT

TAKI's leading the British and American prisoners cutting his way through the jungle with a bayonet, swatting bugs and mosquitoes.

CAMERA ON: a deadly CORAL SNAKE. One young BRITISH PRISONER, 20s, points at the snake, but as he steps back the young PRISONER is BITTEN by another snake! He dies on the spot. SIMMS makes sign of cross and they continue on.

The sun is rising slowly. SIMMS stumbles and falls at times from exhaustion, but manages to go on. Eventually,

SIMMS is so weak he has to be carried. They finally reach the edge of the jungle. TAKI peeks through the trees, spots the Jap airstrip. The Jap CARGO PLANE is in the hangar with a JAP-ZERO next to it, fueling up. The strip is guarded by JAP SENTRIES.

TAKI sneaks up on one Sentry, hits him with a rock, then puts on his uniform, runs back to 2ND LIEUTENANT.

TAKI

I will go to the other Sentries on the airfield and tell them we've had an outbreak of typhoid in the area.

2ND LIEUTENANT

What?

TAKI

Yes, I will tell them they must go to the Infirmary or they will die... We must get rid of them so we can steal the plane.

2ND LIEUTENANT

Let's hope it works. Good luck.

EXT. JAP AIRSTRIP - EARLY MORNING

TAKI walks out onto the tarmac in the Jap Sentry's uniform with rifle slung over his shoulder. He approaches the Jap SENTRIES, who are talking, smoking cigarettes, as two MECHANICS are refueling the Jap-Zero.

Before TAKI can speak a few words to them, a JAP OFFICER stops him, suspicious. He grabs TAKI's rifle away, then points his PISTOL at him, points him to go into the hangar.

INT/EXT. JAP HANGAR - SAME MORNING

The JAP OFFICER looks at TAKI's black Infirmary pants.

JAP OFFICER

Why you are you not wearing

regulation khaki pants?

They speak in Japanese (with English subtitles).

TAKI

Because they are all dead of
the typhoid! No one is left.

TAKI plays like he's gone a bit crazy out of his head.

TAKI (CONT'D)

Dead, dead, dead! Bodies
everywhere!

As the JAP OFFICER lowers his pistol, TAKI kicks it out of his hand, and a KARATE FIGHT ensues.

Outside the hangar, one of the JAP SENTRIES is wondering what's going on in the hangar, goes in to investigate. As he enters the hangar, TAKI delivers a swift blow with the rifle butt to the head, and he drops.

The other SENTRY goes in with his pistol drawn. TAKI takes a swing at him with the rifle butt and the GUARD FIRES a shot, but misses TAKI. TAKI grabs the pistol and shoots him dead. The shot has alerted the last SENTRY outside, who picks up his rifle and runs inside.

The SENTRY catches TAKI trying to cock the pistol, but it jams. TAKI'S in panic, as the man raises his rifle to shoot. The SENTRY pulls back on the bolt, puts his finger on the trigger, but it's too late-- SHIN comes through the door and delivers a deadly karate blow to the man's neck, killing him.

SHIN nods. TAKI smiles back, thankful.

TAKI runs outside, gives an 'all clear' wave to the Prisoners waiting in the brush. The prisoners emerge elated, jumping with joy.

INT. JAP CARGO PLANE - SAME MORNING

TAKI and the 2ND LIEUTENANT climb into the cockpit of the cargo plane, checking out the instruments and fuel. All is okay, tanks are nearly full.

2ND LIEUTENANT starts the engines and taxis the plane out onto the airstrip to board the men, and ready for take off. But two JAP ARMORED CARS appear on the airstrip, coming fast toward the plane, firing machine guns, STRAFING the airfield.

2ND LIEUTENANT pulls cockpit window open, shouts at the prisoners.

2ND LIEUTENANT
Come on men, let's move it!

TAKI
Where's Shin?

2ND LIEUTENANT
I don't know.

BULLETS are flying through the plane's fuselage. Two PRISONERS are killed outright, trying to get onboard the plane. SIMMS takes a BULLET in the leg, as the PRISONERS scramble to get into the plane.

