

Figment

Episode 12

Jonathan stood in awe, watching the two dark figures move around each other gracefully. He would have thought himself inside a movie theater if it were not for Christine's fingers digging into his arm as she hid behind him for protection. There was the sound of rippling fabric and leather, the clear crisp sound as the metal struck metal, the soft pattering of footwork along the grass top. Each movement was met quickly and equally with a counter move.

The killer stepped back, his blade poised above his head in a traditional Kendo stance. The protector held his weapon back behind him in a straight line from his shoulder down to the ground, his opposite hand bent in front of him *en garde*. They both stood for a moment, assessing each other's poise. Figment was the first to move, stepping into his opponent's attack, bringing his sword up to his left to block the downward thrust from the killer. He continued his movement to the left, making a full spin, taking the blade around his head and connecting again as his opposite turned on the spot to his respective right. There were fast, quick exchanges between the blades that followed. The two figures moved in one direction, then switched roles. Jonathan found it hard that he was able to follow every movement as if it were being played in slow motion.

Five exchanges up in the air at each other's shoulder line followed by four exchanges by the knees. The killer thrust forward and Figment turned, allowing the blade to slide harmlessly along his back. He continued his roll along his opponent's arm, coming off the back side with a quick jab of his elbow. The killer stumbled forward and spun quickly to meet a speedy attack from Figment's right hand.

Jonathan watched, completely enthralled, his heart racing in his chest. He had not noticed that he had been backing up slowly, pushing Christine farther away from the fight. Was this instinct to protect her? He was not sure. She peeked over his shoulder and let out a gasp of shock when the killer made an attack at Figment, who spun to his right and threw the blade behind his back to block a certain cut. Figment spun back around in the opposite direction, making his own attack to his challenger's head. The killer ducked backwards as the blade passed inches above the brim of his hat. Once Figment realized his blade had missed he quickly reversed the direction of his blade, but was met with a parry and force to the other side of his body and a kick to the hip.

Jonathan shivered as something cold pressed against his neck. The feeling trickled down the back of his shirt just as another pin point of cold shock slapped itself against his cheek. He looked up towards the sky. It was too dark to tell for sure, but he thought he saw the colorless formations of low laying thunder clouds above him. As another prick of cold hit his face, he knew that it was going to start raining soon. He turned back to the battle that was commencing before him. The two had switched sides of the field again. Jonathan could not remember if this was the third or the fourth time they had changed sides. Neither attacker appeared to be winded at all by the other's actions and reactions. Off in the distance there was a soft roll of thunder. The impending

storm was going to be big; Jonathan could feel it inside him. He pushed Christine back further, trying to get her under a nearby tree to keep her out of the rain.

Figment rushed the assailant, his blade locked at his side in a downward angle, the tip almost dragging along the ground. He jumped as his opponent swung in defense. Figment blocked the weapon's sharp edge quickly and came down to the ground with an attack to the opposite side of the killer's weapon arm. The killer, who Figment had called Kaden before the fight had begun, was open to the attack and quickly spun, following Figment's blade movement until he was clear then brought his blade up to knock away any reponse that may have, but did not, arrive. The two backed off from each other just as the rain began to increase. Kaden looked up to the sky and Figment followed the action as if to see what his opposite was looking at. Laughter filled the common area. It was dark, fearful, and reminded Jonathan of the dream he had earlier in the week.

"At last," Kaden exclaimed, "a fair fight!" He brought his weapon to a guard stance.

Figment impressively spun his weapon around his body and stood in what looked like a stance opposite of Kaden's. "Rain will not slow me down, murderer." He ran, taking off from his stance like a bullet out of a gun. The two met again, blade to blade, arms locked together at the elbows. Rain dripped down from the brims of each other's hats. Figment still could not see Kaden's face, but knew all too well what to expect had his opponent lifted his head. He had to protect Jonathan from what hid in the shadows, no matter what the cost; after all, his true name used to mean "Defender of Men", and it would be a shame that he did not fulfill his destiny to live his name.

Figment pushed off from Kaden, letting the blade of his sword slide along his enemy's. They separated from each other, both standing in the same stance; arms out stretched in front of them, holding weapon points on target with each other's eyes. Lightning flashed in the sky, allowing Jonathan to see the two slowly revolving each other in the field, holding their stance.

"You protect him from what he is." Kaden said; his voice powerful over the rolling thunder. "What he will become."

"Jonathan's destiny holds more than you know," Figment retorted.

"His destiny is the same as mine, and you know that."

"Your lines may be tied, but he will not have the same fate."

"You are so certain," Kaden dropped his weapon slightly, as if inviting Figment for an attack, "so certain, in fact, that you cannot see what I wield in my hands."

It was true. With the dark mixed with the rain neither Figment nor Jonathan could see the weapon being brandished by this murderer in black cloth. It was as if the blade itself were black metal, polished to match the color of nothingness. No pattern was engraved in the blade, no sword smith's logo etched near the hilt. Figment came in towards his opponent, faking an attack to the left then quickly switching to the right side. Kaden fell for the fake attack, but quickly corrected and defended himself. Figment anticipated the defense and pressed forward, forcing Kaden's blade down to his side. With a quick movement of the wrist, Figment turned the edge of his blade and shifted the weapon's weight to his left hand. He pulled hard, breaking free of Kaden's blade. He ran past his opponent, feeling what felt like a decent blow to the mid section of Kaden's body. He turned slowly to see Kaden standing perfectly upright, not holding his side in pain.

