

"SON OF A SHOGUN"

An animated story of a shogun prince who seeks his father's approval, but finds he must reconcile with his brothers first.

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EXT. OSAKA HARBOR - DAY

It is the year 1620, a Japanese galleon sails into port.

INT/EXT. SHIP - DAY

Three young Samurai are aboard the deck, immaculately attired in Kimonos and carrying the signature twin swords. They are the Shogun princes, KOGA, MATSU, and IKIRA.

Matsu, a portly fellow and then some, leans over the edge to empty his stomach. Ikira, a scrawny youth, sits green-faced clutching his gut. Koga, tall, handsome and broad-shouldered, stands proudly at the bow like a returning warrior.

IKIRA

Why does he call us back now?

KOGA

The old man's on his last legs, he needs to appoint a successor.

IKIRA

You really think he wants to give us the Shogunate?

KOGA

Well, not you perhaps.

Matsu brings his head up from over the side of the ship.

KOGA

Or you.

MATSU

Oh go drown yourself Koga.

IKIRA

If you wanted the old man's approval so badly you shouldn't have left in such a huff.

KOGA

I had a point to make. Now I return: older, wiser, and willing to forgive.

They scoff.

MATSU

What makes you so sure you'll even get the chance to seek Father's approval?

KOGA

You think he's so ill he'll die before we reach the shore?

MATSU

No, I'm just saying...what if we land but you never reach the palace?

Koga cocks his head, a wry smile across his face.

KOGA

Is that a threat?

Matsu, gives a mischievous wink.

MATSU

You know what they say, first-in, best-dressed. Call it a challenge brother.

EXT. CITY DOCK - DAY

Dock hands tie the ship to the pier. Others, slowly let out ropes that lower the boarding plank...

WUMP!

The plank slams down onto the pier as Koga, Matsu and Ikira charge out and speed away, scrambling and jockeying for position.

Koga, in the lead, pushes over a large sack of rice, blocking the way behind. He calls back over his shoulder.

KOGA

Keep up slow pokes!

Still looking back, he doesn't see the pylon ahead and runs straight into it, he falls flat on his back with a dull THUD.

Matsu and Ikira leap-frog the rice sacks, and Koga.

MATSU

Too bad you don't look where you're

going!

Koga groggily regains his footing and gives chase.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - DAY

The Square is bubbling with market stalls, traders, and caged chickens. At the center is a water well.

Matsu and Ikira speed into the square, bowling over some poor villagers in their haste.

MATSU

Wait!

IKIRA

What??

He slows up.

MATSU

Here, quick!

He unties the rope from the water well.

MATSU

Grab the other end!

They go back to the entrance and stretch the rope across it like a trip-wire.

Koga comes puffing into the square and...PAK! Falls flat on his face in a puddle of mud.

MATSU

Ha-ha! That's twice!

Koga gives Matsu a filthy look.

KOGA

You'll pay for this Matsu.

MATSU

Have to catch us first!

They scurry off.

Koga gets a new look of determination. Quickly he grabs the rope, makes a loop, and lassos the escaping Matsu and Ikira.

The rope pulls tight around their feet brings them down like two logs. Koga quickly binds their hands with the

remainder of the rope and props them next to some distressed chickens.

KOGA

There! Let's see if you go for a good price!

IKIRA

You can't leave us here!

KOGA

Watch me!

And he takes off.

EXT. PALACE COURTYARD - DAY

The palace courtyard is a picture of tranquility: a bubbling fountain, floating cherry blossoms, willow trees swaying gently. A minstrel plays a Gagaku song on a bamboo flute, the tune wafts serenely on the breeze.

FLORMP! Koga blunders over top of the minstrel, causing him to blow a raspberry.

Still covered in mud, he crosses to the fountain, sloshes a few handfuls of water through his hair and brushes down his Kimono before strutting up to the Shogun's quarters.

INT. SHOGUN'S QUARTERS - DAY

The room is sparse except for an ornamental Samurai sword and battle armor. Two geisha kneel silently in the corners.

Koga crosses to a cushion in the center of the room and sits cross-legged.