2ND LIEUTENANT revs the engines, moving it onto the tarmac for take off. TAKI looks back at the chaotic scene of PRISONERS trying to get into the plane.

TAKI
What are you going to do? We can't make it past two armored cars with all this weight on board!

SHIN appears on the airstrip in front of them with a rifle in his hands, waving at them to let him on.

2ND LIEUTENANT
We'll never make it if we take another man on board.

TAKI
If we dump the dead bodies, we can.

2ND LIEUTENANT
That's bloody mad. Those are

our men back there! They deserve
a proper British burial.

2ND LIEUTENANT suddenly takes a BULLET in the shoulder,
BLOOD FLIES!

TAKI

We have no choice now. Give me
The wheel.

2ND LIEUTENANT is begrudgingly helped to the back the
plane. Shells and bullets are ripping all around. In the
cargo hold, two DEAD BODIES are dumped onto the tarmac.

TAKI spots SHIN running down the airstrip. He slows the
plane to pick him up, but third armored car arrives.
2ND LIEUTENANT pops back in the cockpit with bandaged arm.

2ND LIEUTENANT

Oh no, there's nothing we can do for
Shin now. Get this bloody bird up or
we're goners!

On the tarmac, SHIN sees the hopelessness of the
situation. He throws his rifle down, runs over to one of
the enclosed armored cars, climbs on top of it, lifts off
the machine gun.

A JAP SOLDIER pops his head up from inside holding a
pistol. SHIN opens fire on him and the rest inside the
car, killing them and crashing the car. He rolls off,
sees another armored car passing, jumps up on it. SHIN's
standing on the armored car, waving at TAKI to take off
without him.

TAKI takes a deep breath, guns the engines. The plane
starts to move faster down the runway, as SHIN kills two
Japs coming up out of the armored vehicle. He then jumps
inside and drives the car toward the last armored car.

Just as they are about to collide, SHIN jumps out the
door and it crashes into the other car- KA-BOOM!!! SHIN
has cleared the runway for take off.

TAKI slows as the plane is passing him, and SHIN jumps up
through the open door, hanging by his life! But he's
quickly dragged inside by the Prisoners.

Plane lifts off. SIMMS pats SHIN on the shoulders, amazed by his heroism.

MONTAGE SCENES: of them flying over Burma, mountains, rivers, etc.

The 2ND LIEUTENANT is trying to read the Japanese flight maps. He glances downward out the window looking for a heading.

2ND LIEUTENANT
(to Taki)

There it is! The British airfield at Nurnga. We'd better radio in or they're liable to shoot us down. Give me the mike...

TAKI hands him the headphones and microphone.

2ND LIEUTENANT (CONT'D)
(to airfield)

Hello base -- Hello Nurnga base, do you read me? - Over...

No response, as shells begin to BURST in the air around them- BOOM! - BOOM!

He tries radio again.

2ND LIEUTENANT

HELLO, BASE...HELLO GODDAMN IT!
MAYDAY --- MAYDAY --- MAYDAY!
THIS IS 2ND LIEUTENANT JAMES R.
PETERS UP HERE IN A COMMANDEERED
JAP CARGO PLANE. WE NEED TO LAND.
STOP SHOOTING AT US, DAMN IT. WE
HAVE WOUNDED MEN ON BOARD ! WE'RE
COMING IN... MAY DAY -- MAY DAY!

Static comes on the radio, muffled voices are heard.

2ND LIEUTENANT (CONT'D)
(to Taki)

I think they read us, we're getting through!

The shell fire ceases.

EXT. BRITISH AIRFIELD, CEYLON - DAY

TAKI taxis the Jap cargo plane in for a landing. Rescue trucks come to meet them on the airfield.

The door swings open and the prisoners begin filing out of the aircraft, into the arms of medic and the rescue workers.

British soldiers load them into the trucks. SIMMS is carried out on a stretcher, followed by SHIN then TAKI and 2ND LIEUTENANT.

