

KUBO  
... AND THE TWO STRINGS

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**(0100 PRO) PROLOGUE**

BLACK

A child's whispered voice HISSES through the darkness...

CHILD'S VOICE (V.O.)  
*If you must blink, do it now!*

A full moon fills the screen like a giant, unblinking eye. \*

An eerie wind HOWLS through the night sky, and a wave suddenly rises in front of the moon, eclipsing it from view. \*

Another giant wave swells and we CUT WIDER to reveal--

EXT. OCEAN - STORMY NIGHT

A tiny wooden fishing boat comes into view, tossed about by enormous waves, cresting hundreds of feet high.

That's when we hear it, weaving throughout the howls of wind. Hopeful, inexplicable MUSIC. A sweet, chromatic MELODY. \*

It is being played by the boat's lone passenger. A beautiful Japanese woman with long black hair whipping in the wind. She kneels as she plays a stringed *shamisen* instrument. \*

CHILD'S VOICE (V.O.)  
*Pay careful attention to everything  
you see and hear...No matter how  
unusual it may seem.* \*

On the woman's back we catch a glimpse of a woven bag embroidered with the image of a beetle.

Before we can get a better look, our attention turns to a tsunami-sized wave, rising up silently in front of the boat, threatening to consume everything in its path.

The woman raises her hand, strikes the strings on her *shamisen*, and the sea literally *parts in front of her*, allowing safe passage clean through the center of the chaos.

The boat floats onward, approaching a rocky coastline beneath high windswept cliffs, and at the sight of land the woman gives an almost imperceptible smile.

CHILD'S VOICE (V.O.)  
*And please be warned. If you  
fidget. If you look away.*  
(MORE)

CHILD'S VOICE (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
*If you forget any part of what I  
 tell you, even for an instant, then  
 our hero will surely perish.*

\*  
 \*

Before the narrator can finish his sentence, another wave, larger than the others, surges menacingly behind the woman...

EXT. ROCKY BEACH

Propelled by that huge wave, the fishing boat violently rams into the rocky shore, throwing the woman from the boat.

Tossed through the turbulent undercurrent, the woman's head smashes hard against a rock.

And as the ocean recedes, she's left lying in the sand, her body limp and unmoving and blanketed by her tangled hair.

\*

And then another sound. The CRYING of an infant.

The woman's eyes snap open.

Slowly, painfully, she begins crawling across the sand towards the crying. It's coming from *inside* that woven bag.

\*

CHILD'S VOICE (O.S.)  
*His name is Kubo. His grandfather  
 stole something from him.*

\*  
 \*  
 \*

As she reaches the bag and draws back the folds of cloth, we see the face of a baby underneath. We can see his head is wrapped in a bloodied bandage, covering his missing left eye.

\*  
 \*  
 \*

We watch them from a HIGH ANGLE, like we're standing somewhere up on those cliffs, as the narrator adds...

\*  
 \*

CHILD'S VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
*And that really is the least of it.*

CUT TO:

**(0200 BRK) BREAKFAST WITH MOM**

BLACK

GHOSTING IN TITLE: **KUBO**

THEN: ... **AND THE TWO STRINGS**

CREDITS ROLL as we slowly FADE IN, coming face to face with --

A MONKEY

A serious monkey. Staring right at us. Fixed expression. That's because this monkey is actually a carved wooden charm, also known as a *netsuke*, standing about four inches high.

Next to it a young boy, perhaps ten years old, sleeps on a thin mat on the floor. He is curled up within a robe emblazoned with the crest of a beetle, just like the one we saw on the bag earlier.

The boy rolls over, revealing his left eye is covered in a patch. He is the baby from the prologue, grown into a wiry youth, with thick black hair tugged into a messy topknot. He is our hero. KUBO.

INT. KUBO'S CAVE - EARLY MORNING (PRE DAWN) \*

Kubo gets up and begins to tidy up the place, picking up dozens of strewn pieces of paper that inexplicably litter the ground. The paper is creased and wrinkled as if it has been repeatedly folded and unfolded. He smooths each sheet out, then stacks it and places it back on a shelf. \*

By the light of the full moon outside, Kubo walks to a little kitchen area and strikes a flint, starting a fire.

He gracefully pours and heats a pot of water, preparing both rice and tea for two place settings on the ground. \*

He then turns to regard a sleeping woman, lying on a mat in the corner of the cave, barely noticeable in the dark. The folds of her gown move gently as she sleeps.

Kubo steps over and kneels down by her side, and we see this is the same woman from our prologue, only now she seems older and paler. Her face is creased and wrinkled like the crumpled paper scattered around her, and her long black hair is streaked with silvery grey. She is Kubo's MOTHER.

Kubo watches her for a moment, then gathers himself and extends a hand to gently push her hair out of her face.

Her eyes flutter open. She sees Kubo, kneeling there, and he gives her a small smile. An unspoken "good morning." \*

Kubo helps her up and to the mat where the rice and tea are waiting, her movements are slow and feeble. \*

INT. DINING AREA KUBO'S CAVE - EARLY MORNING

Kubo serves his mother rice, even blowing on it to cool it for her.

His Mother eats just a little. A bit of rice falls onto her chin.

Kubo uses his chopsticks to gently put the grains of rice back into her mouth. There is clearly something wrong with his mother. \*

INT. ENTRANCE KUBO'S CAVE - EARLY MORNING \*

Kubo walks his mother over and she kneels on a mat in the shadow of the cave entrance, staring down at the angry white crests of the waves. \*

Kubo sits beside her. He works intently, folding those sheets of paper he stacked earlier into an assortment of origami figures.

There is a tiger, a deer, and a snake, each as impressive as the next. His nimble hands make swift and expert work of it. It's kind of incredible.

Kubo leans forward, grinning from ear to ear as he plays with a paper samurai, showing it to his unresponsive mother. \*

But then Kubo stops, and gets closer to lean on his mother's shoulder as the sun rises. \*

A BELL CHIMES in the distance, triggering him instantly into action. \*

As the orange light of dawn begins to fill the cave, he hurries over to where the shamisen leans against the wall and scoops it up with one hand. He grabs the netsuke and all his origami figures, hastily packs them into his bag and it over his shoulder. \*

Before he leaves he notices a strand of hair has fallen in front of his mother's face. He gently reaches out and pushes it back into place. \*

Kubo looks at his mother's staring empty eyes and rests his hand on her shoulder for a moment before running off. \*

**(0300 JTV) JOURNEY TO THE VILLAGE**

EXT. MOUNTAIN PATH - DAWN

Kubo scrambles down the rocky path with practiced ease, his shamisen occasionally smacking against his hip with a dull harmonic BUMP, like when you jostle a guitar.

In the distance a cluster of buildings peek out from behind a brightly ornate gateway. Kubo plays with his origami samurai as he walks. \*

Kubo continues along the path over a bridge into the village, to a hubbub of activity beyond -- \*

**(0400 STT) STORY TIME**

EXT. CENTRAL AVENUE - DAY

It's later in the morning and the main thoroughfare has become a vibrant pageant of peasantry and peddlers celebrating the second day of the *Obon Festival*.

- A puppeteer operates an elaborate dragon marionette over the heads of SQUEALING CHILDREN.

- FISHERMEN proudly waggle their pungent produce. Crustaceans crawl over each other in open crates.

- A PATIENT DAD AND HIS YOUNG DAUGHTER browse the lanterns being crafted by skilled artisans.

-HIGH CLASS LADIES barter and haggle for the most fashionable festival garments.

- MERCHANTS pitch their wares to VILLAGERS from dusty carts.

- MEN gamble on elaborate tile games. Two old curmudgeons sit in stony-faced contemplation over a chess-like game of *Shoji*.

And lining the street is the feudal Japanese equivalent of the Venice Beach boardwalk. A row of BEGGARS and STREET PERFORMERS, competing for coins, handouts, and attention:

- A hunched beggar woman, KAMEYO sits in the street, with a bowl in front of her. \*

She smiles warmly when she sees Kubo walking toward her. She miraculously straightens up and seems much less woeful.

KAMEYO  
Well hello, Kubo!

He slides his shamisen off his shoulder and sits down next to her. Kubo peeks over the lip of the bowl.

KUBO  
How is it today?

KAMEYO  
Not a bad crowd. I got two pennies  
and a lint ball.

She fishes around in the bowl and pulls out a clump of fluff.

KAMEYO (CONT'D)  
This is pretty good lint.

Kubo CHUCKLES and the old woman turns to him.

KAMEYO (CONT'D)  
And what do you have planned today?

KUBO  
Oh, you know. The usual.

KAMEYO  
(grins)  
Monsters?

KUBO  
Of course.

KAMEYO  
You think you can work in a fire  
breathing chicken?

Kubo fixes her with a look.

KUBO  
The chicken again?

KAMEYO  
(defensive)  
The chicken is funny.

Kubo rolls his eye, but he's clearly enjoying this.

KAMEYO (CONT'D)  
A touch of comedy to balance the  
whole thing out. They're going to  
be throwing money at you, I just  
know it.  
(thinks this over)  
Or they'll throw something at you,  
I don't know.

KUBO  
(LAUGHS)  
Okay, I'll see what I can do.

Kubo stands to leave, but the old woman has one more thing.

KAMEYO

And do you plan on *finishing* the  
story this time, young man?

Kubo just smiles and walks into the center of the square.

In one graceful motion, Kubo drops his bag of origami  
creatures on the ground and spins his shamisen around. \*

He grabs the *bachi pick* from his belt and raises it into the  
air, ready to strike.

KUBO

*IF YOU MUST BLINK, DO IT NOW!*

He then brings it down across the strings, striking a  
beautifully resonant chord.

With this, the entire dynamic of the marketplace changes.

- Mid-haggle, merchants and their customers GASP.

- The Shoji players look up from their game. One takes  
advantage of the distraction and cheats a winning move while  
the other is facing the other way.

- Children watching the puppeteer look over and the puppeteer  
turns the head of his dragon, to see what is going on before  
the children cheer and run towards Kubo.

SHOUTING ceases, CHATTER trails off. Even the TRILLING of  
songbirds in their cages and a distant dog's BARKING stop. \*

Kameyo moves through the gathering onlookers, pushing a man  
aside.

Kubo stands confidently in the center, his shamisen gleaming  
in the sun. Excited WHISPERS ripple through the crowd.

KUBO (CONT'D)

*PAY CAREFUL ATTENTION TO EVERYTHING  
YOU SEE AND HEAR. NO MATTER HOW  
UNUSUAL IT MAY SEEM!*

As he paces, Kubo sizes up the circle forming around him.

KUBO (CONT'D)

*AND PLEASE BE WARNED. IF YOU  
FIDGET. IF YOU LOOK AWAY. IF YOU  
FORGET ANY PART OF WHAT I TELL YOU,  
EVEN FOR AN INSTANT...*

And by this point, there's really no more need for Kubo to shout. The entire crowd has fallen still and silent.

He points to a woman and WHISPERS dramatically.

KUBO (CONT'D)

*Then our hero will surely perish!*

He suddenly shifts into a dramatic pose, plucking his shamisen like a rock star. He strums a simple theme, and a red blur shoots from his pack, somersaulting the full length of the circle before landing at Kubo's feet.

The crowd CHEERS at the appearance of this origami hero.

Kubo puts up a hand to silence them again, and continues:

KUBO (CONT'D)

Hanzo was a mighty samurai. But he was alone; his family taken from him, his kingdom in ruins, and his army destroyed by the dreaded Moon King! You may recall, Hanzo was roaming the distant Farlands in search of a magical suit of armor; the only weapon in the whole world that could protect him from the power of the Moon King. This armor was made up of three pieces. The first...

\*

Kubo pauses waiting for the audience to participate and spins suddenly, pointing to a group of children. HASHI is standing behind them, pushes his way through to answer.

HASHI

Oh, oh, oh!!! I know! I know! *The Sword Unbreakable!*

Kubo smiles and continues to play. A sheet of paper shoots from his bag and forms into a samurai sword that hovers in the air before the crowd.

Kubo sprints over to an adorable little girl, skidding to a halt in front of her.

KUBO

The second...?

MARI

*The Breastplate Imp...*

(struggling)

Impen...

Her father, HOSATO leans down and WHISPERS something into her ear.

MARI (CONT'D)  
*Impen-a-truh-bubble! Yeah!*

The crowd LAUGHS and APPLAUDS the little girl whose cheeks bloom red with pride.

Kubo plucks the second string and we see an ornate breastplate form and hover next to the sword.

KUBO  
And finally, the third weapon, the final piece of the armor...

KAMEYO  
I know this one! Pick me!

Kubo nods at her.

KAMEYO (CONT'D)  
*The Helmet Invulnerable!*

The expectant crowd turn to Kubo for affirmation. He plucks the third string and a beautiful helmet forms. The crowd CHEERS. He begins circling the audience, building the tension.

KUBO  
Before Hanzo could claim the armor and unite the pieces to reveal their true power, he was attacked by the Moon King's beasts!

\*

Kubo plucks a dissonant chord and spins suddenly.

A sheet of paper shoots up, folding in mid air, transforming into a monstrous spider.

\*

The spider creature springs forward and Hanzo charges to meet it, slashing at its legs with his little paper sword.

The crowd cheers.

KAMEYO  
Whoa! Ha Ha Ha!

Kubo launches into a dizzying display, playing his shamisen like a demon. He's good!

**MONTAGE**

In a series of quick cuts we catch various glimpses of Kubo's story... one fantastical battle after another, an incredibly violent display of origami theatrics, with paper body parts raining like confetti around the square.

- A FEROCIOUS SHARK swallows Hanzo whole, until he slices it open from inside, shredding it into ribbons.

- An over-excited samurai grasps the shoulders of two women.

HASHI

Oh yes!

- A FIRE-BREATHING CHICKEN forms and belches paper flames at Hanzo.

- The Beggar Woman CLAPS and CACKLES uncontrollably.

KAMEYO

*HA HA! Kill the chicken! Rip it to pieces!*

- Hanzo runs and turns into a flat piece of paper again shooting under the chicken's legs to escape. The paper folds back into Hanzo to the cheers of the crowd.

- Hanzo gets hit by a flying paper egg shot at him by the chicken. Hanzo turns, runs, and back-flips over the chicken, lopping off its head with one swipe of his sword.

- The patient dad covers the eyes of his young daughter, who moves his hands, not wishing to miss a beat. \*

HOSATO

Oh my!

- The day grows later. Hashi cheers wildly and another man gags as Kubo continues to entertain the crowd with his performance with Hanzo.

KUBO

Hanzo was filled with rage, his soul tormented by the grief of a family stolen from him...

Kubo begins playing a more ominous tune and paper creeps out of his pack, folding as it rises into the air, forming the dark silhouette of the Moon King.

