

TERA

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FADE IN:

EXT. SAISEI FOREST - NIGHT

A sharp, cold wind HOWLS through the night. Through the canopy, a beam of moonlight illuminates a small dirt clearing.

In the center, two silhouetted figures appear: one kneeling, one standing.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

In the age of feudal Japan, stories spoke of evil spirits, born of sin and suffering, who hunted and preyed upon the souls of the living. Oni, these demons were called.

The kneeling figure offers up a glowing blue orb. A *soul*.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

It is said that the oni are drawn only to those pure of heart. That they steal their souls to replace what they themselves lost long ago.

The orb floats toward the standing figure, who brings it into his chest. A soft puff of energy as the figure absorbs the soul. The figure's right eye flares a bright, icy blue. He smiles.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

But the more they take, the more they hunger. And the stronger they grow, the greater the need for a hero to rise up and face them.

A SNAP, and both figures vanish.

OPENING CREDIT ROLL.

SUPER: "Tera"

INT. RAMEN SHOP: DINING AREA - NOON

Customers crowd the small bamboo-framed restaurant. Seated, standing, eating, waiting.

Those with bowls of ramen SLURP them down aggressively, devouring noodles, broth, and chashu pork.

INT. RAMEN SHOP: KITCHEN - SAME

The NOISE and CHATTER fades to near-silence as JII-CHAN (88), an old man in a stained chef's apron, INHALES.

He readjusts his grip on the hilt of a katana and EXHALES. A THUD, as he slams the edge of a cutting board, sending meat and vegetables flying into the air.

In an flash, he draws the sword, slices, and sheathes it.

The ingredients fall back down, perfectly cut.

DING. Jii-chan taps a bell and two steaming bowls of ramen are placed by the serving window.

All dialogue in *italics* is spoken Japanese.

JII-CHAN
(calling out)
Two tonkotsu ramen extra chashu.

TERA
Coming.

Close on TERA (16), a short Japanese girl with fiery eyes and calloused hands. She readjusts her head scarf before grabbing the two bowls and weaving back through the small restaurant, narrowly dodging tables and customers.

TERA (CONT'D)
(setting the bowls down)
Here you are.

Another customer waves at her.

WAVING CUSTOMER
Tera, more broth please!

TERA
One moment!

INT. RAMEN SHOP: KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Tera spoons broth into a bowl.

OTOUSAN (55), a tanned Japanese man with even more calloused hands than his daughter's, drops a handful of dishes in the sink.

OTOUSAN
Tera, don't forget to clear table twelve.

TERA
Yes, Otousan.

Tera takes a deep breath and forces a smile as she goes back out to the dining area.

INT. RAMEN SHOP: DINING AREA - CONTINUOUS

Tera takes the broth to the Waving Customer. She moves to an empty table, piling up dirty bowls and cups.

MASA (O.S.)
You know, there's a better way to stack those.

Next to her, sits MASA (17), smirking over his half-eaten bowl. He brushes back his perfect hair, watching Tera work.

TERA
Don't you have a date with Kimiko or something right now?

MASA
I do. She'll be here soon.

TERA
I told you to stop bringing her here.

MASA
And miss the opportunity to annoy you during a date? Not a chance.

Tera rolls her eyes and trudges off as KIMIKO (16), dainty and beautiful in every way Tera is not, with make-up and a sundress on, takes a seat next to Masa.

KIMIKO
What's her problem?

MASA
She's just crying over spilled soup.

Tera bumps into a table and spills soup on her apron. She refuses to look back at Masa on the way to the kitchen.

INT. RAMEN SHOP: KITCHEN - LATER

Tera washes dishes, watching Kimiko laughing with Masa, hand not-so-casually on his shoulder.

Jii-chan notices her stare.

JII-CHAN
There are plenty of nice boys in
the village, Tera.

TERA
What? No, *Jii-chan* it's not like
that.

JII-CHAN
Are you sure? Because I could
always set you up--

TERA
--No no, it's fine.

Masa and Kimiko stand up to leave. Masa makes eye contact
with Tera, waving.