An OFFICIAL JEEP comes up with two high ranking British officers; FIELD MARSHALL ROBERT HAWKINS, late-50s, sporting a large white handlebar mustache, the other is COMMANDER RUPERT MORAY, 50s. They climb out of the jeep astonished, watching all the British prisoners exiting the Jap plane.

FIELD MARSHALL

What on earth..?

SIMMS hears him as he passes by them in a stretcher.

SIMMS

(to Marshall)

It was those two Japanese men...

(points to Taki & Shin)

They saved our lives.

The 2ND LIEUTENANT comes over with TAKI and SHIN.

2ND LIEUTENANT

(to Marshall)

It's true, Sir. These two men broke us out of a Jap murder camp in the Burma jungles. Then commandeered a plane and flew us here -- It was bloody marvelous.

TAKI and SHIN bow to the FIELD MARSHALL and COMMANDER.

SIMMS

And believe it or not, this one...
 (points to Taki)
 ...is a friend of the Emperor.

The MARSHALL and COMMANDER look at one another.

COMMANDER

The Emperor? Can it be true..?
 We've been trying to get a message
 to him for six months. A lot of
 bloodshed can be prevented if we
 find a way to get past the generals
 and military. Apparently, they're
 keeping the Emperor in the dark about
 Jap losses.

TAKI

You mean the Emperor doesn't know?

FIELD MARSHALL

My God, this man speaks English!

SIMMS

He certainly does, Sir, and the
 Emperor has great respect for
 him. If we could get him into
 Japan somehow, he could probably
 get a dispatch to Hirohito.

The MARSHALL and the COMMANDER discuss it, eyeing TAKI
 over with great interest. They whisper to one another,
 then turn back to TAKI.

FIELD MARSHALL

Young man, would you be willing to
 deliver a message to the Emperor?

TAKI

Yes, sir. I will do whatever is
 necessary to help end the war if
 it will save lives.

The AIR COMMANDER calls out to CREWMEN working on the
 field.

AIR COMMANDER

Get this plane refueled and ready

to fly immediately!

Crewmen run over, start refueling the Jap Cargo plane.

AIR COMMANDER

(to Taki)

Good luck. We're counting
on you. It may save thousands
of lives.

The AIR COMMANDER and FIELD MARSHALL shake his hand, hop
back in their jeep, leave. SIMMS comes to TAKI.

SIMMS

So you're heading back?

TAKI

Yes, it is my duty to help.

SIMMS

I knew you'd say that. Say hi
to Yoko for me.

An ambulance arrives to pick up SIMMS.

TAKI

Yoko? She went to America.

SIMMS

No, I got a letter from her father,
Col. Hart. She stayed in Japan
during the war to complete her
internship at the Orphan's Hospital
in Hiroshima.

MEDICS come and carry SIMMS away on a stretcher. He waves
as they take him away.

SIMMS (CONT'D)

I'm sure she's still there. Go
see her...

TAKI nods, and he and SHIN climb back into the Jap cargo
plane. They take their seats in the cockpit, start the
engines, ready for another take off. The cargo plane
taxi out onto the runway, flies off into the blue.

INT. JAP CARGO PLANE - NIGHT

TAKI AND SHIN are in flight, sitting in the cockpit reading flight maps. They fly over a large body of water until they finally reach a large land mass below. DAWN is breaking.

TAKI

There it is! The southern tip
of Hiroshima.

TAKI points to land below, shows SHIN on map where they are passing over Hiroshima. But out of the corner of his eye with the sun rising, TAKI spots an American B-52 BOMBER above him in the distance.

EXT. AMERICAN BOMBER - SAME MORNING

On the nose of the bomber is written-'Enola Gay'.

INT. AMERICAN B-52 BOMBER - SAME MORNING

The heavy set, CO-PILOT, in his 30s, wearing headset, notices the Jap cargo plane in the clouds below them. He nods to the CAPTAIN, next to him in the cockpit.

CO-PILOT

What the hell? Captain, we got
a bogey down there at five o'clock.