There's a gravitas to Kubo as he continues.

KUBO (CONT'D)

At last, our hero was face to face  
with his nemesis, *The Moon King!*

The two paper figures fly up in the air at each other poised  
for battle, then as they reach fighting distance...

\*

*BONG! BONG!*

Kubo turns and sees the ringing bell. He lowers his hand and  
the origami figures instantly unfold and glide back into his  
pack.

KUBO (CONT'D)

(smiling brightly)

So be sure to come back tomorrow!

He hurriedly gathers up his belongings and collected coins as  
the crowd behind him realize that's all they're going to get  
today. They give a MURMUR of disappointment.

HASHI

What? Oh come on! People like an  
ending, please! Where are you  
going? No....You can't leave!

**(0600 FDM) FADED MEMORY**

INT. ENTRANCE KUBO'S CAVE - EVENING

Just as the bell finishes chiming, Kubo arrives breathlessly  
at the entrance to the cave, to find his mother still sitting  
there like she hasn't moved at all.

He smiles gently and sits next to her. They both stare out  
at the setting sun, sinking down behind the ocean. The last  
rays creep down their faces until shadow covers them  
completely. Then, Mother slowly blinks awake.

MOTHER

(whispers)

Kubo.

Kubo's Mother looks around the cave.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Kubo.

KUBO

Yes, Mother, I'm here.

Kubo smiles softly and takes her by the hand. She smiles at  
him.

KUBO (CONT'D)

Hungry?

She smiles and nods.

INT. DINING AREA KUBO'S CAVE - EVENING

CLOSE ON A BOWL.

MOTHER (V.O.)

And even though he could barely see  
his own hand in front of his face,  
Hanzo and his army of loyal samurai  
pressed on through the blizzard.

They've finished dinner and Kubo, the monkey, and little paper samurai sit next to each other watching his mother. She moves freely now, reminding us of Kubo during his story time. We can see where Kubo inherited his talents as she pretends to step through the deep snow, her arm in front of her face protecting her from imaginary winds.

Kubo stares intently like a child watching his favorite show.

MOTHER

And suddenly, as quickly as it had  
started, the storm cleared before  
him. Hanzo breathed a sigh of  
relief, for he was home!

KUBO

His fortress?! The Beetle Clan  
Castle?!!

MOTHER

Yes! At the very edge of the  
Farlands, hidden from the Moon King  
by powerful magic...

KUBO

And then what happened? When he got  
to the castle?

MOTHER

When who got to the castle?

KUBO

Hanzo, my father.

She is genuinely confused.

MOTHER

Hanzo... Hanzo was at the castle?  
He... Just give me a  
second...I'm...no, no...its gone. I  
can't...I'm sorry, Kubo. Perhaps I  
could recall a different story?

This obviously happens a lot... her memory is deteriorating.  
Kubo tries to play it down.

KUBO

Mother, what was father like?

MOTHER

(smiles)  
Oh, this one is easy. Hanzo was a  
mighty warrior, skilled with sword  
and bow...

KUBO

No. What was he *really* like? When  
he wasn't fighting... when he was  
with us.

She pauses, caught off guard, then smiles softly. For the  
first time, she seems really lucid.

MOTHER

He was just like you.

Kubo smiles.

KUBO

Like me?

MOTHER

Strong and clever and funny. And oh  
so handsome!

She leans over and playfully grabs his cheek. Embarrassed,  
Kubo squirms and GIGGLES and pushes her away.

KUBO

*Ugh, Moth-er!*

MOTHER

Aw, Come on!

She gets more serious.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Never forget how much he loved you,  
Kubo. He died protecting us.

\*

Kubo hesitates, wondering if he should ask the next question.

KUBO  
Did the Moon King--

MOTHER  
Your *Grandfather*.

KUBO  
Did Grandfather and your sisters  
really kill my father? It can't be  
true, can it? They're family!

His mother is now deadly serious and grabs Kubo's shoulders.

MOTHER \*  
No, they are *monsters!* Grandfather  
and my sisters stole your eye,  
Kubo! They must never find you  
again! NEVER! You must always stay  
hidden from the night sky, or they  
will find you and they'll take you  
away from me! Promise me you will  
never let this happen. *Promise me*  
Kubo!

Kubo looks into Mother's eyes and nods timidly. She realizes she has gone too far and calms a little, backing away.

She has a thought and reaches down to the ground, grabbing the little monkey statue.

She holds it up to Kubo and speaks in a funny voice.

MOTHER (CONT'D)  
*Don't be sad Kubo. Kubooo...*

Kubo looks up with the hint of a grin. Sariatu continues with the voice.

MOTHER (CONT'D) \*  
*Remember what you must do, Kubo? Re-  
mem-ber?*

KUBO  
Keep you with me at all times, Mr.  
Monkey.

MOTHER  
*Aaand...?*

KUBO  
And keep father's robe on my back  
at all times.

MOTHER

Yes Kubo. And there's one more thing. Never, EVER, stay out after dark.

She leans across and tickles Kubo with the netsuke.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

(in monkey voice)

*Re-mem-ber?*

KUBO

Yes, Mr. Monkey

MOTHER

Good boy.

They LAUGH together, until his mother's brow suddenly creases and she stops and yawns. It's clear whatever lucidity was there before has gone. Kubo sees this every night, but it never gets easier.

KUBO

Bedtime.

Kubo walks her over to her mat and lays her down. She looks up at him, innocent as a child.

He sits for a moment longer, watching as his mother drifts off to sleep, and then he blows out the candle.

FADE TO BLACK.

A beat, and then:

**(0700 MON) MOTHER'S NIGHTMARE**

INT. KUBO'S CAVE - NIGHT

A SKITTERING sound. Kubo's origami paper starts flying off the cave shelf over Kubo, lying fast asleep.

Kubo blinks his bleary eye. Sits up.

CUT WIDE to reveal the roof of the cave is swimming with origami. A constellation of paper bodies, magically twisting and animating all around him in the air.

He looks over to see his mother on her mat, tossing and MUMBLING in her sleep, clearly in the midst of an intense dream.

Suddenly awake, he runs to his mother.

KUBO  
Mother, wake up! You're dreaming.

MOTHER  
No...

As she wakes almost instantly the paper throughout the cave rains down, unfolded and crumpled, onto the floor.

MOTHER (CONT'D)  
Kubo! Kubo, is that you?

KUBO  
Yes, Mother. I'm here.

This seems to comfort her. A confused look comes across her face.

MOTHER  
Kubo, what happened to your eye?

Kubo just looks at her sadly and she goes back to sleep.

Kubo is left staring at the mess of strewn paper, just as before, and now we understand exactly how it all got there.

**(0800 OBF) OBON FESTIVAL**

EXT. CENTRAL AVENUE - DAY

We see the market square is once again bustling with activity. Everyone wears their finest clothes and the buildings all around have been decorated with colorful Japanese lamps. The Festival is underway. \*

Many of the village women are participating in an elaborate line dance made up of sweeping movements and subtle gestures. They weave and skip past camera, revealing a busy festival scene. \*

Kubo stands watching all of this. He rubs his eye and YAWNS.

KAMEYO (O.S.)  
*Paper boy!* Here! Here! \*

Kubo turns to see that same old woman. She gives a gummy grin and looks suspiciously like she may have washed her face.

KAMEYO (CONT'D)  
C'mon, c'mon. Come sit next to me. \*

Kubo ambles sleepily in her direction and sits next to her. \*

KAMEYO (CONT'D)

What do you think? I got myself all  
spruced up for the big day. \*

Kubo awkwardly grins at her. \*

KAMEYO (CONT'D)

Ahhh... I do so love the festival. \*  
A time to celebrate. Y'know, it's a \*  
shame you never stay past sundown. \*  
There's fireworks and singing and \*  
dancing and feasting of course... \*

She playfully tickles Kubo.

KAMEYO (CONT'D)

But the best part of all... \*

The beggar woman grabs Kubo about the shoulder, drawing him  
in close as she gestures around the square.

KAMEYO (CONT'D)

Do you see those lamps and altars?  
We use those to speak to the loved  
ones that left us behind.

Kubo hears this and his eye widens a little.

KAMEYO (CONT'D)

We listen to their tales and guide  
their safe return to the blissful  
pure land. \*

KUBO

Really? Did you speak to someone? \*

KAMEYO

Yes I did. My husband! His voice  
was as clear and loud as the one  
you use for your stories. \*

(shrugs)

In seventy two years he never had a  
thing to say. Now he's gone, I  
can't shut him up. \*

She LAUGHS fruitily and Kubo's eye widens more as her words  
sink in. In the background, the dance concludes to the CHEERS  
of the spectators.

KAMEYO (CONT'D)

You have someone you'd like to talk  
to, huh?

KUBO  
Very much!

KAMEYO  
Well, what's stopping you? \*

Kubo looks around at all the elaborately ornamented altars.

KUBO  
Don't I need a lamp?

KAMEYO  
Well... \*

She CACKLES conspiratorially into his ear.

KAMEYO (CONT'D)  
I bet you could make a really nice  
one with that paper folding...  
*thing...* you do. \*

Kubo realizes what she's getting at. His eye darts this way and that as his mind fills with the possibilities.

KAMEYO (CONT'D)  
Y'see? Not just a pretty face, huh?

She grins broadly and gives him a friendly nudge.

KAMEYO (CONT'D)  
Now hurry along! Go! There's still  
time before dark! Go! Get out of  
here. \*

Smiling excitedly, Kubo runs away through the crowd, pausing only to wave at the old woman. \*

**(0900 MEA) MEETING ANCESTORS**

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Carrying his bag and lamp, Kubo emerges from a wooded road that opens onto a serene cemetery beside a river. Replete with beautiful plants and flowers, there's nothing macabre about this peaceful place. \*

Dozens of families are gathered among the grave markers, setting up lamps and altars. Nearby, a HOSATO is teaching MARI. \*

HASHI (O.S.)  
It's so great to hear your voice. \*

VILLAGER 2 (O.S.)  
We'll never forget you.

VILLAGER 3 (O.S.)  
It's time to go.

VILLAGER 4  
We missed you so much.

HOSATO  
Place the lamp at the Alter. Ha,  
very good.

MARI  
What do we do next, Daddy?

HOSATO  
Next we pray. We ask her spirit to  
honor us with its light

MARI  
(loudly)  
GRANDMA, WILL YOU PLEASE HONOR...

HOSATO  
(smiling)  
Shhh. Softly, softly!

Kubo finds some space and fashions a rough altar from stones. \*  
He dumps the origami out of his bag, then creates a simple \*  
yet beautiful lamp from an ivory sheet of paper as he watches \*  
the patient dad discuss the ritual with his daughter.

Then, copying the family, he gets on his knees and begins to \*  
pray. He speaks quietly, awkwardly, under his breath.

KUBO  
Hello, father.  
(then)  
I hope you're well. Uh. I mean, I  
know you're dead, but I hope  
everything is... okay...

Kubo thinks about that opening for a moment. He hates  
everything that just came out of his mouth. He starts over,  
raising his arms and gesturing to his baggy robe.

KUBO (CONT'D)  
Look. It's your robe! Mother says  
I'll grow into it.  
(after a moment)  
She says you were a great leader \*  
who died protecting me.  
(MORE)

KUBO (CONT'D)

Saving one of my eyes. Two would've been ideal, but... thanks anyway.

He smiles to indicate he is joking again, and then feels immediately wretched. He decides to get right to the point.

KUBO (CONT'D)

Father, I'm worried about mother. With every day that goes by, she drifts further away. She talks a lot about you, but... but I just don't know. I don't think she remembers what's real anymore. I don't know what's real anymore...

\*

KUBO (CONT'D)

I just wish you were here. So I could... could talk to you... see you... find out what I should do.

Kubo's prayer is interrupted by a gleeful SHOUT.

MARI

Daddy! Daddy! She's here! Grandma is here!

\*

\*

Kubo looks over at the family to see the wick of their lamp suddenly burst into flame.

\*

HOSATO

Now it's time for the final part. We have to help her get back to the spirit world.

MARI

Oh! But she just got here.

\*

HOSATO

Come on.

Kubo stares back at his lamp for a moment. Then he looks back up into the air.

KUBO

*Father? Hellooo?*

He purses his lips. Folds his arms impatiently.

KUBO (CONT'D)

Any time.

\*

The family then brings their lit lantern down to the river, placing it in the water and watching it float out to sea.

\*

\*

Time passes...

Still Kubo's lamp remains steadfastly unlit. The cemetery is practically deserted by now. Behind Kubo in the river, dozens of lit lamps are slowly floating out to sea as the village bell begins RINGING out the fall of night.

Kubo just stands there defiantly. He glares at his altar, patience spent. He grabs his unlit lamp and crumples it up, tossing it angrily to the ground.

KUBO (CONT'D)

*Fine!* I don't need you anyway!

The sun sets behind the mountains. \*

INT. DINING AREA KUBO'S CAVE - EVENING \*

Kubo's Mother's eyes snap open. \*

MOTHER \*

Kubo! \*

EXT. CEMETERY - DUSK \*

The bell stops RINGING, and Kubo has a change of heart. His contorted face softens and he reaches down to scoop up the broken lamp. Feeling vile and foolish he does his best to unfold and smooth out the paper. \*

KUBO

(softly)

I... I'm sorry.

**(1100 MTS) MEET THE SISTERS!**

EXT. CEMETERY - WOODS OUTSIDE KUBO'S VILLAGE \*

Instantly, all along the river, each and every lamp is silently extinguished.

Wisps of smoke curl from the charred wicks, joined by a seeping fog that rolls across the surface of the river from the far bank. This cheerful place has become dark and eerie.

WHISPERED VOICE (O.S.)

*Kuuuuboooooo!*

The voice is eerily melodic. It tingles in the air, seemingly from several directions at once.

WHISPERED VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Kubo!

Kubo looks around, heart racing. He follows the direction of the voice and sees, across the river, a lone woman clad in flowing robes, billowing in the breeze.

She has long black hair and wears a wide-brimmed peasant's hat pulled low so we cannot see her face. In her bone white hand she holds a long wooden pipe. This is a SISTER.

THE SISTERS

*Little boy. What happened to your eye?*

Kubo takes a step backwards, sensing something is very, very wrong here.

The strange woman with the hidden face LAUGHS. A horrible, high-pitched sound, joined by another nightmarish GIGGLE as a second woman emerges from the shadows, her face also obscured by a wide-brimmed hat. This one is the other SISTER. \*

KUBO

Who are you? How do you know my name?

THE SISTERS

*We're your family, Kubo. Your mother's sisters. And we've been looking for you for so long.*

Kubo's eye widens and he takes another step back.