Jonathan watched as Figment ran past Kaden, crouching down and throwing his right arm out in front of him, the blade poised in a finishing move. Something did not seem right in his eyes though. Kaden did not double over, or grip his side. Did Figment not deliver his blow? Jonathan thought he saw a strip of cloth fly out behind Kaden. Maybe all that happened was Figment cut his jacket. Whatever happened, Kaden was not affected by it, or seemed to be upset. In fact, he seemed more assured of himself for avoiding Figment's attack.

Christine pressed herself against Jonathan more, trying to stay warm and dry in the onslaught of rain that was drenching the common green in front of them. Another flash of lightning and roll of loud thunder made her bury her face into his shoulder. He put his hand on hers. The wet shirt felt cold against his skin, but Christine's warm skin felt good. He gripped her hand tighter and pressed himself against her. Another flash of lightning lit the area in front of them. Through the rain, Jonathan could see Figment and Kaden going at each other again.

Kaden circled around Figment. His blade poised at his side, ready to strike at a moment's notice. Figment stood back and brought his weapon into a salute and continued following Kaden around, trained on his every movement. Kaden adjusted his guard then made a strike at Figment. There were several blows between blades: first high, then low, then high again. Figment and Kaden both spun around each other's strikes and parries. Movement confused and blended with grace. Blade play danced the line with deadly blows and shallow misses. Figment was sure he had struck Kaden several times, yet his nemesis was still standing and fighting with the same vigor as the beginning of this bout. He had felt the tip and edge of Kaden's blade a few times, but nothing was too serious. He was wearing down, but kept pushing forward. He had to keep Kaden distracted from Jonathan. God, Jonathan. Why has that fool not left yet? Why is he still standing there by the tree with that girl? If Kaden were to get to Jonathan, there's no knowing what will happen. It was his job to protect him. He had to keep pushing on.

"What's the matter, great defender or men?" Kaden taunted from behind his blackened blade. "Finding yourself wearing thin?"

The giant man in black ignored this comment and continued with his barrage of attacks and parries, hopefully allowing one to slip through and end this struggle. He could not give him.

"Face it, dear Alastair," Kaden laughed once again, "you are going to fail. Jonathan's strength is my strength."

Figment reeled back. Kaden had spoken his absolute name, and in common tongue. This new development was one he was not prepared for. It had shocked him to the point that he let his guard down. There was a scream from the distance behind him.

Jonathan broke free from Christine's grip and ran forward into the rain, running full speed towards Figment. He could not stop himself, yet he did not have a plan on what to do. Kaden had stopped his attack when he turned and saw Jonathan coming towards him. With Alastair distracted, Kaden took advantage and spun his weapon around in his hand, connecting the pommel of the katana to the side of his foe's temple.

Alastair, or Figment as Jonathan knew him, fell to the ground, his hat falling off and fluttering away in the wind. He grabbed the side of his head in agony and looked up. Through this recently blurred vision he saw Jonathan running towards him. He held out his hand and tried to speak. Kaden kicked Alastair's hand down then kicked him in the gut, causing him to roll over on his back, the rain pelting him in the face as he let out a yelp of pain.

Kaden turned around brought his sword up, making Jonathan stop suddenly on the slick grass. Jonathan fell backwards, trying to avoid running onto the sharp point of the blade pointed at his chest. He slid along the grass, his hands trying to stop himself against the now muddy ground. Kaden slowly walked towards him.

"Your savior isn't going to stop me now, Jonny Boy." Kaden said standing over Jonathan, his brimmed hat held down so his face was still hidden in the shadows. "It's time to show you who you really are."

Kaden flipped his weapon around and rested it on top of his opposite elbow, the point still trained on Jonathan as he knelt down in front of the boy.

"I..." Jonathan tried to choke out through gasps for air, "I don't know what you're talking about."

"Don't listen to him, Jonathan," begged Alastair, trying to stand again. Kaden turned his weapon's focus to the protector and turning his head to look in the same direction. Jonathan could now see some of the features of the face. There was something familiar about the chin, the nose, and the cheek bones.

"It's time to see what kind of a man you're 'hero' really is Alastair." Kaden said with a laugh in his voice. Jonathan turned and looked at Figment at the mention of his real name. His face was full of question. As he turned his head back to face Kaden, he looked up. Lightning flashed in the air and thunder roared with the horrifying sound of Kaden's laughter. He slowly raised his head, allowing the light from the storm under the brim of his black cap. The rain dripped down in front of two dark brown eyes. Jonathan's face twisted into a grimace of disbelief. A smirk rose on Kaden's face as he saw the realization spread across Jonathan's.

Jonathan stared forward into those dark brown eyes. They were the same eyes he had seen every day of his life; they were his eyes, his nose, his cheek bones, his same smirk meeting his look of horror. Jonathan was looking at himself.