CAPTAIN

It's just a cargo plane. Forget it.
Let's drop this load and get the
hell outta here!

INT. JAP CARGO PLANE - SAME MORNING

TAKI sees the B-52's bomb-bay doors opening. The B-52's gunner starts firing at them. BULLETS go crashing all around them through the cargo plane's hull.

SHIN is hit in the arm. A bullet RIPS through the wing, and fuel starts spraying out. TAKI notices the gas gauge needle falling to '0' fast!

TAKI

Hold on, Shin. We're getting
out of here.

He pushes down hard on the wheel, and out of harm's way.

EXT. HIROSHIMA HOSPITAL GROUNDS - SAME MORNING

CLOSE ON YOKO in uniform coming out of the hospital--

She hears the plane, looks up, sees the Jap cargo plane,
then she sees two B-52s, realizes something is wrong.

One lone BOMB drops. It WHISTLES silently down toward the
busy city.

EXT. HIROSHIMA HOSPITAL GROUNDS - SAME MORNING

YOKO is looking up as the bomb descends. She SCREAMS! --
When the bomb hits, everything goes WHITE.

INT. JAP CARGO PLANE - SAME MORNING

TAKI'S SCREAM continues where YOKO's left off.

TAKI

No-o-o-o! - Yo-ko!

TAKI's looks to the heavens as the SHOCK-WAVE shakes the
plane, violently. The BLAST below becomes a spectacular
array of colors; blues, reds and oranges.

SHIN

(looking down)

...And Kali was destroyer
of all worlds!

TAKI

YOKO! -- MURDERERS!

An enormous MUSHROOM CLOUD comes billowing up.

SHIN

Man has finally done it...

He has taken the power of a
thousand suns and found a way
not only to destroy his enemies,
but himself as well.

TAKI turns and sees SHIN's eyes have gone white.

TAKI
Shin...Your eyes!

SHIN
I am blind...I looked too long at
the terrible face of God.

TAKI
We have to land...

He banks the plane into the clouds.

EXT. A FIELD NEAR TOKYO - DAY

Out of fuel, the cargo plane CRASH LANDS into a field.
TAKI pulls SHIN out of the burning plane. They make it to
a nearby road and a TRUCK pulls over and picks them up.

The truck takes them to the Imperial Gardens across a
moat near the Imperial Palace.

EXT. IMPERIAL GARDENS - TOKYO - DAY

A JAPANESE CORPORAL in a guard booth spots TAKI and SHIN
walking towards the moat leading to the Palace, trains
his rifle on them.

CORPORAL
HALT! OR I SHOOT !!!

TAKI
I must see the Emperor at once!
It's a matter of great importance!
You must let me pass, it will save
millions of lives !!!

CORPORAL looks suspicious.

SHIN
(to Corporal)

You must let this man pass, he's
a personal friend of the Emperor.

CORPORAL

Sure he is and I'm Genghis Khan.
No one passes. Those are my orders.

TAKI

Don't be a fool...Don't you see?
The Americans have a new bomb.
They will destroy all of Japan!

The CORPORAL is unconvinced.

SHIN hears more troops coming. He tilts his head to the side, listening then goes into action with a quick KICK to the CORPORAL's rifle, knocking it out of his hands. Another kick sends him flying into the bushes.

TAKI makes a dash towards the back door of the palace, dragging SHIN along with him. But as TAKI and SHIN arrive at the door, they are met by four big IMPERIAL GUARDS.

One guard is huge and obese, like a SUMI WRESTLER, 30s. The big SUMI looks at them, sees SHIN is blind.

The SUMI smiles to the other GUARDS, slowly draws his samurai sword from his belt. TAKI whispers to SHIN...

TAKI

Looks like big trouble. It's
a Sumi with a sword.

SHIN

Where are the other Guards?

TAKI

At the door -- There's three
of them.

The other Guards approach with swords drawn.

SUMI GUARD

And where do you think you two
are going?

TAKI

I am associate of the Emperor. I must see him. It is a matter of life or death!