THE SISTERS (CONT'D)

*It is so lovely to meet you, Kubo. Face to face.*

As they say these words, they raise their heads in unison and look up at Kubo to reveal their faces are covered by the blank features and fixed smiles of terrifying "NOH" masks.

THE SISTERS (CONT'D)

*Come, Kubo. Come to your aunties.*

Kubo stands frozen and horrified as they begin gliding like the mist across the river towards him.

THE SISTERS (CONT'D)

*No reason to be afraid, Kubo. We just need your other eye. Your grandfather admires it so.*

Kubo runs.

The sisters GIGGLE as they watch him bolt along the path toward the village, then one of the Sisters leisurely brings her long pipe up to the mouth hole of her mask and takes a deep puff.

The smoke she exhales twists and coalesces into horrible shapes that grow and move of their own accord. They are the DEMONS OF THE PIPE, and they're after Kubo.

Kubo tears up the path leading back to the village, SHOUTING at the top of his lungs.

KUBO  
HELP! HELP! SOMEBODY HELP! HELP!  
LOOK OUT! RUN!

**(1200 SMD) SMOKE DEMONS**

EXT. CENTRAL AVENUE - CONTINUOUS

Kubo staggers through the gate, leaning against it as he finds his breath. He goes to YELL, but his warnings are swallowed up by SHRIEKING EXPLOSIONS of fireworks as the festival ends in noisy celebration.

KUBO  
RUN!

*And then it is too late.*

As Kubo races through the market, the demonic smoke breaks off from its pursuit of him, rolling like a bank of fog into the throng of celebrating villagers.

In a storm of smoke, fire, and terrified SCREAMS, the demons tear through the square, destroying everything in their path. \*

**(1300 MSD) MOTHER SAVES THE DAY**

EXT. MOUNTAIN PATH - CONTINUOUS

Kubo runs for his life up the long path towards his cave. Breath coming in fevered GASPS, he risks a look over his shoulder.

His village is ablaze, consumed in that terrible smoke, tendrils of which are slithering up the hill in his direction.

Kubo stumbles and falls, and before he can scramble back onto his feet he is surrounded by the demons. \*

Through their writhing, ethereal bodies he catches sight of his masked aunts, inexorably gliding up the path toward him.

THE SISTERS

We're here, Kubo. Your family has come for you.

Kubo recoils in horror, but has nowhere left to run.

*And then a hand appears out of nowhere, pulls Kubo's shamisen out of his bag and strikes the strings!*

The notes reverberate, rippling out through the demons like a shock wave.

Kubo turns to see his mother standing over him.

MOTHER

*KUBO!*

KUBO

*MOTHER!*

MOTHER

*KUBO, YOU MUST FIND THE ARMOR! IT'S YOUR ONLY CHANCE! REMEMBER THIS!*

She gives him the shamisen and smacks the beetle crest on the back of his robe, causing two flapping beetle wings to emerge magically from the robe's folds!

The wings pump furiously, lifting Kubo up into the air!

Kubo clutches at his mother, accidentally tearing out a few strands of her hair as he rises up into the sky.

The flapping wings take him higher and higher, away from the village and towards the ocean. All Kubo can do is watch as below, the two masked aunts advance on his mother, one pulling a bladed chain from her robes, the other drawing a menacing sword. \*

Mother narrows her eyes and squares off against them, and there's a strength and power to her that we've never seen before. She pulls her own sword from her robes and raises it defiantly. \*

And then, as if to conceal the horrors from him, Kubo's robe envelopes him, cocooning his body and face. The last thing it covers is his one eye, taking us to --

BLACK.

**(1400 MKY) MEET MONKEY**

EXT. SNOW-COVERED TERRAIN - BLIZZARD

SILENCE, eventually broken by the sound of a rising wind,  
creeping from a WHISPER to a WAIL as we slowly FADE TO:

A MONKEY.

A serious monkey. Staring right at us. Fixed expression. This  
isn't another netsuke charm, but an actual living, breathing  
4-foot tall monkey, and it SHOUTS at him over the wind in a  
female voice...

MONKEY

*KUBO! KUBO! CAN YOU HEAR ME, KUBO?*

Kubo stares at the monkey, blinking. He immediately shuffles  
backward through snow.

MONKEY (CONT'D)

*I SAID, YOUR MOTHER IS GONE! YOUR  
VILLAGE IS DESTROYED! BURNED TO THE  
GROUND!*

Monkey advances slowly.

MONKEY (CONT'D)

*WE LANDED HERE IN THE FARLANDS.  
YOUR ENEMIES AREN'T FAR BEHIND! WE  
MUST SEARCH FOR SHELTER BEFORE YOUR  
GRANDFATHER COMES.*

He backs right into his shamisen. He looks around, dazed and  
disoriented.

As Monkey delivers this rather glum state of the union, Kubo  
happens to look down and realizes he is actually sitting on a  
giant sheet of snow-covered ice.

MONKEY (CONT'D)

*We need to go, now.*

She turns, offering Kubo her back.

MONKEY (CONT'D)

*COME ON. GET UP. LET'S GO.*

Kubo stands for a second, still in shock, then gathers up his  
shamisen and climbs onto Monkey's back.

And as Monkey races through the snow with Kubo on her back,  
we PULL WIDER and WIDER and it becomes clear that shelter  
might not be so easy to find, because all we can see is ice  
and snow for hundreds of miles in every direction.

**(1500 SFS) SHELTER FROM THE STORM**

EXT. GLACIER'S EDGE - DUSK

Monkey and Kubo stand in the snow, staring at something.

MONKEY

Once we're inside, you might be  
tempted to complain about the odor.

CUT TO a giant whale carcass, lying ahead of them on the ice.

MONKEY (CONT'D)

Keep in mind, my sense of smell is  
ten times stronger than yours.

With that, as the sun begins to set behind distant mountains  
of ice, Monkey motions for Kubo to follow her inside.

INT. WHALE CARCASS - NIGHT

Night has long since fallen, and they've made camp inside the  
whale's belly, lit by a shaft of moonlight and a small fire.

Kubo looks less than thrilled as he huddles amidst frozen  
innards. \*

With a knitted brow, Kubo sits and watches Monkey as she  
tends to a large conch shell balanced over a small cooking  
fire. She uses a splinter of bone to stir at a cloudy liquid  
simmering inside. \*

MONKEY

You have questions. I can tell.

Kubo nods his head. He opens his mouth to speak and Monkey  
puts her hand up, interrupting him.

KUBO

Who-

She holds up three fingers.

MONKEY

You get three.

KUBO

I think I have more.

MONKEY

*Three.* But first you're gonna eat. \*

KUBO  
Why only three?

She holds up one finger.

MONKEY  
Okay, that was your first question. \*

KUBO  
What?! I don't understand what's  
happening. Who are you?! \*

MONKEY  
You don't recognize me. \*

Kubo stares. She stops stirring and turns to assume a pose,  
exactly like his netsuke. \*

MONKEY (CONT'D)  
All these years you had to keep me  
in your pack. Now you know why.

KUBO  
But you were a wooden charm!  
(gesturing)  
You were *this* big!

He scowls suspiciously.

KUBO (CONT'D)  
I called that charm *Mr.* Monkey.

MONKEY  
If I were alive at that point, I  
might have found that insulting.  
Look, your mother used the last of  
her magic to save you and bring me  
to life. \*

For a moment, Kubo doesn't have anything to say. He simply  
stares down at the ground with his one eye, glassy in the  
moonlight. Whatever thoughts are running through his head, he  
keeps them in. Whatever emotions might be at work, he buries.

Monkey watches him thoughtfully and then returns to the fire  
and pours some of the mystery stew into a scavenged clam  
shell. She holds it in front of Kubo.

MONKEY (CONT'D)  
Here. Drink.

Kubo stares at the murky liquid.

KUBO  
It smells.

\*

MONKEY  
Everything in here smells. Drink  
it.

\*

KUBO  
I don't want it.

Monkey moves in closer.

MONKEY  
I said drink it.

Kubo stares right back at her.

KUBO  
You're a mean monkey, aren't you?

MONKEY  
Yes. Yes, I am. And that's *three*.  
You're out of questions now, so  
just listen. I'm here to protect  
you, Kubo, and that means you have  
to do as I say. So, if you don't  
eat you'll be weak. If you're weak,  
you'll be slow. If you're slow,  
you'll die.

\*

\*

\*

\*

\*

Kubo seems to accept this. She holds the shell out to Kubo  
again. This time he takes it from her. He sips from the bowl.

\*

\*

KUBO  
It's too hot.

\*

A little annoyed, Monkey takes the conch from Kubo. Blows on  
it pointedly. Hands it back to him.

MONKEY  
*Drink.*

\*

Kubo takes another sip of the soup, SLURPING it loudly,  
provoking a peeved look from Monkey.

He feigns innocence.

KUBO  
Oh, excuse me.

\*

Kubo takes another sip, deliberately SLURPING louder, and  
Monkey full on glares at him. Daggers.

MONKEY

Okay, You better start taking this seriously, Kubo. This is real. This is not a story. Those things, your aunts, they *never* get hungry. They never sleep. They *will* find you and if we're not prepared... they'll kill me and take your other eye.

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

Kubo speaks, but more timidly now.

KUBO

What are we going to do?

Monkey is silent for a second.

MONKEY

We're going to find the armor. It's the only thing that can protect you.

KUBO

So it's real. Really real.

\*

Monkey nods.

Kubo notices a strand of hair from his mother on his robe and picks it off. Monkey crosses over to Kubo and tries to grab it. He instinctively jerks away.

\*  
\*

Monkey holds her hand out.

MONKEY

Don't worry. I'm not going to keep it.

Kubo hands it to her.

KUBO

I pulled that from her head. I didn't mean to.

\*

Monkey nimbly twists and knots the hair into a beautiful woven bracelet.

\*

MONKEY

Your mother was very powerful. She blessed your robes so that when the need was most they would fly you away. She used the last of that power to bring me to life. This bracelet, her hair, it's a memory. Memories are powerful things, Kubo. Never lose it.

\*

She begins tying it around Kubo's wrist and looks right into his eye. \*

She crosses to the other side of the fire as Kubo stares at the woven hair. \*

They sit there, silent silhouettes, shadows flickering off the sides of their strange shelter.

KUBO  
One more question?

Monkey shakes her head, admiring Kubo's guts.

MONKEY  
Last one.

KUBO  
Do you know where it is? The armor?

Monkey pokes at the fire with a splinter of whalebone.

MONKEY  
No. No I don't.

Kubo finally realizes the severity of their situation. The uncertainty on his face betrays his age and vulnerability.

MONKEY (CONT'D)  
Now go to sleep. \*

With a SIGH, Kubo lies down and rolls away from the fire. \*

KUBO  
(softly)  
Good night, Monkey.

Monkey watches him for a moment, her stern face finally softening now that Kubo can't see her. \*

FADE TO BLACK.

**(1600 WHE) WHALE ESCAPE**

INT. WHALE CARCASS - DAWN \*

Kubo's eye blinks open to see Monkey through the first strains of sunlight, filtering in through the blow hole. \*

MONKEY  
Kubo...You were talking in your  
sleep. You were dreaming...calling  
out to your father. \*

(MORE) \*

MONKEY (CONT'D)

And then the paper flew out of your  
bag and folded itself into... him.

\*  
\*

She is pointing at a figure, standing smartly to attention at Kubo's feet. It is LITTLE HANZO, only bigger, fashioned out of several sheets of paper folded together.

Still a bit puzzled, Kubo steps over to inspect the origami.

MONKEY (CONT'D)

He's been standing there for hours.  
Quietly judging us. I'm not even  
sure this counts as origami. I  
could swear scissors were involved.

Kubo reaches out to touch the origami, but Little Hanzo parries his hand, blocking it with his paper sword before marching away somewhat huffily.

\*

KUBO

Ow! Back home in the cave, it was  
my mother's dreams that did this.  
And the paper always unfolded  
itself by morning.

\*

They both look over as Little Hanzo climbs on top of Kubo's bag and strikes a regal pose, pointing his sword in the direction of the blow hole.

MONKEY

What's that about?

Struck by an impulse, Kubo suddenly reaches forward and turns the bag that Little Hanzo is standing on slightly, so that the figure is now pointing his sword in a different direction. Little Hanzo immediately moves back into his previous position, pointing his sword in the direction of the blow hole.

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

Kubo moves the origami again, so he's pointing away from the blow hole. And again, Little Hanzo immediately moves back into his previous position, pointing his sword in the direction of the blow hole.

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

KUBO

What are you doing?

\*  
\*

Little Hanzo gives Kubo the origami equivalent of an exasperated glance, then points his sword at Kubo, and then towards the blow hole again. He then GESTURES impatiently with his sword, as if to say, "Come on already, let's go!"

\*  
\*  
\*

Kubo and Monkey share a glance, realizing what this means.

KUBO (CONT'D)

I guess this is how my father  
answered me.

Monkey takes a breath.

MONKEY

I'm tempted to say that entrusting  
our fate to the guidance of a small  
paper man seems like a bad idea.

(shrugs)

But it's the best bad idea we have.

\*

Their diminutive guide climbs up and out of the blow hole  
first, followed closely by Kubo and Monkey.

\*

\*

**(1700 PMP) PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT**

\*

EXT. FOOTHILLS - DAY

Little Hanzo remains perched on Kubo's shamisen, pointing the  
way beyond the glacier's broken edge. The ground rises and  
rolls through a series of foothills stepping up to a  
mountainous wall of cliffs, upon which snow blazes bright in  
the midday sun.

Kubo looks up at the sound of melodic CHIRPING above him and  
spies a bird, fluttering overhead.

\*

Kubo has never seen anything quite like it and lags behind,  
taking up his shamisen.

As Kubo plucks the strings, a few sheets of paper spring up  
out of his bag, folding themselves into a paper duplicate of  
the live bird, which soars up to greet its twin.

\*

Kubo gives a joyous LAUGH that makes Monkey stop in her  
tracks. She turns, scowling, only to see the boy skipping and  
GIGGLING through the snow as he plays his shamisen. A  
contented child, concerns momentarily forgotten.

She sits down to watch, allowing him this moment of relief.

Exhilarated, Kubo plays faster on his instrument, and more  
paper shoots out of his bag, spiraling up and forming a  
glorious cloud of paper birds in the sky. Startled, the bird  
darts away into the clouds.

Kubo's birds fly and frolic at his command, glittering in the  
sunlight, pirouetting through the air in a dazzling dance of  
paper wings.

Kubo is thrilled, and from her perch across the way, Monkey is also mesmerized.

Kubo falls on his back, CACKLING, facing up into the bright blue sky as his magnificent flock flutters overhead.

And then Monkey's face is looking down on him. Serious, of course, but also a little curious.

MONKEY

You're growing stronger.

Kubo LAUGHS. He feels it.