She SCOFFS, turning back to her dishes.

EXT. RAMEN SHOP - TIME LAPSE

Sun sets over time as customers enter and leave the small
shop.

INT. RAMEN SHOP - NIGHT

The last customer waves goodbye as they exit the shop.

TERA
(bowing)
Arigatou gozaimasu!

Tera plops down on a stool, exhausted.

OTOUSAN
Tera, dishes!

TERA
Ugh.

Tera gets up and drags her feet to the kitchen.

INT. TERA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Otousan, Jii-chan, and Tera walk inside. The interior is
simple, cozy, with traditional tatami flooring and woven
bamboo walls. Tera closes the door behind her.

She passes a family photo with Jii-chan, Otousan, Tera's mother and Tera.

TERA
Nuki! We're home.

Out of one of the rooms scurries NUKI (1013), a brown, furry tanuki with a round belly and mischievous twinkle in his beady eyes.

He runs up to Tera and sniffs the cloth bag she's holding.

NUKI
Is that what I think it is?

Tera opens it to reveal chashu and leftover tempura. Nuki's eyes go wide and he dives in.

TERA
You're welcome.

NUKI
(mouth full)
Thank you.

Tera heads to her room while Nuki chows down.

EXT. TERA'S BACKYARD - NIGHT

Tera, wearing a *gi*, practices forms with a wooden bokken sword. Nuki lounges on a nearby tree, tempura in hand.

NUKI
Aren't you tired?

TERA
(half-listening)
What?

NUKI
I mean you worked all day at the restaurant, and now you're out here practicing. How do you have the energy? I'd be fast asleep by now if I were you.

TERA
(mid-swing)
I dunno. It's fun. And I guess I like the freedom of it.

NUKI
Freedom?

TERA

This is the only time I get to decide what I want to do. No one ordering me around or telling what to do. It's just me and my *bokken*.

NUKI

I guess that makes sense. But why swordsmanship? Plenty of other hobbies you could've picked.

TERA

Something about it drew me in. Don't know how to explain it, but holding a sword in my hand just feels right.

NUKI

Well, if it makes you happy then good for you. Just don't think about swinging that thing in my direction. I hate sharp objects.

Tera runs her hand along the blunt, wooden edge.

TERA

It's a practice sword. Not sharp.

NUKI

I hate things that look like they could or should be sharp too.

Tera rolls her eyes. She continues her practice.

NUKI (CONT'D)

Oh yeah, the festival is tomorrow night. Are you gonna go?

TERA

(pausing)

No. I already told *Otousan* I'd work the night shift. He wants me to start taking more responsibility around the shop.

NUKI

Responsibility? Gross. Why not just give some excuse to get out of it?

TERA

I can't. Not if I'm gonna take over eventually.

NUKI

Is that really what you want to do?

Tera hesitates.

TERA

It's what they expect of me.

NUKI

Not a very convincing argument.

TERA

I don't know what I want. The restaurant...it's a good opportunity, stable, familiar. I know I could do it.

NUKI

But?

TERA

But I don't want to be stuck here my whole life. I want to travel and explore the country. Go to new places, meet new people. It's suffocating here. And I've always felt out of place, even at home.

She takes a final swing at the practice dummy, lopping the head off.

SIGHING, she picks the head up and puts it back on the dummy. It falls right off again.

NUKI

Well skipping out on the festival to work isn't gonna help you achieve that goal.

TERA

I still have obligations. To *Otousan* and *Jii-Chan*. They need my help.

NUKI

Do they? Literally everyone and their mother will be at the festival tomorrow.

Tera tries to put the head back on again, but Nuki jumps on the dummy instead.

NUKI (CONT'D)
How about this: I help you get off
work early and you buy me extra
food at the festival. Deal?

TERA
I shouldn't--

Nuki sits patiently, waiting for her to finish.

TERA (CONT'D)
(sighing)
--But I do want to go.

NUKI
So we have a deal?

TERA
Fine.

NUKI
Great choice. See you after work
tomorrow.