SUMI GUARD

Do you have a pass?

TAKI

No, sir.

SUMI GUARD

I thought not. But if you wish to go further, you will have to pass me.

TAKI

I tell you I am a personal friend of the Emperor. Let me go by!

The SUMI throws his sword on the ground, moves to TAKI, BUTTS him hard in the chest with his huge stomach. TAKI flies backwards to the ground.

SHIN backs up towards the doors where the other guards are, acting like a feeble old man, stumbling, etc.

TAKI gets up charges the SUMI and the fight begins. TAKI is taking the worst of it getting thrown and beaten up.

SHIN

(to guards)

I'm getting out of their way,
I might get hurt!

SHIN moves in closer to Guards, then in three quick moves, karate chops the Guards standing next to him. All three fall to the ground, unconscious.

The SUMI GUARD catches it out of the corner of his eye. He wheels around on the balls of his massive feet toward SHIN, momentarily turning his back on TAKI.

TAKI seizes the chance, goes for the SUMI'S sword. The SUMI realizes his mistake, and in classic Samurai stance,

legs spread with sword raised over his head, Taki lops the SUMI'S head off in one quick swoop.

INT. IMPERIAL PALACE HALLS AND ROOMS - DAY

TAKI and SHIN are running through the massive halls. As they're moving along, three more GUARDS appear with swords, but are quickly cut down by TAKI.

At the end of the Grand Hall, ten more IMPERIAL GUARDS are blocking their path, which is directly in front of the EMPEROR'S personal quarters.

TAKI grabs SHIN's arm and breaks through the rice-paper screens leading into other rooms. The Palace quarters are a maze of rooms with divider screens and doors. He pulls SHIN in with him with GUARDS chasing after them.

TAKI

(to Shin)

There's too many of them!

SHIN

How many?

TAKI

Five, maybe ten, not sure.
Goodbye, friend...Thank you
for all you've taught me.

SHIN

I never thought you would give
up so easily, my Son. Use what
I showed you -- watch the pivot!

The GUARDS charge into the rooms with swords drawn, tearing down the rice-paper dividers in their path. They are almost on them, when TAKI turns to defend against three of the GUARDS. They move in, TAKI's watching the PIVOT of their blades, as they come SLICING at him. He backs up carefully out of range intently watching the pivot of their swords.

The fighters move lithely, like cobras ready to strike. TAKI flies into action, eyes fixed on the blades, and cuts them all down. He has a few cuts to the cheek and forehead, moving into the next room of divider screens for cover.

GEN TERUCHI shows up in his kimono, finds the three guards dead.

GEN. TERUCHI
 (to Guards)
 AFTER THEM...I WANT THEM DEAD!
 ...DEAD DO YOU HEAR ME !!!

GEN. TERUCHI takes out a pistol from inside his kimono and cocks the hammer back. He follows his GUARDS close behind hoping to get a shot at TAKI.

TAKI is cornered by three GUARDS. He watches the blades and steps back carefully, then in a burst, performs a series of somersaults, combined with astute sword work and cuts them all down.

TAKI and SHIN burst through the last rice screens, only to come up against a brick wall, no where to go and they will be forced into the open.

GEN. TERUCHI stops the GUARDS, listens to sounds coming from the last room. He calls out to TAKI.

GEN. TERUCHI
 Let us call a truce... Surely
 we can reason. What is it you
 want?

TAKI
 I want to see the Emperor..!

GEN. TERUCHI
 I'm afraid that is impossible.
 No one gets to see the Emperor.
 Come out where we can talk.

TAKI sticks his head out behind the screen, and GEN. TERUCHI quickly FIRES four rounds. TAKI escapes getting shot, only to see SHIN slump and fall to the floor wounded.

TAKI goes crazy, picks up his sword and throws it through the divider screens like a spear, hitting GENERAL TERUCHI directly in the heart. TERUCHI is stunned, looks down at the sword sticking out his chest. He slowly crumples to the floor. The GUARDS run away, making a cowardly escape.