MONKEY (CONT'D)

You might not want to look quite so pleased about that.

She sits him up, ushering him onto his feet and brushing down his robe.

MONKEY (CONT'D)

We grow stronger. The world grows more dangerous. Life has a way of keeping things balanced.

Kubo reacts to this cynical wisdom by making a face.

KUBO

Monkey, do you ever say anything encouraging?

MONKEY

I encourage you not to die. \*

Monkey licks her hand, smooths down Kubo's hair and walks away. \*

KUBO \*

(Mocking under his breath) \*

I encourage you not to die. \*

As Kubo follows Monkey, something spies on them from behind a nearby rock. Something big and spiky with freakish claws. Its gaze seems to be fixed on Hanzo Origami. \*

Unaware, Kubo is hatching a mischievous idea. As he walks behind Monkey he delicately PLUCKS the strings on his shamisen, and one of his paper birds stealthily breaks away from the flock and dives down from the sky, nipping Monkey playfully on her backside.

Monkey whirls around, searching for the culprit. But the bird has already soared up and into the clouds again.

Monkey gives Kubo a suspicious look. Kubo stares back innocently. Swats his neck as if killing a bug.

KUBO (CONT'D)  
Mosquitos. Annoying.

With no evidence to convict, Monkey turns back around.

But now Kubo notices that, unbidden by him, more birds are swooping down for a second assault on Monkey, and as they dive down they reform into three huge paper mosquitos. They're already circling Monkey, but just as they get close enough to strike, Monkey springs into action. Without turning around, she shoots out an arm and snatches the first mosquito, grabs the second with her foot and launches into an amazing back flip to finish off the third.

She approaches Kubo, smoothing out the crumpled paper.

KUBO (CONT'D)  
Wasn't me. I swear.

She returns the paper to Kubo's bag.

MONKEY  
Paper runs out. As does patience.

KUBO  
I didn't ask them to do that.  
(mutters)  
The second time.

Monkey gives Kubo a skeptical look.

KUBO (CONT'D)  
I didn't. At least, not exactly. I mean, I felt it, but...

MONKEY  
Magic is not meant to be easy. You need to learn control. Concentrate on what you're doing. And always remember...

She leans in real close.

MONKEY (CONT'D)  
*Don't mess with the Monkey.*

She raises her eyebrows by way of punctuation but remains staunchly straight-faced.

A beat, and then she nonchalantly turns and resumes walking.

EXT. CLIFFSIDE - DAY

Fragmented remnants of colossal statues that once guarded the cliffs litter the landscape, dwarfing Monkey and Kubo as they approach, Monkey endlessly lecturing. Enormous heads peek out of snowdrifts. Ancient broken limbs reach among the rocks.

MONKEY

Tread carefully, Kubo. This *isn't* one of your stories.

Kubo doesn't like hearing this. He lags behind, clambering up the broken nose to the eye socket of a wind-worn face. \*

KUBO

How do you know? Maybe it is. And I'm the valiant hero. And you're the mean monkey. \*

Her back to him, Monkey just continues walking.

MONKEY

You may think you're the great hero, but heroes come and go. Any moment, something terrible could come out of nowhere and... \*

She turns her head to confront Kubo and trails off. The huge eye socket is empty and Kubo is nowhere to be seen.

KUBO (O.S.)

*MONKEYYYY!* \*

Hearing Kubo in danger, Monkey gives a YELL of primal fury, and darts across the rocks toward the statue. \*

MONKEY

Kubo! \*

She peers down into the hollow head, catching a glimpse of Kubo, twenty feet below, being dragged down a sheer bank of ice descending into the shadowy bowels of the earth. \*

Monkey doesn't hesitate and jumps down into the darkness after him. \*

**(1800 MEB) MEET BEETLE**

INT. UNDERGROUND TUNNELS - CONTINUOUS

Monkey slides down the incline into a series of ancient caverns carved with the faces of gods long since forgotten.

Spotting Kubo and kidnapper in the distance, she takes off again, a breakneck pursuit through a dank, crumbling labyrinth that hasn't heard footfalls for hundreds of years.

Eventually, Monkey turns a corner and skids to a sudden stop.

INT. BEETLE'S CAMP - CONTINUOUS

Crouching in front of her is the creature. Part giant beetle, part human, shell mimicking the silhouette of samurai armor.

Monkey gives a furious ROAR and rushes toward the creature.

KUBO  
MONKEY! WAIT!

Kubo suddenly steps out of the darkness right in front of her, hands raised, causing her to stop in her tracks.

KUBO (CONT'D)  
He wasn't trying to hurt me. He  
just wanted... Hanzo.

Kubo motions down to the beetle and it becomes clear the creature was not crouching low to fight, but to get a better look at Little Hanzo, there on the ground.

BEETLE  
(muttering to himself)  
Hanzo? Hanzo...

Monkey, still wild-eyed and catching her breath, glares from Kubo to the creature.

MONKEY  
I still think I am going to stab  
him.

They watch as Beetle, utterly transfixed, reaches out a claw to gently touch Hanzo Origami. The figure seems to like him, strolling right on to his arm.

KUBO  
Why must you always assume the  
worst?

MONKEY  
Well, pardon me for misjudging this  
giant, spiky, insect-monster that  
just kidnapped you.

Kubo ignores her. He's watching Beetle intently.

BEETLE

Hanzo! Yes! I *remember* him. I think maybe... he was my master!

KUBO

What? What did you say?

For the first time, Beetle appears to register Kubo and Monkey's presence. He looks up at them, and there's something a little unhinged about his eyes.

BEETLE

We had a crest! A samurai crest!

He suddenly leaps up and enthusiastically digs into the pile of scavenged objects, pulling loose the fabric which he flourishes in front of Kubo and Monkey. It's a large samurai war banner, emblazoned with the familiar beetle emblem.

BEETLE (CONT'D)

Have you seen this crest before?

Wordlessly, Kubo turns to show Beetle the same crest on the back of his robe. Beetle's eyes light up with excitement.

BEETLE (CONT'D)

THIS IS A MIRACLE! YOU HAVE OUR ROBES! YOU'RE WEARING OUR ROBES!  
(suddenly suspicious)  
Why are you wearing our robes?

Before Kubo can answer, Monkey interrupts.

MONKEY

He doesn't have to answer your questions. Anyway, who are *you*?

BEETLE

Many years ago I was cursed,  
trapped in this cursed state.  
Cursed to wander the Farlands.  
Cursed! Or Cur-sed.

As Beetle talks, Kubo casts a curious eye over the scattered objects. Many have the beetle crest on them. He admires a bow and arrow leaning against the wall.

BEETLE (CONT'D)

No comrades. No master. Not even a name or a single memory of the noble warrior I once was.

KUBO

You used to be a *man*?

BEEBLE

Not just any man... a samurai! I mean, I'm pretty certain. Look, I have the stuff.

(trails off)

I mean, I'm either a samurai or a really bad hoarder.

(rallies)

Either way, inside my thorax beats the heart of a warrior!

MONKEY

(still suspicious)

If you have no memory, how can you be certain of anything?

BEEBLE

Because I get... flashes. They come about from objects I find on my travels. Or sometimes it's a sound. Or a smell.

Monkey SNIFFS the air.

MONKEY

(mutters)

You must get a lot of flashes.

Beetle looks sadly at Little Hanzo on his shoulder.

BEEBLE

But the memories, they fade, and all I'm left with is the sense that I was once part of something much *greater*.

Kubo looks up at Beetle sympathetically, and then turns to Monkey with a pleading face.

KUBO

Monkey! Can I tell him?

MONKEY

I really don't think that's a good idea...

RAPID CUTTING between Kubo and Monkey:

KUBO

He has a right...

MONKEY (CONT'D)

Absolutely not!



MONKEY

No it isn't! We can't trust anything you say, because *you* can't trust anything you say! We don't know anything about you!

\*

Kubo plucks a few notes on his shamisen and a paper bird flies in between Monkey and Beetle to get their attention.

KUBO

Monkey, you said it yourself, our quest is a difficult one. A samurai, even a cursed one with no memory that looks like a bug, could be helpful.

BEEBLE

Yes, I am certain I could be helpful! Indispensable!

MONKEY

In what way?!

Snatching up his bow & arrow, Beetle suddenly launches an arrow into the wall.

MONKEY (CONT'D)

Firing an arrow into a wall is hardly what I'd call...

Beetle fires four more arrows rapidly, splitting the first down the middle.

MONKEY (CONT'D)

...Impressive.

BEEBLE

Oh, look at that. Literally the first time I've ever done it.

\*

He drops to his knee in front of Kubo, all earnest.

BEEBLE (CONT'D)

Just tell me of our quest, and I will quickly demonstrate my numerous... "indispensabilities."

KUBO

Well, that's kind of a long story.

BEEBLE

You've got my attention. I promise I won't even blink.

(MORE)

BEEBLE (CONT'D)  
I actually don't even think I can  
blink. Do I have eyelids?

Monkey rolls her eyes and takes a breath, knowing she isn't going to win this one.

MONKEY  
Fine. Walk and talk. Hanzo has  
found a path. \*

She gestures at the little origami guide, who has positioned himself further along the tunnel and is pointing the way with his sword.

INT. UNDERGROUND TUNNELS, DEAD END

As they make their way through the labyrinthine tunnels, we catch up on the end of Kubo's story. Beetle is obviously enjoying what he's hearing. Monkey, less so.

BEEBLE  
So you used to be a toy monkey?!

MONKEY  
Kubo, I really don't see how this  
part is important to the story.

KUBO  
Yes! I kept her in my pocket. She  
was only, like, *this* big...

MONKEY  
Kubo, that's enough.

KUBO  
Tiny. And she was called Mr.  
Monkey.

MONKEY  
(sulky)  
I wasn't a toy, I was a *charm*.

Beetle barks out a LAUGH.

BEEBLE  
Of course you were.

Suddenly, Little Hanzo leaps from Kubo's shoulder, runs ahead to a bend in the tunnel and slips through a crack in the wall.

Beetle breaks through the wall to follow him, but as they round the corner a horrifying monument is revealed: a giant and grotesque relief carved into the rock wall. It's a dead end, but Hanzo continues to point steadfastly ahead. \*

BEEBLE (CONT'D)

Well, that doesn't look good.

Kubo approaches the wall, squinting his eye. Beetle is close behind him, but Monkey holds back.

MONKEY

Don't touch anything!

But Beetle is already running his hand over the rock, and beside him Kubo is prodding his finger into the conspicuous empty eyehole of one of the carved creatures. \*

There's an ominous CLICK.

Beetle and Kubo turn to Monkey, guilt written all over their faces. Beetle points at Kubo. \*

BEEBLE

He did it.

And then the floor falls away beneath them and they plummet into darkness. \*

**(2100 ODO) ODOKURO**

INT. HALL OF BONES - CONTINUOUS

In a confusion of limbs and SCREAMS they hit solid ground.

A beat, and then Kubo and Monkey slowly begin to extricate themselves from a heap on the ground.

Kubo hears a series of GRUNTS behind him. Beetle is lying on his back, rocking back and forth on his carapace like a stranded turtle in a futile effort to get back on his feet.

BEEBLE

Okay...

Monkey SIGHS and walks away, leaving Kubo to offer a helping hand. Beetle waves him away.

BEEBLE (CONT'D)

No, no, no!

He rocks back and forth a few more times. He'd be red in the face if he wasn't already. \*

BEETLE (CONT'D)

Yes.

\*

Kubo reaches over and helps him up.

MONKEY

Kubo, look!

\*

\*

They catch up with Monkey and the three take in their surroundings --

The chamber is vast, with a shadowy vaulted ceiling above and a floor covered in a wall to wall carpet of enormous bleached bones. Tibias, fibulas, ulnas, all piled on top of each other in a tangled heap. Whatever creature they belonged to was huge. In the center of the chamber, glowing balefully under a shaft of light, is a giant disembodied skeletal hand, and on its palm rests a beautiful golden sword.

\*

\*

KUBO

*The Sword Unbreakable!*

Kubo steps forward towards the hand, but Monkey reaches out and holds him back.

\*

\*

MONKEY

It could be a trap.

BEETLE

Allow me.

\*

Kubo backs away as Beetle scuttles toward the hand.

MONKEY

(hisses)

What? It's not a trap if you do it?!

BEETLE

Stealth is my middle name.

\*

MONKEY

You don't even have a *first* name!

BEETLE

Don't worry! I got this!

Reaching the hand he carefully reaches across the bony palm, and with an impressive amount of dexterity manages to grasp the sword's hilt.

\*

He raises the sword triumphantly and turns to Kubo.

BEETLE (CONT'D)

Ha, ha, ha, HA! The mighty Beetle  
is victorious!

\*  
\*

Almost instantly, the fingers *of the hand start to move and close.*

\*  
\*

BEETLE (CONT'D)

AH!

\*

An eerie CLICKING sound echoes through the chamber as the ground beneath Beetle's feet begins to shake. The bones are twisting and jittering of their own accord and rising up.

\*

Monkey and Kubo hop around trying to retain their balance as the bones lurch and dance under them.

\*

Beetle hurries back to his companions, who are staring up over his shoulder into the shadows of the ceiling. Two fires are floating high above them... the burning eyes of a giant skull, peering down as the other bones lock together and begin to form a horrifying skeletal body, many storeys high.

BEETLE (CONT'D)

I don't got this....I don't got  
this...

Fully formed, the Odokuro comes to life with a bloodcurdling SHRIEK, and turns his attention to the three trespassers.

MONKEY

Oh, for crying out loud.

\*

She snatches the sword from Beetle, and rushes forward.

MONKEY (CONT'D)

*I INVOKE THE SWORD UNBREAKABLE!*

Monkey leaps, bringing the sword down across the Odokuro's leg in an impressive slashing movement, but the blade of the "unbreakable" sword *shatters into a thousand pieces.*

Monkey lands stunned, staring at the empty hilt.

MONKEY (CONT'D)

It broke.

\*

BEETLE

So does it just mean the handle,  
or..? I'm a little disappointed  
with the magic sword...

\*  
\*  
\*

MONKEY

It's not the right sword, you  
idiot!

\*

Poking out of Kubo's bag right beside his ear, Little Hanzo points his sword up to the top of the Odokuro's skull.

KUBO

Look!

\*

Kubo points, as the Odokuro SCREAMS and the flames in his eyes explode with fury, fully illuminating his head. For the first time, everyone sees his ghoulish crown: *dozens of swords lodged Excalibur-style in his skull.*

\*

BEETLE

The Sword! It's in his head. Hey!  
I've got a bone to pick with you!

\*

(To Monkey)

You see, because he's made of  
bones.

MONKEY

You're an embarrassment.