Nuki grins and hops away back into the house.

EXT. VILLAGE STREETS - NIGHT

A man hits a glob of mochi with a wood mallet.

FESTIVAL GOERS crowd around as another man places the
finished mochi on the table.

The streets are lively with bright lanterns, food stalls and
villagers dressed in yukata. Many of the festival-goers don
oni masks or costumes of various Japanese mythological
monsters.

The air is filled with TRADITIONAL MUSIC and CHATTER.

A pair of beat-up geta slippers and two furry paws walk
gingerly through the crowd.

The smells from the food vendors waft into Nuki's nose.

NUKI
I think I'm in heaven.

TERA
It does smell pretty good.
(beat)
What did you end up telling *Otousan*
to let me leave early?

NUKI

I told him you'd work extra shifts
next week.

TERA

What?

NUKI

Oh come on, you said yourself you
wanted to take on more
responsibility. I just delayed it
'til next week. So enjoy your
freedom while you can!

Nuki waves a large fried squid on a stick right in her face.
He licks his lips and takes a bite.

Tera hands an oblivious SHOPKEEPER some money.

Nearby, Masa and Kimiko walk arm and arm through the
festival, wearing matching kimonos. Other FESTIVAL GOERS gawk
at the couple in awe.

FESTIVAL GOER

Wow. They're like a fantasy couple.

FESTIVAL GOER 2

I can't tell who's luckier.

They walk up to Tera as she watches Nuki try to scoop up a
goldfish with a paper net.

MASA

Fancy seeing you here, Tera.

TERA

(stale)

Masa. Kimiko.

MASA

Kimiko has a performance on the
main stage in an hour. You should
come by.

TERA

You know I would love to but I'm
actually really busy.

KIMIKO

Oh, don't be like that Tera. If you
want, I can bring you onstage.

TERA

And embarrass myself? No thanks.
Unlike some people, I don't crave
attention.

MASA

Hey now. There's no need to be rude
to Kimiko.

TERA

Yeah yeah, whatever. Go flap your
fish lips somewhere else.

Masa frowns and steers Kimiko away, touching his lips self-
consciously.

Tera deflates once they're out of sight.

TERA (CONT'D)

What am I even doing here.

NUKI

I got one!

Nuki holds up his net with a goldfish caught on the last bit
of paper. It wiggles out of the net and PLOPS back into the
pond.

EXT. FESTIVAL ENTRANCE - SAME

Hulking footsteps stomp through the gates to the festival.

People move out of the way for a pair of red horns that tower
over the crowd.

The red-skinned ONI dons a spiked club on its back. Its loud
BREATHING is almost a growl as it scans the stalls.

ICHIRO (29), the village idiot-turned-samurai steps in front
of the Oni.

ICHIRO

Oi! Can't you read the sign? No
weapons in the festival.

The Oni looks down at him and GROWLS.

ICHIRO (CONT'D)

I don't know how you made that
costume so convincing, but you
don't scare me.

Ichiro touches the hilt of his sword.

ICHIRO (CONT'D)
I won't ask again. Please leave
your weapon--

The Oni leans down and SNIFFS Ichiro.

ONI POV:

Distorted grayscale surroundings. The souls of festival goers radiate various shades of browns and greens. Ichiro's soul too, is a murky green.

END POV.

The Oni wrinkles his nose in disgust and swats Ichiro aside. He goes flying into one of the stalls.

Nearby festival goers stand shocked for a moment before one of them SCREAMS. They all go into a panic.

EXT. VILLAGE STREETS: MAIN STAGE - SAME

The spotlight shines on Kimiko as she begins her performance. Stringed koto instruments and taiko drums accompany her. Festival goers watch in awe as Kimiko flits gracefully across the stage.

EXT. VILLAGE STREETS: NEARBY ROOFTOP - SAME

Tera watches dejectedly from above, stuffing dango under a sad-faced demon mask.

Nuki finishes up his last takoyaki and lets out a loud BELCH.

NUKI
Ah, that hits the spot.