TAKI's weeping, holding the dying SHIN cradled in his arms. SHIN reaches up, touches Taki's coin-necklace.

SHIN

Do not cry, my son...

(beat)

The coin...

TAKI

What about it..?

SHIN

The coin around your neck...

It's an ancient Yakuza coin.

It was your mother's...I gave

it to her.

TAKI

You gave her the coin?

He looks confused.

SHIN

I didn't want to tell you because of my shame... I abandoned you and your mother long ago, now I see how I can not escape my karma.

(beat)

It is funny isn't it? I was trying to run away all my life and then one day you appeared.

(in pain)

I had to teach you all I knew to make you strong to make up for bad things I had done.

SHIN starts to choke, coughs up BLOOD, he's bleeding profusely from the bullet in his stomach.

TAKI

Please, don't talk... We have
to get you to a doctor.

Tries to help him up.

SHIN

No, I won't make it. Let me die
here in peace. Now go. Go find the
Emperor; Tell him all- Go, my son.

SHIN dies in TAKI's arms. He lays him down gently,
crying, clutching the coin in his hand.

TAKI

Father...Father !!!

TAKI rises to his feet as if in a trance, picks up the
sword, walks through the tattered screens, out of the
rooms, towards the Emperor's quarters. He has a
determined look on his face, though he's injured and
exhausted, he keeps moving forward.

TAKI reaches the door to the EMPEROR's underground
bunker, kills two more GUARDS, slumps for a second, then
regains his strength. He KICKS the door open!

INT. THE EMPEROR'S UNDERGROUND BUNKER - SAME

EMPEROR HIROHITO is seated at his desk, frantically going
through documents when the door flies open -- EMPEROR's
startled at first, then realizes it's TAKI standing there,
wounded and bleeding. EMPEROR rushes to his side.

TAKI lashes out and slaps the EMPEROR's face!

EMPEROR

What's the matter with you?
I am your Emperor.

TAKI

You're nothing. A pawn in a
horrific game...

EMPEROR

How can you speak like this to me?

TAKI

Look at yourself; The military is manipulating you and Japan. They are totally out of control! Didn't you hear about the terrible new bomb the Americans dropped?

EMPEROR

Bomb, what bomb? I heard there was a raid over Nagasaki. No major losses. Tojo told me himself.

TAKI grabs him by his collar, fuming.

TAKI

They've used you...You must stop this madness and surrender! I've seen it for my self, the Americans dropped a terrible bomb on Hiroshima. They are going to take Tokyo soon.

EMPEROR looks away distressed, but TAKI pulls him back to face him.

EMPEROR

I have great confidence in my generals. Why should I believe you?

TAKI

Because I never lied to you and you know it. The bomb I saw land on Hiroshima was devastating. It must have killed hundreds of thousands of people, including Yoko!

(reaches for Emperor's throat)
So if I have to kill you now with my own bare hands to stop this, I will do so!

TAKI puts his hands around his throat! EMPEROR looks at him hard, feeling betrayed, pulls his hands away. He then picks up the phone.

EMPEROR

Hai... This is the Emperor... I want an updated casualty count from Hiroshima.

(listens)

I DON'T CARE WHAT GENERAL TOJO TOLD YOU! GIVE ME THE STRAIGHT FACTS, NOW..!

(listens)

WHAT!-- Nagasaki, too? -- Have my car ready at once!

EXT. STREETS OF TOKYO - SAME DAY

EMPEROR's sleek black Mercedes limousine glides by with flags on front fenders with chrysanthemum flower symbol.

Limousine passes by fires in the background. People walk around on the streets in tattered clothing, like zombies, as huge loud speakers bellow out propaganda speeches from GEN. TOJO, telling them 'to stay calm because Japan is winning the war', etc.

INT. EMPEROR'S LIMOUSINE - SAME DAY

EMPEROR is saddened by what he sees... He shakes his head in shame, starts to break down, tears coming to his eyes. TAKI's watching, sitting next to him.

EMPEROR

My God... What have we done to our people? Where have I been?