\*

Beetle lets loose a stream of arrows, one after the other, but they bounce harmlessly off its bones or just fly straight through the gaps.

\*

BEETLE

Uh. This is problematic.

\*

Odokuro's outstretched hand reaches down and scoops Monkey up into the air.

\*

Beetle unleashes another volley of arrows. They zip past Monkey's head as she is lifted higher.

\*

MONKEY

Enough with the arrows!

\*

Monkey grabs at swords from the Odokuro's skull and smashes them against the hand that is holding her. Each sword shatters on impact.

\*

\*

\*

Odokuro dangles Monkey over his awful maw, SCREAMING in triumph, but before he can swallow her there's another sound. A melodic BIRD SONG, like we heard earlier, and it signals an *entire flock of paper birds*, fluttering out of the shadows and circling Odokuro's head in an angry squall.

\*

Below on the temple floor, Kubo plays his shamisen for all he is worth, maneuvering the origami assault while Beetle watches on in disbelief.

Odokuro stomps its giant feet down, narrowly missing Kubo. \*  
Beetle draws back his bow and challenges the creature. \*

The paper birds dive and swoop and Odokuro SHRIEKS with \*  
frustration, swiping and swatting at them. \*

Odokuro waves his arms, swatting birds out of the air. He  
flails madly, dancing back and forth across the temple floor.

Kubo is in danger of being crushed by Odokuro's stomping \*  
feet, but Beetle throws himself through the air, covering \*  
Kubo as the Odokuro's foot comes down. \*

BEETLE \*

Oh, foot! \*

A beat, and then both Beetle and Kubo realize they're  
hovering a few feet above the floor. They are stunned to see  
a pair of wings BUZZING out from beneath Beetle's shell.

KUBO

You can *fly*?!

BEETLE

Apparently, yes!

Beetle is no less surprised but doesn't waste any time. With  
a quick flex of his new wing muscles, he rockets them further  
up into the air, careening wildly towards the beast. \*

Monkey watches, dumbfounded, as they crash upon the skull  
beside her. \*

Odokuro ROARS in outrage, as Kubo and Beetle pull at the \*  
remaining swords, frantically trying to find the real deal. \*

BEETLE (CONT'D)

Are you sure it isn't the Sword  
Unfindable?

Beetle's hand grabs a hilt that will not budge. He gives it a  
tug, but the blade is stuck tight. \*

BEETLE (CONT'D)

I think I found it!

He pulls at it again. And again. With increasing effort. He \*  
turns over his shoulder and YELLS, his voice cracking. \*

BEETLE (CONT'D)

A HAND HERE!?! ANYONE!?

And suddenly Odokuro's skeletal hand obliges, snatching him up in its bony fingers, leaving Kubo alone upon the creature's skull.

BEETLE (CONT'D)

Ah! That's not what I meant.

Odokuro gleefully squeezes Beetle and Monkey in each hand, giving a victorious HOWL as it lifts them towards its opening mouth.

Kubo reaches for the sword but is thrown into the air by the Odokuro's movements.

MONKEY

Kubo!

As Kubo is flying through the air, an arrow zips by and pins his robe to the wall, saving him from the fall.

Kubo's robe starts to rip and he begins to fall again. Monkey frees herself from the beast's grip and races up the skeleton to save Kubo. Just before she gets to him, the Odokuro's hand grabs her again.

MONKEY (CONT'D)

Kubo!

KUBO

Monkey!

Kubo's robe rips fully and he falls towards the ground far below.

MONKEY

No!

BEETLE

Kubo!

Kubo falls and lands on the Odokuro's skull. He begins smashing every hilt lodged in the skull until he finds the Sword Unbreakable and gives it a hard pull, finally yanking it free.

Odokuro suddenly stops in his tracks, looking confused. Both Monkey and Beetle look up and see Kubo standing victorious, the Sword Unbreakable in his hand.

BEETLE (CONT'D)

Thank goodness that's over.

The Odokuro begins coming apart, bone by bone, as if the sword was the linchpin that was holding it all together!

Kubo's smile of satisfaction quickly fades as he realizes the monster is literally crumbling beneath his feet, and he's a really long way up...

In a rain of broken bones that CRASH to the ground, our heroes topple helplessly down.

\*  
\*  
\*

**(2200 ATS) ARGUMENT ON THE SHORE**

EXT. THE LONG LAKE SHORE - DAY

Beetle, carrying Monkey and Kubo, flies out of the Hall of Bones and crash lands on the beach below.

Beetle lies on his side as Monkey squats behind him, slapping mud and leaves onto his wounded wings as a bandage. Little Hanzo sits on the horned crest of his helmet, swaying every time Beetle winces.

They are on the shore of a vast lake that stretches so far into the distance that it's hard to pick out the horizon from the sky. All around, great barnacle-encrusted driftwood wrecks tell tales of feckless fishermen dashed against the rocks.

BEEBLE

Everything...turning...black...

MONKEY

Then open your eyes.

BEEBLE

Uh oh. I can't feel my wings.

MONKEY

You didn't even know you had them five minutes ago. Stop wriggling. There... is that feeling better?

Beetle squirms under her touch, like she's giving him a massage.

BEEBLE

Yeah, a little to the left. Down just a bit. Right there. That's good.

A surprising thought dawns on him.

BEEBLE (CONT'D)

You're being nice to me.

MONKEY

Shh. Don't tell anyone.

Seeing Beetle is awake, Kubo runs excitedly along the water's edge, waving the Sword Unbreakable above his head and shouting.

KUBO

We did it, Beetle! We got the sword!

Monkey eyes him sidelong as she finishes dressing Beetle's wounds.

MONKEY

Put that down, it's sharp.

Kubo makes a face behind her back and kicks his feet through the loose pebbles at the water's edge.

MONKEY (CONT'D)

Okay. We're done here. Get up.

She slaps Beetle gently on the back and he winces with pain.

MONKEY (CONT'D)

We have a lot of walking to do.

BEETLE

You can't be serious. \*

MONKEY

I'm always serious. \*

Kubo GROANS.

KUBO

Are you two going to fight again?

MONKEY

Of course not! We just need to have a grown-up conversation.

KUBO

You're going to fight again.

BEETLE

Kubo, just go over there and...  
uh... play with something.

Kubo picks up the Sword Unbreakable.

MONKEY

Not that.

He grabs his shamisen instead and stomps away, sitting down upon a rock where he PLUCKS moodily at the strings.

Beetle turns back to Monkey and HISSES quietly.

BEEBLE

Monkey, this is the Long Lake. We can't walk around it! We need to swim across. I can carry Kubo...

Monkey cuts him off.

MONKEY

"Carry Kubo"?! That's your better idea? Look, I appreciate your help, I really do, but when it comes to the boy, I know what's best.

BEEBLE

Is that right?

MONKEY

And what's best is to not be fielding ideas from a talking cockroach.

\*  
\*  
\*

BEEBLE

This coming from the talking monkey.

\*

KUBO (O.S.)

I can still hear you, y'know.

\*

MONKEY

Then play *louder*.

Kubo scowls. His fingers dance across the strings. Unseen by Monkey and Beetle, some of the scattered leaves and twigs begin to wobble and shift and rise off the ground.

\*  
\*

MONKEY (CONT'D)

This conversation is over. Monkeys don't swim.

BEEBLE

(grinning)

Not to worry. Monkey see, monkey do!

Monkey GROWLS, shaking her head.

MONKEY

How long have you been waiting to say that?

BEEBLE (ALT)

Ever since I met you. What were we  
'grown-up conversation'-ing about?

MONKEY

You're ridiculous, you're just  
absolutely ridiculous. Ridiculous!  
Crossing the lake is a ridiculous  
idea. It's not your fault...  
there's no sense left in your head.

\*

\*

BEEBLE

(frowns)

I think I resent that.

(an afterthought)

And I may not know everything...

MONKEY

Anything.

BEEBLE

Anything. But I do know Kubo is  
more capable than you think he is!  
You're being a *tiny* bit  
overprotective here.

\*

MONKEY

I'm being a *lot* overprotective  
here. It's my job to make sure Kubo  
is safe. And *that*...

(points to the lake)

...is not safe. *You*...

(points at Beetle)

... are not safe!

\*

Bigger pieces of debris are shifting now. Hunks of rotten  
driftwood and uprooted bushes. They float and twist behind  
Monkey's back toward Kubo as he continues playing.

MONKEY (CONT'D)

Kubo is just a child!

BEEBLE

And an incredibly gifted one! He  
just saved our lives!

MONKEY

Yes, he is very powerful, but he  
still has much to learn!

Monkey stops. Beetle is staring over her shoulder with his  
mouth open.

MONKEY (CONT'D)

WHAT?

She turns around to see what he's looking at.

Drifting out from the shallows behind the rocks is a huge and magnificent "origami" boat, created entirely out of magically beach combed detritus!

BEEBLE

Fast learner.

He nudges Monkey, whose jaw is also hanging open.

Hanzo Origami eyes the boat up and down, then gives his seal of approval by confidently pointing his sword at the deck.

BEEBLE (CONT'D)

(to Kubo)

Did you *know* you could do that?

Kubo thinks for a beat. Then, he plucks a final note and a massive sail woven from leaves and grass suddenly unfurls, billowing in the morning breeze.

Monkey looks at Kubo. She's not smiling exactly, but there's a hint of pride.

MONKEY

Show off.

One by one our heroes hop aboard the great boat.

And as the sun rises higher in the sky, the boat sails away across the water.

**(2300 KUB) KUBO'S BOAT**

EXT. KUBO'S SAIL BOAT - THE LONG LAKE - AFTERNOON

We can tell our heroes have been sailing for some time now. The boat is a tiny speck on the vast lake.

Beetle and Kubo stand near the side of the boat. Beetle is leaning over Kubo's diminutive shoulders, helping him draw back his bow and take aim.

BEEBLE

Okay now, take a deep breath. Clear your mind... guess I got that part covered.

He throws Kubo a wink. Kubo grins.

BEEBLE (CONT'D)

Now draw back slowly. That's it.  
Now close one eye... guess you've  
got *that* part covered...

Kubo GIGGLES and gives Beetle a mock shove with his elbow.

BEEBLE (CONT'D)

Concentrate on what is directly in  
front of you and let everything  
else fall away... aaand...  
*release!*

ANGLE ON a fish swimming just under the surface of the water  
as it is suddenly speared by one of Beetle's arrows.

BEEBLE (CONT'D)

Perfect shot! Perfect shot!

\*

Monkey knuckles up behind Beetle and sits down, smirking.

MONKEY

Not bad. And what's your plan for  
getting the fish into the boat so  
we can actually eat it?

We see the fish float past camera, then sink into the water.

Beetle looks a little deflated but rallies with his typical  
bravura.

BEEBLE

Well, I said I was teaching him how  
to shoot, not fish. Fishing is, uh,  
tomorrow's lesson.

\*  
\*  
\*

Still smirking, Monkey swipes another arrow out of his hand.

MONKEY

Give me that.

BEEBLE

Woah, grabby Monkey.

\*

Monkey reaches into Kubo's pack pulling out a length of rope  
which she ties to the arrow, grinning slyly and clearly  
enjoying herself.

MONKEY

Now try it.

Beetle takes the arrow off her, then reaches around to help  
Kubo draw back the bow.

BEEBLE

Okay, now pull back and...

Zip! Bullseye! Another fish harpooned. Kubo and Beetle both let out a CHEER.

BEEBLE (CONT'D)

(to Monkey)

The rope was a pretty good idea!

The rope on the arrow tightens and Beetle yanks the fish into the boat.

MONKEY

And you're not an awful shot.

Kubo eyes the two of them, smirking.

KUBO

Okay, now you two are being weird.

EXT. BOAT DECK-MINUTES LATER

Beetle and Kubo drop their haul of fish onto the deck. Beetle starts looking around, like he's trying to find something.

BEEBLE

We're gonna need something to cut  
this wi--

There's a SWISH of air and the fish is transformed into perfectly cut sashimi.

Beetle and Kubo stare at Monkey. She shrugs.

MONKEY

Sword Unbreakable.

They all sit down together. It's a nice, quiet, gentle moment. Our three heroes, eating under the sun. Kubo sits right between Beetle and Monkey, but he isn't really eating.

Beetle, on the other hand, is stuffing his face. Hanzo Origami stands on his lap, using his tiny paper sword to lance chunks of fish from a makeshift plate and toss them up into Beetle's open mouth. \*

Monkey watches sourly.

MONKEY (CONT'D)

Must you play with your food?

She grimaces as Beetle replies with a full mouth.

BEETLE

Yes.

He notices Kubo looking at them with an odd look on his face.

BEETLE (CONT'D)

What's the matter, Kubo? You act like you've never had a meal sitting between a monkey and a beetle before.

KUBO

I've never had a meal sitting between *anyone* before.

Monkey's face softens.

MONKEY

Come on. Eat. You need energy. And this is much better than whale soup.

\*

Kubo smiles. Takes a bite of food. Beetle chews thoughtfully as he stares at Kubo now, clearly thinking about his comment.

BEETLE

Kubo, question: before you started on your heroic quest, what were you like?

\*

KUBO

Well, I looked after my mother, mostly. And I told stories. About mighty warriors seeking revenge, with battles and monsters and magic. I was pretty good at telling them. Not so good at ending them.

\*

\*

There's silence for a moment and Kubo seems lost in recollection.

KUBO (CONT'D)

Sometimes I would tell my mother stories about little things. Like skimming rocks across the river. Or catching fireflies in the mulberry fields.

\*

Both Monkey and Beetle have stopped eating and listen intently as Kubo goes on, his voice quieter.

KUBO (CONT'D)

And when I told those stories I could see her eyes were mostly clear. I could tell she saw me, really saw *me*. And I could see her too. Her *real* self. Her spirit. Trying to find its way out. It was beautiful.

\*

Monkey & Beetle look at each other, not quite sure how to respond to this. Finally, it is Beetle who offers...

BEEBLE

You know something, Kubo? Back when you just told stories...Before you went on this great adventure, you were still *very much* a hero.

\*  
\*  
\*

Kubo looks up at Beetle, liking the sound of that. Monkey does too. She gives Beetle an approving nod.

They go back to eating. Sitting a bit closer together now. We hold on the moment, savoring it, until...

...it's interrupted by the distant sound of THUNDER.

Monkey turns sharply and leaps onto the mast. She clambers to the top where she sits like a silent sentinel.

Mountainous thunderclouds roll across the distant horizon; a black smudge beneath a vast fiery sky. A storm is coming and the sun is sinking into the ocean.

\*

MONKEY

We're going to have to head for shore. Find a hiding place. And...

\*

Monkey has now switched focus to the bow of the ship.

\*

Monkey drops down to the deck as Kubo and Beetle turn to see Hanzo Origami standing on the very end of the ship pointing into the dark waters.