TERA
I should've stayed at the shop.

NUKI
And miss all this good food?

Nuki eyes the unfinished *dango* in her hand.

Tera notices him staring and hands it over.

TERA
C'mon Nuki. Let's just go.

She gets up and brushes herself off.

Down below, the sound of CHEERS.

EXT. VILLAGE STREETS: MAIN STAGE - SAME

Kimiko takes her final pose and the crowd erupts into APPLAUSE.

Kimiko beams at the crowd. She blows a kiss to Masa.

She turns around to head off stage but bumps right into a tall, red figure.

KIMIKO
(annoyed)
Excuse me--

The figure picks her up with a huge clawed hand and hoists her into the air. The crowd GASPS in horror.

It brings Kimiko up to its face, giving her a perfect view of its razor sharp teeth.

EXT. VILLAGE STREETS: NEARBY ROOFTOP - SAME

Tera hops down onto a balcony when--

KIMIKO (O.S.)
HELP!

ONI (O.S.)
ROOOOOAAAAAAAAARRRRRRRR!

Tera looks over the edge to see people fleeing from the stage and Kimiko dangling helplessly in the Oni's grasp.

Nuki tugs at Tera's sleeve.

NUKI
That's Kimiko it's holding, right?

TERA
Yep.

NUKI
Don't happen to have your *bokken* with you do you? Not that a wooden stick is gonna do much against that thing.

Tera spots Masa fighting his way through the crowd to Kimiko. Without hesitating, she grabs a handful of takoyaki from Nuki and leaps off the balcony toward the stage.

NUKI (CONT'D)
Wait Tera no!
(beat)
Not the *takoyaki*!

Nuki watches her go, frozen in place for a moment. He collects himself and dashes off in the opposite direction.

EXT. VILLAGE STREETS: MAIN STAGE - SAME

The Oni takes a big whiff of Kimiko.

ONI POV:

The scent of her soul is a light blue aura around her.

END POV.

It smiles as she tries to squirm and pound at its fist in vain.

MASA (O.S.)
Hey! Let her go!

Masa smashes one of the *koto* instruments into the Oni's leg. It breaks without leaving a scratch. He looks up at the Oni.

MASA (CONT'D)
Uh oh.

Masa is backhanded into a food stand.

The Oni opens its mouth wide. A blue orb from inside Kimiko appears and starts traveling up from her chest and out of her mouth.

Before the Oni can consume the orb, a takoyaki smacks it in the face.

TERA
Hey ugly! Eat this!

The Oni GROWLS at Tera who hits it again and again with takoyaki balls.

It drops Kimiko and approaches Tera instead.

Tera runs out of takoyaki and looks around for something else to throw.

The Oni descends upon her. She can smell the reek of its breath.

Tera tries to keep her legs from shaking as she puts on a brave face.

The Oni leans down to sniff her.

ONI POV:

Tera emits little color. Her soul is very faint, barely perceptible.

END POV.

ONI
(perplexed)
Hmmm?

The Oni spies a necklace on Tera's neck and is just about to reach for it when--

OTOUSAN (O.S.)
Don't you dare lay a hand on my daughter.

SLICE!

The Oni ROARS in pain as Otousan cuts a line down its back with a *katana*.

OTOUSAN (CONT'D)
Tera, get out of here!

The Oni whirls to face Otousan, who stares it down.

Otousan strikes again, quick as a snake, making precise cuts all around the Oni's body.

The Oni staggers back and grips its spiked club. When Otousan charges again, it swings, batting him across the other side of the stage.

EXT. CITY STREETS - SAME

Tera and Kimiko help Masa up.

KIMIKO
(to Tera)
Thanks for saving me.

She hugs Tera, who's a little surprised.

TERA
Yeah, don't mention it.

MASA
Uh guys? Watch out!

ONI
ROAAARRRRRRRR!

The Oni charges them full speed.

TERA
Run!

Tera pushes Masa and Kimiko away as the Oni barrels toward her. She stands defiant, accepting her fate.

SHINK!

