

# Figment

## Episode 14

Dean had never been in a tougher position than he was currently in. A murder was on the loose somewhere in the state, traveling eastward. There was so far no noticeable motive and the only idea of a weapon was sitting on his desk, neatly stowed away in a wooden sheath. It had taken him a few days to find a katana in the city. He wished to not become part of that eBay crowd, bidding on random items on the Internet all day and night. He was a traditional shopper. If he really wanted something, he would find it in the stores, and if he could not find it then he probably did not need it as badly as he once thought. He ran his fingers over the ornate metalwork that covered the hilt of the sword, the small flat piece of metal that is typically placed between the blade and the handle and serves as a guard to the hands when in combat. Twin dragons circled the grip, each on holding a miniature replica of the weapon in one front claw and their tongues were hanging from their jaws, splitting at the end in a serpent's fork. Similar dragons were cast on the pommel, the small metal cap at the end of the grip that gave the blade more balance besides the full tang of the blade. He looked at his cell phone. The first seven numbers on his recent call list were from the officer he enlisted to help him find a katana, calling for more information. What did 'full tang' mean? Did it have to be straight or curved? Of course Dean knew that a normal police officer was not going to know that a full tang blade meant that the blade continued past the hilt and into the grip. It was a way to balance the blade. Blacksmiths would double the steel in the grip, matching the weight of the blade beyond the hilt, giving the sword a balance point of a few inches in front of the hilt. A better balanced blade would mean its wielder would have more control over his actions. It was clear that the murder had a very in depth knowledge about swords and sword play, and thus would choose to have a perfectly balanced blade. As for the curve of the weapon it was just a simple history lesson.

There were two different types of katana found on today's market; samurai and ninja. A samurai blade has a slight curve in it, allowing the user to slice rather than hack – which better fit the marks found on the murder victims – and was often more balanced than the ninja blade, which was straight and more often than not used as a blunt force object than a cutting weapon. Dean had explained this to the officer, hoping that some of the knowledge would be retained after the following evening's activities of drinking with his buddies and experimenting with drugs he had pulled off some punk from the streets during a raid. It made Dean furious that the police force was so corrupt. He tried to stay out of it as much as possible. There had always been that line between detectives and police officers, and that line was hardly ever crossed because both sides hated each other; the detectives because the police would contaminate the crime scene and the police because the detectives thought themselves better.

Dean found himself pacing his office again, trying to convince his mind of a motive. He could not find one. This killer, murder of the night, was killing people at random. He was not following any known patterns or sticking to any preferred targets. It would be much easier for Dean to track the killer if they were sticking to suburban

communities, or a specific gender, but the latest murder of a husband and wife in a rural home was just as confusing as the rest. The only clue was the sword that was lying on Dean's desk; the supposed weapon of choice. Dean had run simulations with a few of the CSI techs, looking for more blood splatters that matched those of the crime scenes. They had come close on a few of them, but still not close enough in Dean's opinion. There was something else about the weapon that Dean could not figure out. Something about the blade that gave its owner a little bit more control. He had tried adding more weight to the hilt, then to the pommel, and finally to the tip of the blade to try to get better results, but found that all three solutions led him further from the truth. This was single-handedly becoming the hardest case he had ever worked on.

The intercom from his phone beeped loudly. When Dean did not answer it immediately, it beeped loudly again. Dean walked around his desk and pressed the speakerphone button on the base. A voice, female, clear and calm, came over the speaker. There was a small smacking noise in her voice as she spoke. Most likely she was chewing a piece of gum while working; a typical habit for some of the secretaries around the office.

"Detective," the voice called through the small speaker, "chief wants to see you in his office."

There was a slight buzz followed by what seemed to be an annoyed clank of plastic as the phone on the other end was haphazardly tossed back into the cradle. Dean tossed the sheets of paper onto his desk and opened his door. As he made his way through the labyrinth of desks, junkies, and blues he kept asking himself what that portentous fart wanted now. It was not like Dean was purposely wasting his time on this case.

He passed a short-haired blonde girl, no older than twenty-one (but obviously more experienced in sex than most forty-year-olds), sitting at a small metal desk just outside the police chief's office. He took no more than a second to acknowledge her more out of politeness than the fact that he could see the beginnings of her sky blue lace bra peeking out of the top of her salmon colored shirt which could have been much too small for any girl with a large bust. Judging by the position of the front of the shirt, this girl was attempting to make her chest appear larger than it truly was. Sheep and plastics, that is what Dean thought of girls like that. One rap of his knuckles on the plate glass then a turn of the handle and Dean was inside the office, ready to receive the barrage of insults and questions for his methods.

"Shut the door, Detective," said a larger man sitting in an even larger leather-wrapped chair. Dean did as he was told, then stood in front of the desk, his hands behind his back. "Do you have any idea what I've been going through with this case you're working on?" The man asked almost rhetorically.

"Sir," Dean started before being cut off.

"I've got the press running around calling my officers incompetent and my detectives lazy. A killer is on the loose and all you seem to be able to do is shuffle through the same stack of papers, almost like you are playing with yourself. Now I hear you've got one of my people out around town looking for a...a *bushow*..."

"Bushido," Dean corrected.

“Whatever the *fuck* it is, you’ve got a uniformed officer roaming the streets, wasting mine and his time, as well as tax-payer’s dollars. You need to get your head out of your ass and get to work on finding this psycho.”

Dean did not move. He was not certain if there was anything else the chief was going to berate him about.

“What are you waiting for, the right words to invite me into the circle jerk you call you investigation?” the chief asked. “Get out, solve this case, now!”

Dean nodded and left the office, looking towards the secretary once more as he left. It was apparent she was attempting to gain the attention of one of the slums that a blue had in cuffs across the room for her shirt was pulled slightly lower than before and her bra was hoisted down to make her breasts almost explode out of the top. He shook his head and kept walking back to his office. Leaving his door open he walked over to the wall which held a large map of the region. Six markers were inserted into the map at what seemed like random intervals. Six murders; three following what seemed like an almost straight line eastward, another three in what seemed to be a random order just north of the others. At first they thought of a copycat, but upon more investigation they determined that it was the same individual. The murders then looked more like a zigzag pattern, which made even less sense. Dean ran his finger through his hair then sat down behind his desk and stared at the map on the wall. Where was the pattern? It would be easier if the killer was following a certain road or travel path. Dean would figure out the general area that would be logical for the next murder depending on the mathematical distance and time between the previous six, but a zigzag is hard to determine the next point. It could be anywhere. He picked up one of the papers on his desk and started looking it over again. A highly-detailed photograph of one of the victims. He studied it carefully, leaning back in his chair. He turned the image slightly to look at it from a different angle. As his mind wondered his eyes lost focus on the image on the page, but seemed to focus, as if by some outside force, on the map on the wall. The top edge of the page seemed line up perfectly with the top line of markers. Dean did not even think, but instead reacted, grabbing a marker off his desk and jumping towards the map on his wall.

An officer knocked on his door and walked in carrying a slip of paper. His eyes wide with both terror and excitement that something was happening.

“Sir,” the officer said, “we have a new break in the case; another murder.” Dean did not seem to hear the officer as he was busy drawing on the map. “Some kid was just killed...”

“I know,” Dean interrupted stepping back from the map. “And I know where.” He and the officer looked at the map and the lines Dean had drawn, almost like the child’s game Connect-The-Dots, through each of the markers and continuing straight out in the same line. At one point, two lines intersected, making a large, empty arrow pointing right at a shaded area of the map; an area typically reserved for universities or institutions.