Moments later, a screen door opens and a little nugget of a man hobbles out on an ivory walking stick, his long white beard dragging along the ground. This is the SHOGUN.

Koga keeps his eyes on the floor as the Shogun shuffles slowly towards him.

Really slowly.

Koga wriggles on his cushion like a man with an itch he dare not scratch in polite company.

Eventually the Shogun sits down.

SHOGUN

Koga.

KOGA

Father.

The Shogun's tone is gruff. Koga has done a mediocre job of cleaning himself up and the Shogun can see the mud still behind his ears, the tears in his Kimono, and his top-knot half out.

SHOGUN

Five years and you show up looking like this?

Koga continues to look at the floor.

KOGA

I...had a run-in with two fools in the market.

SHOGUN

And where are your brothers? Are they all right?

KOGA

They were the two fools.

The Shogun scowls.

SHOGUN

Get out.

KOGA

What?

SHOGUN

You heard me! Get out!

Koga looks up for the first time.

KOGA

But father--

SHOGUN

LEAVE!!!

The old man coughs and keels over. The Geisha immediately totter over and help him up. Koga doesn't know what to do with himself.

Koga watches the Geisha help the ailing Shogun back to his room, his face pale, expression shocked.

After a moment he rises and leaves.

EXT. TOWN - AFTERNOON

Koga trudges down an empty cobbled street. The sky is orange, shadows are long and dark. Buildings loom over him on all sides.

His eyes look hollow, shoulders hunched, the Shogun's rejection has hit him hard. He kicks a pebble down the slope...

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - CONTINUOUS

The pebble comes to rest at the base of the water well. The square is now empty, quiet, cold. Koga slinks over to the well to get a drink.

Suddenly he stops, he can hear something, a GROAN.

KOGA

Hello?

The GROAN comes again. Koga looks over to see feet protruding from behind an empty stall. He goes over and is more than a little surprised by what he sees.

KOGA

Matsu? Ikira?

MATSU

You scoundrel. Those ruthless villagers took our money and clothes.

KOGA

No!

MATSU

Help us up!

Koga unties them. Matsu and Ikira, now in their underwear, stretch the kinks out of their limbs.

MATSU

You're back awfully early, let me guess: The old man threw you out! Told

you to get lost! Ha! That'll teach you  
to leave us at the mercy of common men!

KOGA

Brothers, you must know I didn't mean  
for this to happen.

Matsu pivots and drives a well-trained fist into Koga's  
mid-section. Koga doubles over, winded.

MATSU

And I didn't mean for that to happen  
either!

(to Ikira)

Come on brother, let's go.

Ikira gives Koga a friendly kick in the ribs as he passes.

IKIRA

Your loss is our gain! Who knows, maybe  
he'll hand us the kingdom now!

Koga watches them lumber up the street to the temple,  
pausing to snatch some clothes off a low-hanging line as  
they go.

EXT. PIER - DAY

A red sun is setting spectacularly over the water but Koga  
doesn't even look up, he dangles his feet over the edge of  
the pier, a miserable expression on his face.

Koga shares a moment with his scruffy reflection, runs a  
hand through his matted hair, looks at his torn clothes.  
How did this day go so wrong?

Two unseen sailors are having A CONVERSATION on the nearest  
boat, Koga can hear their chatter.

SAILOR ONE (O.S.)

They say the Shogun's in his last days.

SAILOR TWO (O.S.)

Too bad, he's a good man, and I hear  
the sons feud!

SAILOR ONE (O.S.)

Typical Samurai. They seek honor and  
power but can't forgive their own  
brothers.

Koga smarts at this, something has hit a raw nerve.

SAILOR TWO (O.S.)  
Still, they will come and go.

SAILOR ONE (O.S.)  
Let's hope so friend.

Koga's springs to his feet.

He can now see the two sailors leaning against the mast. Their eyes meet. The men see his swords and immediately their eyes fill with fear.

KOGA  
Brothers!

The sailors look confused. Before they can say anything Koga begins running back up the pier.

EXT. SHOGUN'S PALACE - EVENING

Matsu and Ikira are crossing the courtyard. They are about to enter the Shogun's quarters when Koga comes running.