\*

Kubo and Beetle walk towards Hanzo.

\*

KUBO

The second piece of armor!

\*

MONKEY

The breastplate - it's down there?

BEEBLE

Okay, I got it.

\*

\*

Immediately, Beetle turns, about to leap into the ocean.

KUBO  
Beetle, wait!

BEETLE  
Don't worry, beetles can hold their  
breath underwater for a very long  
time.

MONKEY  
What?! Since when? \*

BEETLE  
It's a well known fact, Monkey. \*

MONKEY  
You don't remember anything at all,  
but beetles swimming... *that's* what  
sticks in there? \*

KUBO  
No, Beetle. My mother told me a  
story about the Long Lake. There's  
something under the water. \*

BEETLE  
Oh, yeah? What kind of something? \*

KUBO  
She said there was a Garden of  
Eyes. Eyes that stare into you.  
Into your soul. They show you  
secrets, things to keep you down  
there with them... *forever!*

Beetle and Monkey stare at him a moment. Beetle resumes his  
swagger, a little hesitantly.

BEETLE  
Okay. Well, I won't look directly  
into anyone's eyes. Even if I'm  
being incredibly sincere.

Before he leaps in, he looks at Monkey and winks.

BEETLE (CONT'D)  
You're gonna miss me, Monkey. \*

And then he's gone, disappearing under the waves with a  
SPLASH. \*

MONKEY  
 (quietly)  
 Be careful.

**(2350 HSU) HUNTERS SPLIT UP**

EXT. SNOW-COVERED TERRAIN - DUSK

A tiny fragment of cloth flutters in the wind, obscured by a squall of snow. We ANGLE DOWN to follow its erratic path, revealing where we are --

\*  
 \*

It's the same spot where Kubo and Monkey first crash-landed.

The scrap of cloth is abruptly speared by a metal spike attached to a long chain. At the other end of it are the sisters, drifting through the blizzard.

A Sister winds in the scrap of Kubo's robe and nods.

SISTER 1  
 He's searching for the armor. Just like his insolent father.

\*

SISTER 2  
 Yes, sister. Then we must ensure he does not find what remains.

They nod to each other and turn away, lifting off into the shadows in opposite directions.

**(2400 ABB) ABOVE/BELOW**

EXT. KUBO'S SAIL BOAT - THE LONG LAKE - NIGHT

Rain is pouring down now, building into a full blown storm.

Kubo stares down at the water while Monkey stares up at the moon, barely visible behind the RUMBLING clouds. Both are clearly concerned.

KUBO  
 (shouting)  
 MONKEY, I THINK HE'S IN TROUBLE. WE SHOULD HELP HIM.

\*  
 \*

Monkey stares upwards as lightning CRACKLES far above them.

MONKEY  
 KUBO, YOUR AUNTS ARE STILL OUT THERE. I'M SORRY, BUT WE HAVE TO HEAD FOR SHORE.

\*

There's a SPLASH of water behind her, and when she turns around Kubo has vanished.

MONKEY (CONT'D)

Kubo!

Monkey grabs the Sword Unbreakable, then she too moves to dive off the boat.

As she jumps something snags her ankle and yanks her violently back across the deck. Her leg is ensnared in a chain, and a flash of lightning reveals the grim silhouette of a masked Sister, holding the other end of it as she floats above the boat.

The Sister stares down at Monkey, her WHISPERS inexplicably audible over the sounds of the storm.

SISTER

Look at this. I come fishing and all I reel in is a *stinking ape*.

She glides closer.

SISTER (CONT'D)

How pathetic that *this* filthy creature is all that's left of my sister's magic.

MONKEY

This filthy creature will *tear you apart!*

She suddenly springs forward, attacking with the Sword Unbreakable.

UNDERWATER

Kubo swims through columns of kelp and schools of flitting fish. They scatter as lightning FLASHES far above.

An unnatural light, glowing between the inky strands, beckons Kubo deeper.

He pushes his way through the kelp and there, suspended in the sea, is the second piece of armor! A golden, shimmering breastplate, unmoved by the current; a white hot beacon in the black abyss.

Kubo swims faster, reaching out for the breastplate. He then slides his body into it, the armor magically shrinking to fit him.

He turns to swim back to the surface, but as he does, a second, more sinister glow glints off the breastplate.

It's a giant, luminous eye atop a serpentine stalk that undulates with a thousand legs.

Before he can stop himself, Kubo is staring directly into it. His eye widens. His limbs fall limp by his side. He is transfixed.

The sea creature's body slithers closer and its dreadful arms open to embrace him.

#### WATER'S SURFACE

The storm RAGES. As does the battle on the boat between Monkey and the Sister. Lightning and THUNDER tear apart the sky as Monkey dodges blow after blow of The Sister's terrible chain.

Beneath their feet the boat's deck is beginning to crack and unfold, the magic binding it together starting to fade.

#### MONKEY

Kubo!

The Sister's chain flies out and wraps around Monkey. The Sister reels her in.

#### SISTER

I have crushed creatures who could fit this world on their fingernail. This victory brings me no honor.

As the Sister moves to strike, Monkey kicks her and frees herself from the chain.

#### MONKEY

Imagine how you're going to feel when you lose.

Monkey "parkours" herself onto the mast, flipping over the Sister's head and landing right beside the Sword Unbreakable.

#### SISTER

I felt loss only once.

Monkey grabs the Sword and immediately launches into a frenzied assault of her own.

#### SISTER (CONT'D)

Eleven years ago, I lost my sister.

The Sister is now the one dodging the blows, desperately trying to regain the offensive.

SISTER (CONT'D)

She fell in love with a fool and betrayed our father.

They remain locked in combat, the boat's slow disintegration forcing them to become increasingly acrobatic.

SISTER (CONT'D)

She was an ungrateful coward!

Monkey moves to strike a death blow, but the Sister suddenly vanishes into the darkness of the torrential rain.

Monkey turns on the spot, surrounded by echoing GIGGLES, as lightning flashes reveal strobing glimpses of the Sister through the whipping sails.

MONKEY

Who's the coward now?

The Sister's familiar porcelain mask slowly rises into frame directly behind Monkey...

The Sister lunges at her with a ROAR. Monkey pivots and raises her sword but as she parries one piece of the broken chain, the other coils around her body and drives her into the deck.

Beetle emerges from the water, triumphantly holding an arrow above his head. It's the one with the fish impaled upon it.

BEEBLE

I got it! I got it.

Monkey and the Sister look up as Beetle clambers onto the deck, proudly wielding his skewered fish.

MONKEY

Beetle! What happened? Where's Kubo?

BEEBLE

Ummm....

The Sister takes advantage of Monkey's distraction and attacks. The sword is flung from Monkey's hand and lodges in the side of the boat near Beetle with a TWANG.

Beetle frowns, clearly confused. The Sister has turned her attention to him, gliding across the deck. He casts aside the arrow and pulls free the Sword Unbreakable, squaring his shoulders and ready to fight.

The Sister attacks Beetle and disarms him before she is lassoed by her own chain with Monkey wielding the other end. Monkey furiously whips the Sister through the air, hitting her against the mast.

MONKEY

Get back down there! He's in trouble!

BEETLE

I got it.

Beetle takes one last, deep breath, and dives off the boat back into the water.

UNDERWATER

The Ningen drags Kubo down deeper and deeper into the water, its eerie light illuminating Kubo's face while indecipherable WHISPERS chatter through the gloom. As they descend, the light reveals a massive form beneath them; a giant mouth, rimmed with thousands of razor sharp teeth, surrounded by dozens more of those staring eyes.

WHISH! An arrow punctures the glowing eye, and the lake is filled with SCREAMS as Beetle appears through the water. He follows up with a volley of arrows, spearing one eyeball after another.

Kubo is suddenly released from the Sea Creature's grasp, and blinks himself awake, but he's out of air and fading fast. With a last exhalation of bubbles, his eye rolls back in his head.

Beetle sees this and swims towards Kubo.

EXT. KUBO'S SAIL BOAT - THE LONG LAKE - RAGING STORM

The boat is in shambles now, torn into little more than stepping stones for Monkey and the Sister as they fight.

SISTER

It never fails to amaze me, how the creatures down here fight so hard, just to die another day.

MONKEY

Down here, there are days worth  
fighting for.

SISTER

*There is nothing down here worth  
anything!*

Monkey sees the Sword Unbreakable at the other end of the boat and runs for it. Just as she reaches it, the Sister's chain ensnares her. She continues to crawl towards the sword and a thin trickle of blood begins to stain the white of her fur.

SISTER (CONT'D)

It's pathetic what happened to my sister. I looked up to her. She was so strong. Love made her weak.

MONKEY

No. It made me *stronger*.

Monkey takes advantage, and with a savage burst of strength she springs into the air, and *raises the Sword Unbreakable for its killing blow...*

UNDERWATER

Beetle is just a few feet from the surface, dragging the unconscious Kubo when he sees the Sister's cracked mask sink down past him, disappearing into the darkness of the water.

WATER'S SURFACE

Beetle's head breaks the surface, and he looks around to see the scattered and fragmented remains of Kubo's boat.

MONKEY (O.S.)

*OVER HERE!*

Monkey is crouched on a floating chunk of boat, no more than a few feet wide, waving her arms to get Beetle's attention.

Beetle drags Kubo through the water over to Monkey and hauls his limp body up onto the wreckage of the boat.

Monkey shakes him by the shoulders but he doesn't stir.

BEEBLE

The eyes. It was the eyes! They had him in a trance.

MONKEY

No, no, No! Come on, come on, Kubo!  
Wake up! Please wake up! Please,  
please, wake up. It's gonna be  
alright. It's gonna be alright. I'm  
here. I'm right here.

Then, slowly but steadily, Beetle and Monkey notice the  
pieces of the boat are beginning to reassemble around them.  
Realizing what this means, they both look down at Kubo again.

He COUGHS weakly, his eye closed, and mutters as if caught in  
a dream.

KUBO

I saw...

BEETLE

*What? What did you see?*

Kubo opens his eye and looks directly up at Monkey.

KUBO

I saw...*Mother.*

MONKEY

My son.

Monkey just reaches down and pulls Kubo up into an enormous,  
tearful hug.

Beetle watches this embrace with an almost comical level of  
astonishment as the boat continues to fold back together, and  
as that magnificent sail unfurls, once again...

DISSOLVE TO:

**(2500 SYS) MOTHER & HANZO'S STORY**

EXT. THE LONG LAKE SHORE - NIGHT

The storm has finally come to an end as Kubo's boat calmly  
reaches the shore of the Long Lake.

BEETLE (O.S.)

So you must look more like your dad  
then?

INT. CAVE THAT REMINDS US OF HOME - NIGHT

Kubo, and Beetle sit around a campfire, their attention is fixed on Monkey as she fusses around the cave, trying to avoid eye contact.

After a while the weight of their collective gaze provokes a response. \*

MONKEY

You're staring. Let me guess. You have questions. \*

Monkey SIGHS and stops what she's doing. Kubo and Beetle nod their heads in unison. \*

KUBO

Why- \*

BEEBLE

I'll start. First question, if I'm Beetle, and you're Monkey, why isn't he called "Boy"? \*

MONKEY

Oh boy. Questions can wait. We need sleep.

Monkey spots Kubo's eye on her and for a moment she holds his gaze. She smiles, but it is tinged with sadness, as though she would like to explain further but can't find the words.

KUBO

Tell us your story. Then we can sleep. Please?

Hearing this last word, Monkey hesitates. She smiles and relents, shaking her head in defeat as she knuckles closer. \*

MONKEY

Okay. Perhaps you can help me...

She takes Kubo's shamisen from beside his bag and slides it across the ground toward him. He picks it up, and plucks a couple of notes.

MONKEY (CONT'D) \*

The night I met your father...

She hesitates.

KUBO

Mother?

Monkey takes a deep, solemn BREATH.

MONKEY

My sisters and I went to the Temple  
of Bones to kill Hanzo. \*

A moment of stunned silence. Kubo is still staring, in shock, \*  
bachi pick poised upon the shamisen strings. Monkey raises \*  
her eyebrows at him and clears her throat. \*

KUBO

Oh. Right.

He begins plucking the shamisen strings again, and a delicate  
tune begins to play.

Immediately all around the cave, *pebbles and twigs and fish  
bones and stalactites all begin to tremble and move.* Just  
like when the sail boat formed, they dance and weave through  
the air to illustrate her story, becoming a kind of makeshift  
planetarium depicting the night sky.

MONKEY

At the bidding of the Moon King, my \*  
sisters and I had come down from  
the night sky and killed many noble  
warriors. Your grandfather told us  
that any man who found the magical  
armor would grow too powerful and  
be a threat to the heavens.  
That night I arrived at the Temple  
before my sisters. And there he  
was. The mighty Hanzo.

The objects of the cave form an elaborate tableau of Hanzo  
first meeting Mother in the Temple of Bones.

MONKEY (CONT'D)

"You have offended my father," I  
told him. "Now you must die."

BEETLE

Yeah, that's so you.

Kubo nudges him with his elbow.

KUBO

Beetle! Shhh!

The tableau Hanzo faces Mother, sword drawn. She falls upon  
him with her own sword, robe and hair writhing about her.

MONKEY

We fought. Hanzo was strong. But  
then he stopped. He looked into my  
eyes and uttered four simple words.  
These words changed everything.

\*  
\*

A breathless beat.

BEETLE

"I love you... *Monkey?*"

\*

MONKEY

"*You are my quest,*" he whispered. I  
had seen the wonders of the  
universe, but the warmth of his  
gaze as I looked into his eyes...  
*That* I had never known. It was his  
*humanity* I saw. And it was more  
powerful than anything in my cold  
realm!

\*  
\*

Hanzo and Mother dance, holding each other closely.

MONKEY (CONT'D)

In recognizing his compassion I  
recognized my own. I spared his  
life. He gave me mine.

Kubo stares at the new tableau that has formed: Mother &  
Hanzo holding baby Kubo in their arms.

MONKEY (CONT'D)

And then he gave me *you*.

\*

Meanwhile, baby Kubo smiles happily, blinking both his bright  
eyes. Whatever happened to his eye, hasn't gone down yet.

MONKEY (CONT'D)

But your Grandfather found us.

The Origami family falls lifeless into Monkey's hand.

\*

MONKEY (CONT'D)

His rage at my betrayal shook the  
heavens.

\*  
\*

And then the floating debris suddenly stops in place, rolling  
gently in the air a beat before unraveling and falling  
lifeless to the cave floor. Kubo has stopped playing the  
shamisen.

\*  
\*  
\*

MONKEY (CONT'D)

Your father and his army gave their  
lives, allowing me to escape with  
you in my arms.

