

INT. LIVING ROOM - EARLY MORNING

The sound of a SHAKUHACHI is heard, but not seen. Shining in the sun, a katana blade swings downwards.

Dust refracts off of rays of early morning light that shines yellow through an aged windowpane. The shakuhachi still plays, this time filtered through a tinny television speaker.

A small but cozy living room with '90s era construction, potted plants, and tacky wall decorations.

A calendar with a large picture of a cat on it. "May 4th, WEDNESDAY, 2013."

Dark wood panels line the walls and floor, with a large, dark red Persian carpet.

Spread around the carpet are comic books, worn-out VCR tapes showing various classic samurai films, and the top of a private school uniform.

A bulky, plastic CRT Television sits on a drawer made of light wood that does not match the the walls or floor. The TV shows a shirtless samurai repeatedly making the same downward motion with a bamboo training sword.

A young African-American boy, JAI (12), stands shirtless in front of the TV, mimicking the samurai's movements with a cheap, plastic toy katana, just far enough away so as to not hit anything with his sword.

His jaw is clenched tight as he glares at the TV, striking his sword downwards with as much strength as he can muster.

From the window we see a SCHOOL BUS pull up in front of Jai's house. BEEP! The bus honks. Jai does not notice, and continues practicing with his toy sword.

BEEP! The bus honks again. Jai quickly turns around and stuffs his sword in his backpack. He scrambles to put on his uniform, and runs out the door.

A DVD box falls out of his backpack as he leaves, settling on the floor amongst the pile of comic books and VCRs. This one looks newer than the others. "47 RONIN."

EXT. PLAYGROUND - AFTERNOON

It is a bright, sunny, hot afternoon. The sound of kids playing, laughing, and screaming can be heard in the background.

Jai reclines at a shaded bench underneath a playground system, reading a comic book. He has an LA Dodgers baseball cap on.

Jai's backpack sits by his side, wide open. The hilt of the sword pokes through a flap.

JACK(O.S.)  
Jai, Jai, Jai...

JACK (13), RYAN (12), and COLIN (12), walk up to Jai, with Jack in front. Jack is tall and skinny, while Ryan and Colin are more heavy-built. Jack is smiling. Ryan and Colin carry grim expressions.

Jai peers up from his book for a second. He then goes back to reading.

Jack looks with surprise, and chuckles.

JACK (CONT'D)  
What did we talk about yesterday?

Jai doesn't respond, or even look up. He licks his finger, and turns the page to his comic book.

Jack scowls at this. He turns to Ryan.

JACK (CONT'D)  
Can anyone here remind him?

RYAN  
Yeah, we told 'em that this was our spot.

At Ryan's statement, Colin takes a step forward and snatches Jai's comic book out of his hands. The comic book has a blue cover with the title visible. "USAGI YOJIMBO".

Jai looks up, making direct, unblinking eye contact with Jack. His expression remains neutral, and his voice stays calm.

JAI  
I was reading that.

JACK  
(mocking tone)  
Aww, were you?

Jack takes the comic book from Colin and tears it in half.  
RIP!

Jai makes no reaction, and maintains eye contact. His hand inches towards the hilt of the sword in his backpack.

A leaf slowly floats down from the playground structure. It touches the ground, and immediately, Ryan moves forward and rears his fist to punch Jai.

In one swift motion, Jai swings his toy katana out of the bag and smacks Ryan jaw with it, stopping him from punching. Ryan flinches from the pain and takes a step back.

Jai dodges a fist from Colin. It flies past his head in slow motion. He then swings his sword from where he hit Colin downwards and to the right, hitting Colin in the ribs. Colin quickly clamps his arm down, catching the sword, and smirks.

Jai looks up at him incredulously.

Ryan wraps his arms around Jai from behind and lifts him up by the ribs.

Jack moves in and punches Jai in the face twice. Left jab to his eye, right hook to his teeth. Jai spits blood at Jack's face, and Jack moves back, staggered. Jai swings his leg up and front kicks Jack in the throat. Jack falls to the ground.

Colin tries to pull the sword out of Jai's grip, but Jai won't let go.

Jai lowers his stance, pulling his center of gravity down. He elbows Ryan in the stomach. Ryan lets him go and doubles over.

Jai grabs his sword with both hands, and yanks it. He manages to pull the sword free from Colin's arm, but it bends a bit. He immediately pokes Colin in the solar plexus, knocking the wind out of him. Colin falls to his knees.

Jai then jumps with one leg, uses the other one to launch himself off of a playsystem pillar, and brings the sword down on Colin's head, knocking him out. The sword bends more from the heavy blow.

Ryan starts running at Jai, bent forward in rage. Still eyeing Colin, Jai flips the sword, grabbing it by the blade. He swings the hilt behind him without looking. The hilt hits Ryan directly in the temple. THUNK. Ryan gets knocked out.

Still sitting on the ground, Jack struggles to wipe the bloody spit out of his eyes. A shadow looms over him.

Jai is standing above Jack, staring him down.

JACK (CONT'D)  
(out of breath)  
Listen, I'm sorry about the comic  
book! I-I'll buy you a new one!

The sound of a shakuhachi is heard, but not seen. Shining in the sun, a plastic, bent toy katana blade swings downwards. THUD.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

The school bus shows up at the window again.

The front door swings open fast and loud, hitting the wall behind it with a BANG. Jai walks in with a black eye and a tattered uniform, his backpack slung over one shoulder. In one hand is the two halves of comic book. In the other, the battered and bent plastic toy katana.

On his face is a massive grin-- as well as two of his front teeth missing.