A sword pierces through the belly of the Oni. It slows to a stop and looks down at the point sticking out of its gut.

A moment later, the blade pulls out and the Oni topples to the ground. Otousan stands behind it, breathing hard, sword in hand.

TERA (CONT'D)
Otousan!

Tera runs over to him.

OTOUSAN
Are you hurt? Can you walk?

TERA
I'm fine. Are you okay?

OTOUSAN
Yes. Come, we're going home.

Otousan looks back toward the Oni, but its already gone. His face is grave as he leads Tera away.

From a distance, the injured Oni hides, clutching its stomach and watching Otousan by Tera's side.

ONI POV:

Otousan's aura shines a bright blue.

END POV.

The oni grins menacingly and limps away, back into shadows.

INT. TERA'S HOUSE: DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The air is heavy. A palpable silence.

Tera sets the table with bowls of noodles, tea cups and chopsticks.

Her bokken sword sits against the wall nearby.

She pours the tea for Otousan and Jii-chan. The trio sit and begin to eat.

Nuki quickly swipes an extra bowl from the kitchen counter and scurries off.

Jii-chan SIPS his tea.

Otousan eats without looking up. He eventually sets down his chopsticks and breaks the silence.

OTOUSAN

I'm disappointed in you, Tera.

TERA

What?

OTOUSAN

You heard me.

TERA

I almost died today and the first thing you say to me is that you're disappointed?

(scoffs)

Is this about the fact that I went to the festival instead of working at the restaurant? That "none of this would've happened if I had just worked like I was supposed to"?

Otousan's face is unreadable.

TERA (CONT'D)

I'm sorry taking one day off of work to attend a festival was such a disappointing decision of mine. It's not like I'm not at the restaurant every other day.

OTOUSAN

That's not why.

TERA

Then what? The fact that you had to save me? That I was too weak to defend myself from a giant monster triple my size? Oh yeah, sorry my training didn't prepare me to fight a full blown *oni*.

Otousan shakes his head.

TERA (CONT'D)

Then what?

Otousan looks Tera in the eyes.

OTOUSAN

Do you remember how we lost your mother?

TERA

What does that have to do with this?

OTOUSAN

Answer the question.

TERA

She was killed by--an *oni*.

OTOUSAN

And do you know why she was killed by the *oni*?

Tera remains silent, for once having nothing to say.

OTOUSAN (CONT'D)

Because she, like you tonight, chose to save others instead of herself. She sacrificed her own life to protect people she didn't even know. And now, those people are probably drinking and laughing somewhere out there as if nothing ever happened, while we have to spend every day living with the consequences of her actions.

(beat)

People called her a hero.

(MORE)

OTOUSAN (CONT'D)

But if being a hero meant robbing
her father of a daughter, her
husband of a wife, and her daughter
of a mother just for the sake of a
few strangers, then I'd have told
her to be the coward or the villain
every single time.

TERA

Otousan--

OTOUSAN

--Had Nuki not warned me tonight,
had I not gotten there in time, had
I lost you in the same way--

Jii-Chan closes his eyes and takes another sip of tea.

OTOUSAN (CONT'D)

--I'm disappointed because you
showed me today that you have the
same instincts as your mother. The
same lack of self-preservation. And
I won't let you get yourself killed
to save a few nobodies, even if
they are your friends.

TERA

But I couldn't just let them die.
If I hadn't stepped in, Kimiko
would be gone.

OTOUSAN

And if I hadn't stepped in, you
would be too. What right do you
have to try and save people when
you can't even save yourself?

Otousan stands and walks over to Tera's wooden sword. Next to
it on the wall is the same picture of Tera and her family.

TERA

(worried)

What are you doing?

A pained expression on his face, Otousan picks up the sword
and SNAPS it over his knee.

Tera sits at the table in shock as the broken pieces CLATTER
to the floor.

OTOUSAN

You're no longer allowed to practice sword fighting or go anywhere outside this house or the restaurant without my explicit permission. Is that understood?

TERA

What? That's not fair.