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

Kubo looks at the shredded paper in front of him.

\*

KUBO

Why does Grandfather hate me?

Monkey strokes her hand through his hair.

MONKEY

Oh, Kubo. He doesn't hate you. He  
wants to make you just like him.  
Blind to humanity, as I once was.  
Only then can you take your place  
beside him as part of his family...  
cold and hard and "perfect".

\*

Kubo closes his eye tight.

KUBO

I'll never be like him! Never!

\*

MONKEY

I know.

They sit in silence and, after a moment, Monkey realizes he  
has fallen asleep in the safety of her arms.

She rises and carries him over to a corner where she uses his  
robes to tenderly tuck him in.

MONKEY (CONT'D)

He's exhausted.

BEETLE

Me too.

MONKEY

I'm not tucking you in.

Beetle smiles as Monkey pads back over to the fire. He  
notices the blood staining her fur and her pained expression  
as she sits.

BEETLE

You're hurt.

He reaches out to her.

MONKEY

Just a scratch.

She slaps his hand away, but there's no malice in it.

BEEBLE

(gently)

Monkey? Why didn't you tell him sooner... who you really are?

MONKEY

The magic that keeps me here... it's fading. Soon I'll be gone, and then Kubo will be alone again.

BEEBLE

Not alone. He is the son of Hanzo. I will do everything I can to keep him from harm.

Monkey appreciates this.

MONKEY

Thank you, Beetle. To know Kubo has someone to watch over him when I'm gone. That would be a fine way to end my story.

Beetle considers this.

BEEBLE

Your story will never end. \*

Monkey is surprised and a little moved by his sentiment. He looks over at Kubo as he continues. \*

BEEBLE (CONT'D)

It will be told by him. And by the people he shares it with. And by the people they share it with. And by the people they share it with. And by the people they share it with...

It's starting to get a little awkward.

MONKEY

Beetle...

BEEBLE

The point is, your story will live on. In him. \*

And Monkey really likes the sound of *that*. She smiles. \*

Kubo lies in the corner of the cave on his side, sleeping soundly.

BLACK

Kubo's eye blinks open.

**(2600 KUD) KUBO'S DREAM**

EXT. TWISTED RIVER - CONTINUOUS

Kubo is lying in long grass beside a river similar to the one at the cemetery near his home. Somewhere close by, the plucked notes of a shamisen are playing a BEAUTIFUL SONG.

Kubo sits up and looks around and sees a figure next to him.

It appears to be a sweet old man with a smile on his face. He plays a shamisen.

OLD MAN

Hello, my young friend. Why don't you join in my song?

KUBO

But how did you..? You're...

OLD MAN

Even blinder than you?

The old man smiles to let Kubo know he is being light-hearted. Never one to back down, Kubo adds...

KUBO

Twice as much. To be precise.

OLD MAN

Which means I see double the truth.

KUBO

This is all a dream.

(wary)

Is this a good dream or a bad one?

OLD MAN

See for yourself.

The man gestures across the river, which has suddenly expanded into a giant moat, beyond which a majestic stone fortress rises out of the mist.

KUBO

My father's fortress.

OLD MAN

Yes.

\*

The tableau continues to shift before Kubo's eye, dissolving into rows of SAMURAI wearing the beetle crest on their armor, standing frozen like statues. They are guarding a dazzling golden helmet, floating in the air.

KUBO

The last piece of armor! It's here?

OLD MAN

Follow the setting sun and you'll find it. In the place that might have been your home. Claim your birthright, Kubo! Give this story... a happy ending!

And with that, the old man plucks a single VERY LOUD NOTE --

INT. CAVE THAT REMINDS US OF HOME - DAWN

Kubo sits up, wearing a look of epiphany on his face. He turns to look at his companions.

He rushes over to shake Monkey awake. Then a groggy Beetle.

KUBO

Mother! Beetle! Wake up!

\*

MONKEY

I'm up. I'm up.

BEETLE

(groaning)  
I'm down.

MONKEY

(to Beetle)  
Ugh. Get off.

Beetle stretches, a pained expression on his face.

BEETLE

I think I slept on something...

He reaches down and pulls out the sheathed Sword.

BEETLE (CONT'D)

"Sword Uncomfortable".

KUBO

The Helmet. I know where it is. I saw it in a dream, Beetle!

BEEBLE

A dream? Well that doesn't mean anything, in particular. I dreamt I fought a giant skeleton with swords in its head.

MONKEY

That really happened.

BEEBLE

Oh. Yeah.

KUBO

Beetle, Come on! This way!

Kubo picks up Little Hanzo and pops him into his bag, fastening the flap over the top as he slings it over his shoulder.

Kubo motions to the others. Beetle and Monkey exchange curious glances and follow him.

**(2700 ETF) ENTER THE FORTRESS**

EXT. THE FARLANDS - SUNRISE

An epic panoramic landscape. The waking sun breaks through boundless banks of cloud, and paints the landscape beneath a blazing red. Dwarfed by the immensity of this vista are our heroes, but their shadows grow and multiply out from the horizon like an infinite family of paper dolls.

EXT. MOUNTAIN PASS - THE FARLANDS - LATE AFTERNOON

Our heroes hike a trail through the mountains. As they traverse a particularly steep bluff, Beetle gamely lifts Kubo up by his collar and plonks him onto his shoulder.

As they near the top of the mountain ridge they play a cheerful game, spirits high.

KUBO

I spy with my one eye, something beginning with... "S."

\*

\*

BEEBLE

"Snow."

KUBO

No.

BEEBLE  
"Snowflake."

KUBO  
No.

BEEBLE  
Okay... "Snow-covered trees."

MONKEY  
Nothing to do with snow.

BEEBLE  
(looks at Monkey)  
How about "serious?"

MONKEY  
(mutters)  
"Stupid."

Kubo frowns. From his perch on top of Beetle he hears a sound. Soft, indistinct, but strangely familiar.

BEEBLE  
Okay, I got it. "Snow."

MONKEY  
He said it wasn't snow.

Kubo looks up into the sky.

KUBO  
It's a song.

BEEBLE  
Well, that's not fair! How do you see a song?

Kubo leans over and gently tilts Beetle's head.

KUBO  
You look.

Above them a hundred-strong flock of birds glide beneath the canopy of cloud. They look like herons but glow with a magical blue light and sing a symphonic version of the song from Kubo's own dream.

MONKEY  
Golden Heron. It's believed they hold the souls of the departed, carrying them over to wherever they may need to go.

BEEBLE

What are they singing?

KUBO

It's *beautiful*. \*

MONKEY

Many say the song's about what happens when we die. How we don't just... disappear.

BEEBLE

We don't? So what happens to us?

MONKEY

Like Kubo's paper, we shift. We transform. So we may continue our story to another place. The end of one story is merely the beginning of another... \*

And at that they crest the top of the ridge to see the heron flying over a pair of monumental stone faces, dozens of feet high, carved into the likenesses of Hanzo and Mother. Cracked and forlorn, they have fallen in against one another, foreheads touching to create a crumbling arch.

A bridge painted with the beetle crest runs between them, leading to the dark ruins of a massive island fortress. We saw this once-majestic place before, in Kubo's dream. Only now it lists into the water, walls and rooftop shattered and overgrown with wild bamboo. A broken home. \*

**(2800 MEM) MEMORIES**

INT. ENTRY HALLWAY BEEBLE FORTRESS - DUSK

Torn banners displaying the beetle crest flap in the evening wind as the trio moves through the ruins. \*

BEEBLE

I remember this place. \*

It's clear this place was once splendid, filled with weapons and armor and beautiful works of art. Now all that remains is covered over in dust and encroaching weeds and bamboo. \*

INT. STUDY BEEBLE FORTRESS - CONTINUOUS

Kubo slides open a door into a room overflowing with papers, scrolls, and maps.

There are drawings of Ningen and Odokuro, even sketches of the armor itself. It seems this place was entirely dedicated to Hanzo's search for the armor. \*

KUBO

This was where my father prepared for his quest. \*

Our heroes walk through it, gazing around in wonder at the various memories of their journey. Monkey examines up a piece of paper with an image of the Helmet on it. \*

Kubo spies a stand of intricately printed screens in front of a doorway across the room. Upon one of them is an illustration of an amazing golden helmet, just as in Kubo's dream! The sweeping lines of the helm curve around an elegant war mask that mimics the facial features of Hanzo. \*

Kubo excitedly pushes through the screens. \*

**(2900 UND) UNITED/DIVIDED**

INT. COURTYARD BEETLE FORTRESS - NIGHT \*

Moonlight seeps through a tangle of high bamboo growing out of the ragged remains of a once grand courtyard. Kubo runs out across a floor strewn by the broken remnants of hundreds of pieces of ornate samurai armor. \*

BEETLE \*

There's something I don't understand...Why would the helmet be here? \*

MONKEY \*

Kubo! \*

Monkey and Beetle are right behind him, but already smoke is seeping amongst the shattered armor, thin tendrils snaking up beneath breastplates, gauntlets, and greaves. \*

Fingers of smoke slither up around our heroes, constricting and hoisting them into the air. Beetle's bow falls from his hand and CLATTERS to the ground. \*

A familiar LAUGH echoes through the courtyard. \*

The other Sister, stark and ominous against the full moon, floats down in front of her captives, smoking pipe in hand. \*

MONKEY (CONT'D) \*

Release us! \*

She floats closer. \*

SISTER

Oh, Sister. I remember how we  
looked up to you. Of all of us, you  
shone the brightest. Such a waste.  
All we ever wished was to be a  
family... in our home among the  
stars. \*

MONKEY

I think we have very different  
definitions of family. \*

The Sister reaches out to Kubo. \*

BEETLE

Don't you touch him, you witch! \*

The Sister turns her horrible NOH mask to face him. \*

SISTER

And then there's you. The thieving  
insect who stole my sister's soul. \*

MONKEY

What? \*

Noticing the confusion in Beetle's and Monkey's eyes, the  
Sister throws back her head and GIGGLES again. \*

SISTER

Oh, this is precious! You've been  
together all this time and you  
haven't even realized? \*

A beat of stunned silence. \*

A puff of smoke drifts from the Sister's pipe across the  
ground to Hanzo Origami, and lifts him into the air. She  
speaks directly to Beetle as she motions to Monkey. \*

SISTER (CONT'D)

You took her from us. It was only  
fitting we took something from you!  
How swiftly those memories spilled  
from your head. Wiping out all  
recollection of your *obscene union*,  
*HANZO*. \*

The smoke turns Little Hanzo in the air. Folding. Reforming.  
Until the paper samurai has become an exact replica of Beetle  
himself. \*



The Sister's assault is relentless, and Monkey's wound is hampering her defense. Slowly but surely the Sister is gaining the upper hand.

She rains down blow after blow, forcing the sword from Monkey's hand, LAUGHING as she gains the advantage.

Nearby, Kubo begins to come to, groggy and disoriented. He suddenly CRIES out...

KUBO

Mother!

Monkey sees Kubo and crawls towards him.

And then, as the Sister floats into the air preparing to deliver a fatal blow, a rusted sword spins at her, knocking her to the ground.

The projectile came from Beetle, and he grabs more swords from the pile of armor around him.

Beetle runs to where Kubo is comforting Monkey.

KUBO (CONT'D)

Shhh...it's okay. I'm here.

Kubo looks up to Beetle.

KUBO (CONT'D)

Father!

BEETLE

My son.

MONKEY

(weakly)

Seems I'm married to a bug.

She hesitates as she looks him up and down.

BEETLE

Yeah. A samurai bug.

She smiles grimly, holding onto Beetle's arm.

BEETLE (CONT'D)

You are my quest. You always have been.

MONKEY

Hanzo. Keep him safe. No matter what.

BEEBLE

I promise I will.

Suddenly, Beetle YELLS in agony as the Sister appears behind him and plunges her blade deep into his back.

MONKEY

NO!

Beetle slumps down beside Monkey, who looks up, dazed and horrified, as the Sister stands over them.

She raises her blade above Monkey's head.

Monkey looks over to Kubo.

MONKEY (CONT'D)

Fly home, Kubo.

Time seems to slow down. The only sound we hear is the quiet THUMPING of Monkey's weakened heartbeat.

*THUMP... THUMP...*

*Kubo races towards the shamisen, reaching out his hands.*

*THUMP... THUMP...*

*The Sister's sword carves through the air toward Monkey's neck.*

*THUMP... THUMP...*

Kubo grabs the shamisen, raking his bachi across the strings so violently that two of them actually snap in half, and the REVERBERATING SOUND of the shamisen swallows up everything with a shockwave of blinding white light.

**(3000 KUC) KUBO CRIES**

INT. COURTYARD BEETLE FORTRESS - NIGHT

DISSOLVE THROUGH to find Kubo on hands and knees, blinking his eye as he tries to get his bearings.

Around him are pieces of the Sister's broken mask. In front of him lies the netsuke statue. It is broken in half. Beetle's broken bow lies next to him.

Out of silence we gradually become aware of the slight but steady PLUCKING of a string. Dull. Empty.

Kubo kneels, cradling the shamisen with the two broken strings in his lap as a steady stream of teardrops fall from his face and repeatedly strike the one remaining string.

Behind him, with the sound of each tear, shredded scraps of paper surge up into a tiny blizzard. Within it a pathetic, flimsy version of Little Hanzo begins to take shape.

Sensing something, Kubo turns to see the figure there. A pitiful, torn version of its former self.

But Hanzo Origami is not giving up. Using all of his strength, he drags himself across the floor and points his sword again.

He slowly rises and goes over to the place where Hanzo fell, and sees the diminutive figure, damaged but undeterred, pointing with his sword and staring up at Kubo beseechingly.

Finally, Kubo turns to see what he was pointing at. It's an illustration of the Helmet Impenetrable. Only from here *it looks exactly like the bell in Kubo's village.*

CLOSE ON his face, staring as realization dawns.

Kubo packs his bag with the sword, Hanzo Origami, and the broken netsuke. He ties the straps of the breastplate onto the side and then steps over Beetle's broken bow. He pauses for a moment as he looks at it. Then he kneels down and takes the bowstring from the shattered wood and wraps it around his wrist alongside his mother's bracelet.

And then he picks up his shamisen, closes his eye, and stands for a moment in the center of the courtyard, the only sound the FLAPPING of the frayed beetle banners as they billow in the wind.

Kubo plays one last note, PLUCKING the string as hard as he can, snapping it completely.

With a RUSTLING, the beetle banners flutter more violently, twisting and folding and breaking off their mounts. The banners envelope him, intertwining with his own robe to become a magnificent pair of wings that lift him up into the air, soaring above the ruins...

(3200 RTT)

EXT. CENTRAL AVENUE - DAY

The bell rings above the village ruins. It has been utterly decimated, like a bomb went off. The once lively and colorful place has been burned to the ground.

