

FADE IN

EXT. FROZEN WASTELAND - DAY

Endless white. Howling wind.

A lone ESCAPEE, emaciated, ragged, half-mad with terror sprints desperately across shallow snow. His breathing is ragged. Pure panic in his eyes. He keeps looking back over his shoulder.

From the ridge above, MASTER RUSH drops down.

He is a towering figure in ornate black armor the layered plates of a samurai's craft but scaled for something beyond human. Through the gaps and open faceplate, dark crimson blood churns violently like a raging waterfall. A single kanji is engraved across his chest plate, deep and deliberate. His blood-formed face is turbulent and furious, long liquid hair whipping wildly.

The Escapee sobs and tries to run harder.

ESCAPEE

(hoarse, desperate)

Please... I can't...

Master Rush accelerates. Each step is precise, terrifyingly fast.

SWISH - THWACK.

Both legs are severed at the knees in one brutal sweep.

The Escapee crashes forward, screaming. Before he can hit the ground, Master Rush spins his sword into a reverse grip and impales him through the chest in mid-fall.

The blade punches cleanly through his sternum and out his back. The man is suspended on the sword, choking, eyes wide with shock. He slowly slides down the blade as blood pours out in a steaming red waterfall, staining the snow.

Master Rush holds him there for a long, merciless beat

Then, in one flashy, arrogant motion, he whips the sword in a fast circular arc. The corpse flies off and slams into the snow. With a sharp downward flick, he cleans the blood from his blade in a dramatic crimson spray.

He stands motionless over the lifeless body, the blood forming his face and body still raging violently inside the armor. For a chilling moment, only the wind is heard.

Then – the spilled blood on the snow begins to move. It slithers backward like living mercury, forcing its way back into the Escapee's wounds. The severed legs twitch and violently reattach with sickening cracks of bone and flesh.

The Escapee gasps awake in agony, eyes bulging in horror.

MASTER RUSH

(voice deep, crashing like a waterfall)
There is no escape.

Master Rush grabs him by the back of the neck like a disobedient dog and begins dragging the broken man through the snow toward the distant pit.

On the ridge above, the other two Blood Masters watch in silence.

MASTER FLOW – Gentle, smooth blood flows inside his armor like a serene river. His blood-formed face is calm, graceful, almost peaceful.

MASTER STILL – Thick, dark blood sits completely motionless inside his armor like a frozen lake. His face is cold, pale crimson ice – utterly still and emotionless.

CUT TO BLACK.

TITLE: BLOOD TIES

FADE IN:

EXT. SNOWY FOREST CLEARING – MORNING

Tall, snow-laden pines stand like silent guardians. Soft golden light filters through the branches.

KAI REN (mid-30s, East Asian, athletic and focused) trains alone. His movements are disciplined, almost meditative with single short sword strikes flowing through precise arcs. Snowflakes scatter like sparks around the blade.

He stops. Closes his eyes. Breathes.

Then draws the second sword.

The change is immediate and striking. Dual-wielding, he becomes something fierce and beautiful. Fast, aggressive, lethal. He flows between the trees like living poetry using spinning slashes, crossing strikes, low sweeping kicks into rising cuts. Every motion is perfect.

For a long beat after the final spin, he stands motionless, swords lowered, breath visible in the cold air. He looks south, toward the distant mountains where Mei lives. A quiet, aching longing crosses his face.

EXT. FOREST CLEARING - MIDDAY

Kai moves like a shadow through the trees. He tracks fresh prints, draws his bow in one fluid motion, and releases. The arrow flies true.

He kneels beside the fallen deer, places a gentle hand on its still-warm neck, and whispers something too soft to hear. Respect. Gratitude. Sorrow.

He begins field dressing with practiced, efficient cuts.

EXT. FROZEN LAKE - AFTERNOON

The vast frozen lake stretches endlessly under a pale, indifferent sky. Kai kneels on the ice, cutting a clean hole. He drops his line and waits in perfect stillness, a man comfortable with silence.

When he pulls up a large thrashing fish, he cleans it quickly... but pauses, staring out across the empty white expanse. The loneliness of the landscape mirrors his own.

EXT. TRADING POST - LATE AFTERNOON

A modest log outpost dusted in snow.