OTOUSAN

I expect to see you at the restaurant tomorrow morning for the morning shift.

Otousan sits back down and continues eating.

Tera stands, throws down her chopsticks and storms out.

Otousan eyes Nuki, who scurries after Tera.

INT./EXT. TREEHOUSE - NIGHT

Tera lies on the floor of the treehouse, staring at the wall. A small oil lamp flickers beside her.

Nuki curls up nearby.

NUKI

Are you gonna sulk here all night?
Because I'm getting hungry again.

Tera continues staring at the wall.

Nuki hops down next to the broken sword. He grabs the two pieces and tries jamming them together. He holds the sword up, fixed.

NUKI (CONT'D)

Ta da!

The sword splinters in half again. Nuki frowns and tosses it aside.

NUKI (CONT'D)

C'mon, don't be upset. I'm sure
he'll get over it in a few days.

TERA

I'm not upset.

NUKI

And I'm not a magical talking
raccoon dog with--hold on a second.

POOF! Nuki CLAPS his hands and a cloud of smoke engulfs him.

NUKI (CONT'D)

Webbed feet!

He wiggles a pair of duck feet in Tera's face.

Tera is unmoved.

NUKI (CONT'D)

Okay, how about--

Nuki CLAPS again and shape-shifts into a tanuki-colored duck.
He waddles around, QUACKING.

TERA

(ignoring)

It's so unfair. Why do I get
punished for trying to do the right
thing?

Nuki stops and transforms back. For once he looks serious.

NUKI

Looks at it from *Otousan's* point-of-
view. He's had to live a tough life
after losing *Okasan*. It was a heavy
blow and he hasn't been the same
since. It's difficult for some
people to come back from those
sorts of things. Keeping you safe
is his way of coping with the
sorrow.

TERA

Then why can't he teach me to
protect myself instead of just
grounding me?

NUKI

He told you why tonight. Because
he's afraid you'll make the same
mistake.

Tera stands.

TERA

Choosing to save people wasn't a
mistake. *Okasan* only died because
she wasn't strong enough.

NUKI

Tera, don't talk about your mother that way.

TERA

It's true though. If I had my way, I would train to become the greatest warrior in all of Japan. Strong enough where no *oni* could stop me.

Nuki stares at Tera intently.

Wide shot of the treehouse and Tera standing, fist clenched in front of her.

Nuki SNORTS.

TERA (CONT'D)

I'm being serious Nuki!

NUKI

No, I know. You're Tera. You'll get there. One day.

TERA

One day.

Tera looks out at the village.

TERA (CONT'D)

I never thought I'd see a real *oni* up close. I thought they were all made-up like *Jii-chan's* stories.

NUKI

Oh they're real all right. And nasty. Real nasty.

TERA

Do you think it's dead? Do *oni* disappear when they die?

NUKI

Some do.

TERA

Well I hope this is one of them.

NUKI

Me too.

Nuki gazes out as well with a worried expression.

FADE TO:

INT./EXT. TREEHOUSE - LATER

Tera lays on a blanket, eyes open, looking up at the stars.

Nuki sits beside her, PLAYING a Japanese folk song on a shakuhachi flute.

Even after he stops blowing into the flute, the notes continue to PLAY as he begins to SING.

INSERT - OIL LAMP

The flame of the oil lamp wanes as it nears its last few minutes.

Nuki's voice fades as the MUSIC transitions to a more ominous track with the same melody. The rhythmic beating of DRUMS grows LOUDER and LOUDER.

Focusing on the flame, we...

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. ONI CAVE - NIGHT

A makeshift campfire CRACKLES in the center of the cave.

Sitting beside it, the Oni GRUNTS as it wraps a rough piece of cloth around its stomach wound.

The bonfire grows. HISAN (8888), appears as a flaming demon face in the center. His mouth moves, but we do not hear him speak.

The Oni GRUNTS in reply.

The flaming face of Hisan flickers violently.

The Oni stares at its injury for a moment before speaking in a scratchy, guttural voice.

ONI
Yes, Master.

The bonfire expands into a column of flame before dying back down into a small campfire.

