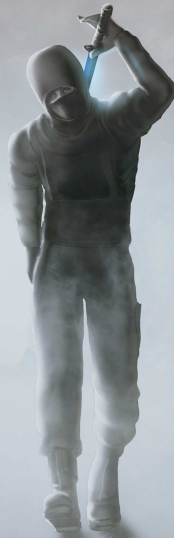


A.S.A.T.



ANTI-SUPERNATURAL ASSAULT TEAM

A.S.A.T

Anti-Supernatural Assault Team

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Book 0- Fresh Blood

## SUMMARY

A.S.A.T. (Anti-Supernatural Assault Team) is a special group created by a billionaire Arthur West. They consist of 6 best people, Arthur could find. Their main aim is to find 5 pieces of the Seal of Solomon, so they can stop the demon that is responsible for the end of the world in 2012.

Episode 0 tells the history of each member and how they become members of A.S.A.T.

### **Book 0- Part 2- Tokutei**

*Second to nothing*

**September 25, 2012**

1.

The sun was slowly disappearing between huge skyscrapers in Tokyo. The sky was clear, and soon the brightest stars started to emerge. You couldn't see them in the city, as the lights of everything dimmed even Sirius, which is the brightest star in the night sky. A couple of miles from the last house of Tokyo, the sky was more beautiful than ever. No additional light could dim it, nor any passing car. The Milky Way was cutting the night above a widespread bamboo forest. Among the thick trees a dark shape passed really fast, then another, and another. Twelve of such black figures quickened inaudibly through the forest. They seemed to be rushing somewhere, yet, they did not move in a straight line. Three of them occasionally jumped on bamboos then leaped back to the ground performing a front flip or other twisting move. Others pushed their knees hard to the mossy soil, and ejected high in the sky over the uprooted plants. Suddenly the one who was leading them stopped, pulled his hand strongly to the back like a karate chop, and opened his hand in a flat palm manner.

“Cease.”

Everyone stopped running, and crouched scanning the area.

“We've attained our destination,” he added, pulling his arm back.

Now it was clearly visible that these figures were people dressed in black ninja-like attires. They had curved swords on their backs, and several small shiny metal things attached to their belts. In front of them was a huge old Japanese castle, or rather some ruins of it. It seemed to have been built in the forest, hidden from everyone. Further from the truth.

In the seventeenth century the area was a small village with a beautiful castle where ronins had their dwelling. These people were samurais who had themselves for their masters. They didn't want to serve for the country, and certainly they didn't want to obey the ruler's orders. Hundreds of them hid in the castle, and fought the emperor's soldiers. In late spring of

1608, the emperor Tokugawa Ieyasu sent ten thousand soldiers to dispose of ronins once and for all. The soldiers were lead by general Hakizama who was in possession of a legendary katana sword, the sword made of a meteorite. The legend had it that this sword could cut through anything, as it has been made from the element not known on Earth. This element was harder than carbon fibre, lighter than lithium, and because of its unnatural blue color, it was named bluenium. On 5<sup>th</sup> June 1608, the soldiers attacked the castle. Their orders were to kill everyone. The inferior ronins had no chance of winning, but they never gave up. Having fought for over 8 hours, the last ronin was killed. After the battle, the castle was left with blood-covered walls and floors, and also with thousand dead bodies, both of ronins' and soldiers', including general Hakizama. The villagers, buried only ronins, and abandoned their home forever. Since then, no one lived there, and the nature covered the village with a bamboo forest. The almighty meteoritic katana has never been seen again.

The ninjas were slowly approaching the remains of the castle. The building had three floors. The walls were creaked, and the roof was covered trees that had made their way through the roof.

"There was supposed to be a village around the castle. I can't see anything," one of the man said.

"The forest buried everything."

They walked towards two statues covered with green grass and leaves. The statues showed two samurais standing at attention. The first one was cut in the middle, with the second part lying behind it while the second one had only small holes and creaks made by time.

"The myth says that Hakizama was killed on the second floor, near the north terrace," said one of the men.

"The villagers left his body as well as the weapon among other soldiers of Emperor Tokugawa Ieyasu," The other one added.

The leader pointed to several men. "Idaki, Sato, Tanaka, fetch it."

Three men ran towards the building. The first one amazingly jumped onto the first floor, then on the second one. The others "flew" inside through the window. The walls inside were badly destroyed, but to their surprise the pale stains of blood were still visible. The floor was covered with hundreds of human bones, rusty samurai swords, as well as remaining of the clothes and uniforms. They all met upstairs. The room, as everything else looked like an open cemetery, with all the bones covering the whole floor. There was a large collection of weapons hanging on the left wall. Opposite to it, were two low tables and dozens of broken plates and pottery.

"How will we recognise the katana among all these swords?" one of them asked picking an old blade.

"Bluenium does not fade, nor does it decay or rust," said the second man looking around the corridor. "Yet, at night, its colour is very weak, and one can only see it by pointing it towards some source of light."