Kubo's new wings fly him across the landscape and land him on central avenue near the bell tower. \*

Kubo struggles to his feet and stares up at the bell. \*

Kubo steps over to the blackened wooden scaffold of the bell tower. It's quiet enough to hear his footsteps CRUNCH as he walks. And then, face determined, he starts hitting the broken tower until it crashes down with the bell. \*

Kubo reaches in the rubble and frees the helmet. \*

KAMEYO (O.S.)  
Kubo? Is that you? \*

The voice surprises him. He turns around. \*

From somewhere across the other side of the main street, a soot-stained face peeks out from the charred ruin of a house. It is Kameyo, and she watches the unfolding scene with wide eyes. \*

Behind Kameyo are Hosato with Mari, and other familiar faces looking at him with awestruck curiosity. \*

KUBO  
You have to leave this place. The Moon King, *he* is coming. \*

The survivors see the look on his face and don't ask questions. They hurry through the market place toward the gate out of town.

Kubo waits a moment for them to leave, puts on the helmet and then takes a deep breath. His hand tightens its grip on the sword hilt, and he looks up at the full moon hanging ominously in the sky. Unblinking. \*

KUBO (CONT'D)  
GRANDFATHER! IT'S ME! KUBO! I KNOW YOU CAN SEE ME!

There's a moment of silence as the echoes of his shout dissipate, and Kubo whirls around to confront the BLIND OLD MAN from his dream. Now he wears regal robes that glow in the moonlight.

GRANDFATHER  
Hello, Grandson. It's so good to see you at last. So to speak.

He CHUCKLES. Gentle. Winsome. Utterly insincere. \*

Kubo picks up a rock. \*

GRANDFATHER (CONT'D)

And I see you found the armor.  
Seems your mother had a reason to  
bring you to this dreadful place  
after all.

Kubo throws the rock at Grandfather.

Grandfather's hand snatches the rock out of the air as it  
comes at him.

GRANDFATHER (CONT'D)

I see.

His face still placid, he calmly squeezes up his fist and  
crushes the projectile to dust.

KUBO

I know you do. That's how this all  
began. You finally saw me. That was  
my fault. I should have listened to  
my parents.

GRANDFATHER

Kubo, we both want *the exact same  
thing*.

KUBO

You want to take my other eye.  
*That's* what you want.

GRANDFATHER

Well, yes, but do you know *why* I  
want it?

KUBO

Because you're old, and mean, and  
cruel.

He takes a breath and smiles affably.

GRANDFATHER

Oh now, that's a little harsh. As  
long as you cling to that silly,  
useless eye, you can't come up to  
live with me in the heavens.

Grandfather keeps moving closer to Kubo as he speaks.

GRANDFATHER (CONT'D)

You'll be stuck down here in this  
*hell*. Staring with that lonely eye  
at hate and heartache and suffering  
and death.

(MORE)

GRANDFATHER (CONT'D)

Where I want to take you we have none of those things. It will just be you with your family. Where you belong.

\*

KUBO

My family is gone. You *killed* them.

\*

GRANDFATHER

No! They brought their fates upon themselves. They disgraced me and upset the order of everything.

\*

\*

\*

KUBO

That's how *your* story goes.

GRANDFATHER

Oh, Kubo. When you're up there with me you will be *beyond* stories. You will be immortal. You will be... *infinite*.

\*

KUBO

No, you're wrong. Not infinite. All stories have an end.

\*

\*

\*

Grandfather narrows his eyes. We get the sense he will only play this game so long. He's starting to look a little pale and more... *wrinkly*... than before. Grandfather's skin is slowly taking on the appearance of a milky cataract-like shell. Cracks on his face splinter across the surface like shattered glass.

\*

\*

\*

GRANDFATHER

Is that right? And how does *this* story end?

\*

\*

Kubo fixes his grandfather with a look filled with fire.

KUBO

I *kill* you!

Kubo raises up his sword, ready for battle.

GRANDFATHER

Oh, very well. Is this your wish? To do battle with the hideous *monster* who ruined your life? To prove your worth like your doomed father? How mortal.

\*

\*

\*

\*

\*

\*

(3400 SHO) SHOWDOWN

EXT. CENTRAL AVENUE - NIGHT

Grandfather throws open his arms and his entire body breaks apart like a cocoon. We see the blur of a hideous head trailing a long serpentine body as it launches a hundred feet into the air. Seeming smaller than ever, Kubo stands there looking up at this towering beast.

The Moon Beast LAUGHS, shaking the very foundation of the devastated village.

Kubo YELLS, and runs at the beast, sword held high.

It lunges down at him, fangs bared. Kubo leaps, spinning over its head and slashing at its pearly white flesh. The sword connects with a flash of sparks, like metal on metal.

The beast recoils, but whether it's out of pain or surprise is not immediately clear. Kubo is upon it again, a dazzling barrage of blows forcing the monster further back.

Gaining the advantage, Kubo lunges with his sword, slicing deep into the creature's vast white eye. The beast ROARS and thrashes, its enormous tail decimating a scorched building behind it.

Furious, the beast twists around and comes at Kubo. He ducks through a charred doorway and somersaults out of a window, the creature bulldozing the entire building behind him.

Kubo jumps and weaves as the monster lashes out. Each time he evades its claws or maw, he scores a hit with his sword.

The beast relentlessly pursues him through the blackened shells of ruined homes. Despite his agility and tenacity, Kubo is running out of breath. It seems he's fighting a losing battle.

Exhausted, he stumbles, and the beast's jaws lock down around his body. The armor buckles and cracks around him, and Kubo is spat out, SMASHING through the remains of a wall.

Painfully, Kubo crawls back onto his feet, bruised and bloodied.

The creature snaps its tail like a whip, coiling around Kubo's body and pulling him up in front of its terrible face. The spiky tip of its tail hooks under the lip of Kubo's helmet and flips it off his head.

Giant tendrils of saliva fly out of its mouth as it hisses...

MOON BEAST

You want to be human? Then *share*  
their weakness!

The tail around Kubo squeezes tight, crushing him.

MOON BEAST (CONT'D)

*Suffer* their humiliation!

The spiky tail tears the patch off Kubo's face.

MOON BEAST (CONT'D)

*Feel* their pain!

The beast throws Kubo contemptuously to the ground. He lands in the dust beside the Sword Unbreakable.

As Kubo goes for it the Moon Beast strikes him with its enormous tail, flinging him like a rag doll through the air.

**(3500 T2S) THE 2 STRINGS**

EXT. CEMETERY - CONTINUOUS

Kubo CRASHES through branches and bushes, cartwheeling through the undergrowth leading down to the riverside cemetery outside the village.

He eventually comes to a stop, barely conscious. His bag lands nearby, its contents strewn around him.

In the distance we hear the Moon Beast ROAR as it smashes through the village on its way to finish Kubo off.

Kubo blinks. Slowly pulls himself off the ground.

He reaches out for his sword. From beneath his robe sleeve the two bracelets around his wrist are exposed. His mother's hair and Beetle's bow string.

Kubo's fingers pause over the top of the sword hilt. And then withdraw.

And then, as quickly as he can, he deftly begins *re-stringing his shamisen*, using both string and hair.

The Moon Beast thunders closer through the woods.

Two strings in place, Kubo stares at the empty space where the final string should go.

The Moon Beast appears, and finds Kubo kneeling on the ground, shamisen in hand.

MOON BEAST

*This is the end of your story. Now take one last look with that lonely eye. One last look at this wretched place you call home.*

Kubo stands up. Defiant.

KUBO

I'm not leaving.

*He then reaches up and plucks out a hair from his own head, and stretches it across the shamisen.*

The Moon Beast CACKLES.

KUBO (CONT'D)

For every horrible thing down here there's something far more beautiful. My mother saw it. So did my father. I see it, even with just one eye.

The Moon Beast SNARLS, no longer finding this amusing.

MOON BEAST

Then I'll just have to rip it out of your head *again*, won't I?

\*

As the Moon Beast goes to strike, Kubo plucks the first string on the shamisen, producing a single BOOMING NOTE.

KUBO

*IF YOU MUST BLINK, DO IT NOW!*

The Moon Beast stops, surprised.

All the dead paper lanterns in the river suddenly ignite again, a trail of light snaking from the river all the way to the broken lanterns scattered throughout the marketplace.

KUBO (CONT'D)

I know why you want my eye. Because without it I can't look into the eyes of another and see their soul. Their love.

MOON BEAST

Everything you loved is *gone!*  
Everything you knew has been taken from you!

When Kubo speaks, his voice is stronger than ever.

KUBO

No. It's in my memories. The most powerful kind of magic there is.

Kubo plucks the second string.

And now, emerging from behind trees and grave markers, come the surviving villagers. They hold glowing lanterns as they march to take their place alongside Kubo.

Kubo plucks the final string, producing a NOTE that echoes endlessly, and the Moon Beast stares down with an expression of shock. Yet more figures are joining the ranks of Kubo's army, but these are glowing with the same otherworldly light that we saw surrounding the blue herons. *These are the spirits of the dead.*

He gestures to his army.

KUBO (CONT'D)

It makes us stronger than you'll ever be. These are the memories of those we have loved and lost. And if we hold their stories deep in our hearts, then you will never take them away from us.

Kubo stands there defiantly, looking up at the Moon Beast, who has clearly heard enough. The beast rears back and strikes down at Kubo like an enormous snake.

But as his fanged head lunges at Kubo's army, it is deflected by a field of blue light that has appeared around them, just like the glow that protected Mother's boat in the prologue.

The Moon Beast is stunned. Shakes his head. Then he strikes again. And again. Each time he is repelled by the field which keeps on growing larger and brighter.

KUBO (CONT'D)

*And that really is the least of it.*

With that, he brings his hand down on his shamisen, STRUMMING all three strings at once.

The blue glow explodes, and everything is swallowed up in a blinding white light.

**(3700 GRR) GRANDFATHER REBORN**

EXT. CEMETERY

The glare slowly dissipates, and in front of Kubo now stands the sweet-faced old man from Kubo's dream. He looks around, confused.

OLD MAN  
Where am I?

Kubo approaches him and kneels down.

KUBO  
Hello, Grandfather.

The old man stares at Kubo. Genuinely puzzled.

OLD MAN  
Hello. What happened to your eye?

Kubo stares at his grandfather, a little uncertain.

KUBO  
Don't you remember?

The old man shakes his head.

OLD MAN  
I'm sorry, young man. But I seem to have forgotten my story. Can you help me?

It takes a moment for this to sink into the crowd, and then Kamekichi pushes forward.

KAMEYO  
I'll tell him. No, we'll all tell him. We'll tell him everything he needs to know.

As Kubo watches, the old woman approaches the old man, warily at first, as if testing the water.

KAMEYO (CONT'D)  
You... are the kindest, sweetest man to ever live in this village.

The old man seems surprised.

OLD MAN  
Oh... Oh really?

Kameyo breaks into a grin and nods vigorously.

KAMEYO

Yes!

Other villagers around her are starting to get the idea.

MARI

(stepping forward)

Every day, you walk around smiling  
and handing out coins to  
children... like me!

KAMEYO

And old women!

OLD MAN

(unsure)

Oh...

Soon, each of the villagers is shouting out details of the  
old man's "story."

VILLAGER 1

You... you taught my kids to swim!

HOSATO

And... you give blankets to the  
poor!

HASHI

You're a good man.

VILLAGER 3

You fed the hungry.

VILLAGER 4

You always lend a helping hand!

VILLAGER 5

You're a great example!

OLD MAN

Oh. Turns out I'm pretty selfless.

YOUNG DAUGHTER

That's why we love you!

Kameyo leans in close to the Old Man.

KAMEYO

You know, we have something in  
common. We both *adore* your  
grandson.

She gestures to Kubo.

KAMEYO (CONT'D)

His name is Kubo.

OLD MAN

Kubo....I'm sorry, but I don't remember.

KAMEYO

Well, your grandson's a storyteller. He'll tell you all the stories you've forgotten.

OLD MAN

Really?

She winks at Kubo.

KUBO

Of course.

DISSOLVE TO

**(3800 FIP) FINAL PRAYER**

EXT. PATH DOWN TO CEMETERY - WOODS OUTSIDE VILLAGE - NIGHT

Under the tiniest sliver of moon, a long procession of villagers heads down the forest path leading to the river. They hold glowing paper lanterns as they move along solemnly. Their departed loved ones walk alongside, identifiable by a subtle "spirit glow" emanating from them in the moonlight.

When they reach the river, farewells are said and lit lanterns set adrift once more.

EXT. CEMETERY - NIGHT

The last of the remaining villagers file back up the path as Kubo assembles his new altar. On it, he places two unlit lamps, then gets to his knees, facing them. He begins speaking quietly.

KUBO

Hello, Mother. Father. I know my stories can tend to get a little, um, *long*. So I'll keep this brief.

Kubo pauses, thinking what he wants to say.

KUBO (CONT'D)

I am very grateful. I have had the chance to meet you both.

(MORE)

KUBO (CONT'D)

Hear your wisdom. Feel your kindness. Even eat a meal sitting between you. This was a happy story.

(a beat)

But...It could still be a *whole lot happier*.

Kubo leans closer to the altar, losing some formality now.

KUBO (CONT'D)

And I don't know exactly what the rules are or how this works. But if there were any way to... y'know. I still need you. So I could *say* this has been a happy story. Or I could *feel* it. We could all feel it. And then we could end this story... together.

A beat, and then he looks up again in growing wonder as a light spills across his face.

CUT TO:

BLACK

A long silence, and then we start to hear the first few notes *The Song of the Dead*.

FADE IN:

**(3900 UNI) UNITY**

THE MOON

Reflected in the river. Glowing blue heron sail in front of it, singing their sweet song.

We TILT UP across the surface of the water to find where the herons are coming from...

EXT. CEMETERY

Floating along the river, heading out to sea, paper lamps are refolding themselves and rising up out of the water, their light swelling brighter and brighter *as they transform into glowing blue heron*.

The newly-formed paper birds then flap their wings and rise up off the water to join the rest of their flock in the sky.

This wondrous sight is witnessed by three figures standing in shadow at the river's edge. The shortest of the figures looks up into the moonlight. It is Kubo, his face still partially hidden in shadow, but we can see he's wearing a huge smile. And now we see why...

Standing on either side of him, their hands resting gently on his shoulders are HANZO & MOTHER, young and resplendent. If there is a "spirit glow" around them, we can't quite see it in this light. They seem as alive and tangible as Kubo himself.

His eye sparkles in the moonlight as he looks up at the heron soaring above the sea in the night Sky. \*

KUBO'S VOICE (V.O.)

*The end.*

FADE TO:

WHITE

ROLL END TITLES.