The Oni turns, SNIFFING the air. It stares back out toward the village with narrowed eyes.

INT. TERA'S HOUSE: TERA'S ROOM - NIGHT

A beam of moonlight leaks through the bamboo window, gently illuminating the otherwise dark room.

Tera sleeps on her futon. Nuki SNORES softly beside her.

For the briefest of moments, the shadow of the Oni crosses over the room.

Nuki shifts around in his sleep, but does not wake.

INT. TERA'S HOUSE: OTOUSAN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Otousan and Jii-chan lay asleep, side-by-side on adjacent futons of their own.

The Oni's shadow passes over them.

EXT. TERA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A single bush outside the house makes a low RUSTLE.

INT. TERA'S HOUSE: TERA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Tera wakes to the sound and instinctively sits upright.

Her head turns to the window and she gets up to peer out. She sees nothing.

Nuki wakes and rubs his eyes. He sees Tera by the window.

NUKI
(whisper)
What are you doing?

TERA
(whisper)
Shhh.

She cautiously creeps toward the door, grabbing a small lantern. She puts her ear by the door and listens.

A faint CLANK emanates from the kitchen.

A push and the door CREAKS open to reveal:

INT. TERA'S HOUSE: LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The room is empty.

Tera steps out, holding the lantern in front of her. It casts a dim, yellow light across the space.

Tera looks around, but still sees nothing. She stops again to listen, but only hears the rhythmic TRILLS of cicadas outside.

Tera slowly makes her way to:

INT. TERA'S HOUSE: KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

She shines her lantern across the counter. Everything seems to be in place, untouched. Except...

A pan. Laying upside down on the ground. As if it had been knocked off its hook.

Tera bends down to pick it up and sees--a muddy footprint.

She bolts up just as she hears Otousan SHOUT.

OTOUSAN (O.S.)

Get the sword!

Suddenly, a sickening THUD from Otousan's room.

OTOUSAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

JII-CHAN!

Tera runs to the door and swings it open.

INT. TERA'S HOUSE: OTOUSAN'S ROOM

The room is a mess. Furniture damaged, paintings torn, futons ripped to shreds.

Jii-chan lays unconscious up against the wall. Beside him, a smashed table.

Otousan stands face-to-face with the Oni, wielding a bamboo stick as he attempts to fend off the intruder.

The Oni SNARLS and bares its claws.

TERA

Otousan!

Otousan barely deflects a swipe from the Oni as it closes in on him.

Another parry, but this time the Oni's claws carve off a chunk of the bamboo stick. Otousan staggers back.

JII-CHAN
(weakly)
Tera...

TERA
Jii-chan! Are you alright?

Otousan swings what's left of the stick. The Oni catches it and wrenches it from his grasp.

JII-CHAN
The sword...

Jii-chan points to a sword hilt sticking out from underneath the broken table.

Tera pulls away splintered wood and wrenches the sword free.

The Oni swings again and again. Otousan dodges, but the Oni lands a kick that sends him tumbling back against a cabinet.

Otousan coughs weakly.

JII-CHAN (CONT'D)
Tera, run.

Instead of listening, Tera rushes forward, drawing the sword and swinging it at the Oni's arm.

It ricochets off the Oni's skin and it turns, shoving Tera back against the wall, knocking her into a daze.

OTOUSAN
Tera!

Nuki appears in the doorway, taking in the scene. Seeing Tera, he rushes to her side.

JII-CHAN
(to Nuki)
Take her.

Nuki nods at Jii-chan. He SNAPS his fingers and turns into a gorilla. Nuki grabs the sword and Tera and heads for the door.

Tera fights Nuki but he holds her firm. She watches helplessly as the Oni slowly approaches Otousan. It picks him

up and opens its mouth.

Otousan shudders as his bright blue soul orb begins to flow out of his chest and into the Oni.

It floats into the Oni's mouth causing the Oni's eyes to flare blue.

Soulless, Otousan's body dissipates into the air.

TERA

Noooo!!