KOGA  
Matsu! Ikira!

They turn.

MATSU  
Get lost!

Koga arrives puffing.

KOGA  
Please, just let me--

Matsu shoves him away, but Koga resists. They struggle.

MATSU  
Clear off! You've made enough trouble!

KOGA  
No! Please!

The scuffle attracts the guards' attention.

GUARD  
What's going on?

INT. SHOGUN'S PALACE - CONTINUOUS

The SOUND OF THE STRUGGLE is floating in from outside. The screen opens just just enough for an old eye to peer out...

EXT. SHOGUN'S PALACE - CONTINUOUS

The brothers have each other by the scruff of the collar.

MATSU

Koga-san is trying to harass the Shogun. Take him away!

The guards grab Koga.

KOGA

Matsu, please! Listen to me!

MATSU

Why should I?

KOGA

Because I have wronged you!

Matsu startles at this.

MATSU

Stop!

The guards pause.

MATSU

Just what do you mean by that?

KOGA

It was wrong to tie you up in the square.

MATSU

I already know that.

KOGA

But I didn't. Until now...

Matsu looks puzzled, this doesn't sound like his pig-headed older brother.

KOGA

When I visited father, he knew. He knew we'd been fighting, he knew I'd delayed you to get here first. He saw right

through me and turfed me out.

This confession is difficult for Koga, he looks pained, like he's trying to swallow a rock.

KOGA

And I deserved it. I'm sorry.

Matsu looks his brother up and down, he doesn't know what to think.

KOGA

Please brothers, let me now make amends. Let me help you. Your clothes-- and your hair--they are not fit to present to the Shogun. Please, let me help you.

He motions towards the bubbling fountain in the center of the courtyard. Matsu squints suspiciously, is this another trick?

MATSU

Ok.

The guards release Koga and the three brothers cross to the fountain.

AT THE FOUNTAIN

Koga washes his brother's faces and hair. The dirt is hard to get off, so he tears his own Kimono and uses it to help scrub. Soon they are properly clean.

Satisfied, Koga then turns his attention to their tawdry clothes.

KOGA

These won't do...

He turns.

KOGA

Fresh clothes! Quick!

Moments later a geisha totters over with two crisp, clean Kimonos.

KOGA

Quick - put these on.

They do so. Koga then helps them pin their hair back up.

Soon they are spic-and-span.

KOGA

Excellent, fit to meet a Shogun!

Matsu and Ikira regard each other approvingly. Then they turn to Koga, his hair is a mess, Kimono little more than sleeves, they are both stuck for words.

MATSU

Brother, why?

KOGA

No time for that, father is waiting.

They all turn to the the palace but stop dead in their tracks.

Koga gasps.

Matsu and Ikira quickly bow on one knee.

The Shogun is standing in the doorway, watching them.

KOGA

Father! How much have you see--

SHOGUN

Enough.

Koga also bows, he wriggles uncomfortably, tries to pull what is left of his Kimono over his bare chest.

A hand touches his shoulder, he looks up.

The Shogun is standing next to him. As Koga kneels they are more or less eye-to-eye, and yet the old man has a commanding presence.

KOGA

Father?

The Shogun continues past, to Matsu and Ikira, and lays a hand on each of their shoulders.

SHOGUN

My sons! How it pleases me to see you

again! Rise and embrace your father!

They do so.

SHOGUN

Quick, inside, time is short and we  
have much to talk about...

Koga watches them proceed up to the Shogun's residence. The Shogun turns back toward him and he again looks at the ground.

SHOGUN

Koga.

Koga makes no reply. The Shogun eyes his clothes, little more than hanging rags now.

SHOGUN

You're looking even worse than before.  
A feat I wouldn't have believed  
possible until now!

KOGA

I...had to help two fools prepare to  
meet the Shogun, there was no time to  
tend to my appearance.

The Shogun smiles for the first time, their eyes meet.

SHOGUN

How much you have grown up in just a  
few short hours!

(he takes Koga's hand)

Come with me my son.

PULL-OUT through the willow trees as the two men head into the Shogun's residence.

FADE-OUT.