TAKI

You lived in a cocoon. But now you have one last act to perform, or more suffering will continue.

EMPEROR

I understand. But you must come with me...I need your support... I must help the country. I must! I am their Emperor.

EXT. MILITARY HEADQUARTERS, TOKYO - SAME DAY

The EMPEROR's black limousine pulls up to military H-Q. He and TAKI get out and go into a building, past a line of JAP SOLDIERS, who snap to attention as they pass.

INT. MILITARY HEADQUARTERS - DAY

TAKI and EMPEROR are racing down the halls. Soldiers stop in their tracks, bowing when they see him coming. EMPEROR stops at GEN. TOJO's door, opens it and enters.

INT. GEN. TOJO'S OFFICE - DAY

GEN. TOJO is frantically searching through his papers as EMPEROR and TAKI come in. TOJO's caught off guard from the unexpected visit.

EMPEROR

I DEMAND TO KNOW WHAT IS GOING ON!
WHAT ABOUT THIS DEVASTATING NEW
BOMB DROPPED ON HIROSHIMA?

GEN. TOJO

Who told you such a thing?
There was no such bomb!

TAKI

I saw it with my own eyes...

EMPEROR

Are the Americans on their way
To Japan or not, General? I WANT
THE TRUTH !

GEN. TOJO

IMPOSSIBLE! JAPAN WILL NEVER
BE DEFEATED !

EMPEROR

You didn't answer my question!

EMPEROR moves closer to the GENERAL's desk and sees some of his own personal letters amongst the papers. He quickly pulls one out, looks at the envelope, sees it's been opened.

EMPEROR (CONT'D)

What's this? A personal communiqué
from U.S. Ambassador Gruenwald to
me -- opened and read?

GEN. TOJO

We felt it best not to trouble you, since we were at war.

EMPEROR

How dare you make such a decision.
I AM YOUR EMPEROR! I PUT MY TRUST
IN YOU!

GEN. TOJO is speechless, staring at him.

TAKI

He won't answer you, your Highness.

EMPEROR

I will ask you one more time... Are the Americans on their way or not?

GEN. TOJO

The situation is under control.

EMPEROR

You had better answer, do you hear me? I will not allow our people to be slaughtered for your own selfish motives!

GEN. TOJO

They are coming, but we can hold them off. We need more time. If we can get every man woman and child ready to fight, we can defeat them!

EMPEROR

Are you mad?! You would risk the lives of hundreds of thousands of innocent people, and have Japan reduced to ashes..?

EMPEROR picks up the phone.

EMPEROR (CONT'D)

(into phone)

This is your Emperor speaking...
Send in the guards to General

Tojo's office, I am relieving him of command. You will follow my orders directly from now on. Directly! -- Do you understand?

Hangs up.

EMPEROR (CONT'D)

I should have you shot, General, but instead I'll leave it for the Americans... I'm certain they will do it for me.

TOJO's disgraced, he bows his head down, looking away from the EMPEROR. Four guards arrive and escort GEN. TOJO out the door. The EMPEROR sits down at the GENERAL's desk, shuffling papers, assuming command.

EMPEROR (CONT'D)

Taki, will you stay and help me?

TAKI

I'm sure you will do fine, your Highness. It is time you stand on your own feet. In the meantime, there's someone I must find...

EMPEROR

Miko?

TAKI

I must look for her and make sure she's alright.

The EMPEROR nods, picks up the telephone again.

EMPEROR

(to phone)

Hai, get me Ambassador Gruenwald.

TAKI smiles and leaves.

EXT. YOKOHAMA BAY - NIGHT

TAKI's searching MIKO's fishing village, looking everywhere for her. American air raids have ceased, but

it is a scene of devastation; FIRES, bombed out houses, people walking around in a daze from shell shock, etc.

EXT. MIKO'S HOUSE IN YOKOHAMA BAY - NIGHT

TAKI charges into MIKO's burning house. He falls to the ground on his knees thinking the worst, then sees her mother EIKO and MIKO out the window returning from the docks. They're waiting for boats to take them away. They are frightened and thin from hunger.