MARA (40s, sharp-eyed, wrapped in heavy furs) leans over a wooden counter.

Kai steps onto the porch and drops the massive, fresh-caught fish onto the wood.

MARA

Fish. Shocker. Kai... you got any surprises for me?

THUD.

Kai drops a heavy, wrapped bundle of fresh venison right next to the fish.

KAI

Venison.

Mara blinks at the meat, then looks up at him, letting out a dry laugh.

MARA

It was a joke, Kai. You remember jokes?

A small, knowing smile touches his lips. He shrugs.

KAI

Pork spoils faster.

Mara slides a sack of salt and oil across the counter.

MARA

You know, most people bring news when they come in from the north. Weather. Travelers. Anything.

A beat. Something shifts in his expression — not sadness exactly, but the weight of a man who spends too much time alone with his own thoughts.

KAI

(quietly)

Mei's doing well. Last I heard.

Mara's expression softens. She clearly knows the name. Knows what it means to him.

MARA

Good. *(beat)* Go home, Kai. Eat something you didn't catch yourself for once.

He picks up the supplies. Pauses at the edge of the porch.

KAI

See you next week, Mara.

He heads back into the snow. She watches him go, shaking her head — fond, not dismissive.

INT. KAI'S CABIN - SUNSET

Warm firelight flickers inside the modest, well-kept cabin. Kai seasons and cooks the fresh meat and fish with quiet care.

He sets out two bowls by habit.

Then stops.

A small, painful beat. He puts one bowl away.

Kai reaches into a worn pouch and pulls out a small wooden WOLF CHARM, crudely but lovingly carved by Mei years ago. The wolf is fierce yet protective, howling at an unseen moon. A symbol of their bond.

He holds it in his calloused palm, thumb slowly tracing the grooves she once carved with small hands. His expression softens with a rare glimpse of tenderness and deep, protective love.

He closes his fist gently around the charm, pressing it to his heart for a moment.

Then tucks it away with reverence.

A distant THUNDER OF HOOVES shatters the silence.

Kai's head snaps up. The softness vanishes instantly. He grabs both short swords and steps outside, instantly alert.

EXT. FOREST CLEARING - SUNSET - CONTINUOUS

Through the trees, Kai sees his FATHER racing toward him on a lathered, exhausted horse. Dark, ominous storm clouds gather heavily on the horizon behind the rider, swallowing the last light of day.

EXT. FOREST CLEARING - MOMENTS LATER

The horse bursts into the clearing and rears violently. Kai's FATHER tumbles off and crashes into the snow. Blood pours from savage gashes across his chest and arm, steaming in the freezing air. His face is already pale with death.

KAI
Father!

Kai drops his swords and lunges forward, catching his father before he collapses completely. He slams a hand against the worst wound, blood gushing between his fingers.

FATHER
(weak, rattling)
My son...

He claws onto Kai's arm with failing strength.

SMASH CUT TO: FLASHBACK

EXT. ANCIENT RUINS - NIGHT (YEARS AGO)

Younger FATHER slams his bleeding palm against a towering, cracked stone archway. Crimson light detonates across the ruins.

FATHER (younger)
(feral with ambition)
Tonight our suffering ends!

The ground fractures with a bone-shaking CRACK. For one heartbeat it feels like success.

Then the world answers with a deep, abyssal ROAR from beneath existence itself. The light curdles. Black tendrils of liquid darkness explode outward, ripping men in half, twisting their bodies, flooding their eyes with madness as they're dragged, still screaming, into the abyss.

The younger Father stumbles backward in horror as the gateway throbs hungry, ancient, and now awake.

HARD CUT BACK TO:

EXT. FOREST CLEARING - PRESENT - SUNSET

FATHER

(barely audible, pained)

You still hold your left sword too high...

The smile dies instantly in agony.

FATHER

(urgent, desperate)

We cracked its tomb... Thought we could steal power.
Instead... we invited death itself.

He coughs violently. Blood explodes across the snow. The spilled blood twitches, slithering like a living thing before it stills.

Kai stares at it, eyes wide.

FATHER

(weaker, but burning with final strength)

The Blood Masters have risen. Cruel. Merciless.

KAI

(voice cracking)

What do they want?