Jii-chan gives Nuki a weak nod through the doorway as he closes the door behind them.

TERA (CONT'D)

(broken)

No.

Tears roll down Tera's face. She reaches a hand out toward the house as she's carried away into the night.

FADE TO:

EXT. SAISEI FOREST - NIGHT

Nuki stops to catch his breath in the dense, dark woods. He squints as he tries to make sense of his location. The only light in the area comes from a small lantern around his neck.

Tera takes the opportunity to wrestle her way off Nuki's shoulder and grab the sword from him.

NUKI

What are you doing?

TERA

Going back to save them.

NUKI

You're not strong enough.

TERA

I don't care. I have to try.

Nuki steps in front of her.

NUKI

Tera, wait.

TERA

Let me through.

Tera tries to sidestep him but he blocks her.

NUKI

It's already too late. You saw it
yourself. The *oni* took his soul.
And probably has taken Jii-chan's
too by now.

Tera fights back tears.

TERA

But--

NUKI

--Tera. We have to go.

Tera wipes her eyes and takes one last look in the direction
they came before turning away and pressing forward.

EXT. SAISEI FOREST - LATER

Tera and Nuki sit around a small fire.

SNIFFLES can be heard from Tera in between the CRACKLING of
the fire.

NUKI

I'm sorry, Tera.

TERA

How did this all happen so fast?
Just yesterday we were at the
restaurant and now--

Nuki pulls out a scroll and hands it to Tera.

TERA (CONT'D)

--What is this?

NUKI

Otousan told me to give this to you
if something like this ever
happened.

Tera hesitates, but takes the scroll.

NUKI (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

Read it.

Tera unfurls the scroll.

OTOUSAN (V.O.)

Tera, if you're reading this, it means I failed to protect you. From both the oni, and the truth.

Tera's brow furrows.

OTOUSAN (V.O.)

I had hoped to shield you from this forever. Give you a life free from fear and worry, but it seems that that will no longer be the case. Before you read further, just know that I am sorry.

Tera grips the letter so hard, it crinkles the edges.

OTOUSAN

The truth is, our family comes from a great clan of *shinobi* warriors, whose duty has been to hunt down and defeat the oni across the provinces of Japan. But when your mother's soul was taken, I sheathed my blade and instead focused on raising you. But now, seeing as I am gone as well, I have no choice but to entrust you with this burden. Seek out Blacksmith Kota, in the town of Fujiwara. He will set you on the right path. Go, my dear daughter, become the warrior I'd hoped you'd never have to be.

Tera finishes and rolls the scroll back up.

TERA

Did you know? About all of this?

NUKI

I mean, technically it was more--
(off Tera's look)
--yeah. I did.

Tera nods and tosses the scroll into the fire.

NUKI (CONT'D)

(panicking)

What are you doing?

TERA

What do you mean?

NUKI
Why did you throw it away?

TERA
I don't need to read it again.

Tera grabs the sword and straps it to her back. She starts heading off into the forest.

NUKI
Where are you going?

TERA
To Fujiwara. So I can find this Blacksmith Kota. I'll need all the help I can get if I'm gonna become the greatest warrior in Japan, right?

NUKI
Uh, right. Can we stop somewhere for breakfast first though?

Tera shakes her head and heads off, Nuki following close behind her.

EXT. SAISEI FOREST - SAME

Wide overhead of Tera and Nuki on their way.

NUKI
So, which way is Fujiwara?

TERA
I have no idea.

FADE TO BLACK.

ROLL CREDITS.

TAG**END CREDITS.**

FADE IN:

EXT. SAISEI FOREST - NIGHT

The Oni lies motionless on the forest floor.

A HOODED FIGURE swings a massive black nodachi sword over its back and crouches down.

It reaches a hand over the Oni and Otousan's blue orb flows from its body into the Hooded Figure. A puff of energy, and once more its right eye flares blue.

A moment later, the Hooded Figure stands back up and looks out toward the dark forest. The moon overhead shines with a slightly blue hue.

FADE TO BLACK.

END PILOT.