Around the village are huge LOUD-SPEAKERS, spouting military propaganda against the coming American attack. FISHERMEN, WOMEN and CHILDREN are holding make-shift bamboo SPEARS as weapons.

ON MIKO: She sees TAKI running down the quay toward her. She breaks away from the others, throws down her spear and runs to him. She rushes into his open arms as they embrace and kiss, passionately.

MIKO

Taki, Taki... I missed you so.
We were so afraid. The military
told us we should not be captured
alive if the Americans invaded.

TAKI

It's all lies. The war is over.
I want to be with you forever.
I have missed you more than I
realized -- I love you.

An announcement over the loudspeakers interrupts, it's the EMPEROR speaking. All the villagers bow in awe at the voice, which the public had never heard before.

EMPEROR (O. S.)

This is Imperial Emperor Hirohito...
We are keenly aware of the inmost
feelings of all of you, Our subjects.
However, it is according to the dictate
of time and fate that we have resolved
to pave the way for a grand peace for
all generations to come by enduring the
unendurable and suffering what is
unsufferable.

As the local villagers listen intently, their hopes are lifted. They begin throwing down their spears. A couple of the OLDER MEN and WOMEN begin to weep.

TAKI and MIKO look to one another, embracing.

TAKI

He's finally done it. He's taken his responsibility and put an end to this. We will live in peace once more. At long last, the Emperor and the people are one again!

PATHE NEWS REEL FOOTAGE:

NEWS COVERS A SERIES OF EVENTS covering the end of the war and the post war period:

- 1.) Emperor Hirohito signing the surrender order on the deck of the U.S.S. Missouri with Gen Douglas Mac Arthur looking on (Sept. 2, 1945).
- 2.) Japanese Generals committing hara-kiri, and the War-Trial sentencing Gen. Tojo to death at Nuremberg. (May 8, 1946)
- 3.) The Emperor on his Royal Barge, continuing his studies in microbiology, looking under the microscope, etc. (1955)
- 4.) The Emperor shown with the Empress and his family, three daughters and a boy. They are in western dress, in front of their modest home in the country. (June 3, 1966)
- 5.) The Emperor at Disneyland, being given a Mickey Mouse watch by Mickey himself. (May 24, 1975)

DISSOLVE:

CUT BACK TO THE BEGINNING: EMPEROR ON HIS DEATH BED

INT. EMPEROR'S BEDROOM - JAN. 7, 1989 - DAY

EMPEROR HIROHITO is dying. TAKI stands gazing out the window out at a light falling SNOW, looking thoughtfully at the palace gardens as they continue to reminisce together...

TAKI

It seems so long ago... The surrender ceremony with General MacArthur, the occupation.

EMPEROR

MacArthur could have had me executed along with Tojo and the others, but luckily it was decided I would be spared to keep the people calm in the post war transition.

(coughs)

And now the country is changing so rapidly...

TAKI

Yes, but remember what old Monk Ju used to tell us- 'everything is subject to change'... Remember?

The EMPEROR doesn't respond, TAKI goes to him and checks his pulse. He notices the Mickey Mouse watch on his arm- TICK, TICK, TICK, TICK...

Then his pulse finally stops and the monitoring machines alarm goes off. EMPEROR lets out a last sigh in death, his hand slowly opens, and two small piece of PAPER fall to the floor.

TAKI looks down at the papers curiously, picks one up. It's a One-Franc 'METRO TICKET', then picks up the other- It's a sepia PHOTO of the young Prince with his arm around Yoko with Taki standing behind, arms around them and Miko, all laughing, contentedly.

Taki smiles to himself, in quiet revelation.

TAKI

Of course... It was the only time he was ever free...

He tucks the photograph into his breast pocket, turns to the window -- Two solemn, RED ROBED MONKS at the gardens PAGODA start to ring the large black BELL-GONG.

As the snow continues to fall, the Red Robed Monks and the pagoda are obscured from view, until they disappear into the whiteness of the void.

FADE OUT

THE END