"Like the stars."

"We have to separate, and find it," ordered the first ninja.

The men spread into different directions around the room and corridor. Each of them grabbed a sword from the dusty ground, looked at it carefully, and threw it back among the skeletons. Most of the weapons were rusty, broken, or completely destroyed.

A few minutes past, and the sword was nowhere to be found.

"It must be somewhere here," one of them shouted angrily, throwing another regular katana onto the floor.

"Look!" one of them exclaimed pointing at the glowing object in the corner of the corridor. "This must be it."

They slowly walked towards it. As they were approaching, they saw a headless skeleton lying on the floor. It had still an upper armor on it, and a large helmet lying nearby. The shiny light blue object was half-covered by some piece of metal. The ninja crouched, pushed away the metal piece, and picked up the glowing item. It was a metre-long, curved sword with a navy handle and a silver-blue blade. He could easily see his masked face reflecting in the steel. The other men were gazing at it with amazement.

“It’s beautiful.”

“I could easily change my katana for it.”

“No time for reflections. Let’s go back,” the ninja holding the sword ordered.

The warriors rushed quickly to the terrace, and leaped out of it landing silently on the ground.

## 2.

Eight other ninjas were squatting near the two statues. No one said anything. They were only waiting for the others to come back.

“They’re coming back,” one of them said.

The person carrying the sword ran up to the leader.

“Here it is, master,” he announced handing out the weapon.

The black ninja took the sword, and scanned it carefully, while the others gathered around, and stared at it with astonishment.

“At last, after 400 years, the almighty katana has been found.”

Suddenly, the ground started to shake, and a horrible high-pitched howl came from the forest. Everyone looked around with concern. The shake lasted for a split of second, which could be felt like a thud rather than like a shake.

“Look!” the ninja, who brought the sword, whispered pointing at the castle.

The building began to wobble, and seconds later it collapsed with a huge boom. When the debris hit the ground, a great cloud of ash rose into the air covering everything. The ninjas were observing it, but they did not feel any fear, only wonderment. What is more, neither did any of them run away or even moved.

“What’s going on?” one of them asked.

“Aught,” the leader said in a manner as he knew exactly what had happened. He shook his head, placed the sword on his back, and ordered, “Withdraw. Now!”

“We’d better return to the base before someone comes here,” one of them suggested.

Not waiting any longer, the crouching warriors stood up, and started running into the forest. No sooner had they passed the first bamboo trees, than the ground shook again. However, now, the quake didn’t seem to be similar to the previous one, and certainly it didn’t last as short as that one. The soil moved in dozens of various places in the area. Everyone stopped, and took a look at it. The ground in those places fractured. The slits were around 30 inches long, and they were getting bigger and bigger. One man drew out his sword, and stood in the readiness.

“What is it?” One of the warriors asked scanning the fractures, which now, were almost everywhere.

“I don’t know. Something evil is looming,” came the answer.

The ninjas were looking around stopping their eyes on every fracture.

“Master, you seem to be hiding something from us,” someone asked.

The leader didn’t know whether to tell them the truth, or try to escape as quickly as possible. He made a decision.

“You must prepare to fight,” he whispered.

“Fight? What?” came another answer.

“The dead, the evil that dwells here.”

“What evil?”

“What are you talking about, Master?”

The leader made a small step to the left, as a fracture appeared right between his feet.

“The legend is true. This ground is cursed. I did not believe it, until now.”

“There was nothing about the curse in the legend.”

“I have failed to inform you about the last piece of the Blue Sword story.”

The cracks stopped spreading, and the soil around them began to move.

“I did not believe it was relevant,” the leader continued louder as the others were preparing for the unknown. “The legend also says, that whoever steps on this cursed ground, will bring all the dead back to life. This land should not be entered. He was right, and I didn’t listen. What a disgrace to me.”

All of the sudden, something emerged from the ground, it looked like a grey tip of a stick, but another appeared next to it and another. Three of these grey-looking sticks were emerging from the ground. Just when they were 2 inches long, the ninjas saw that they are connected to some root-like thing of the same colour. The men quickly realised it was a palm without any skin or muscles, only bones. Then another came from the ground. The osseous hands were getting higher and higher. One of them grabbed a nearby root of a plant, and pulled it self up revealing bones of arms and a skull. The moving skeleton was rising from the ground. It happened in every place where the fractured had occurred. Nevertheless, the ninjas weren’t scared by this fact, even though they were surrender by hundreds of skeletons raising from the ground.

“I knew we wouldn’t escape from here so easily,” one of the guys said.

“We wouldn’t have been hired if it weren’t for an extra dangerous mission, would we?” the second one added gazing at the nearest skeleton that was slowly walking towards him.

“They seem to be either soldiers or ronins who fought here,” another ninja deduced.

“Or both,” yet another added.

All the undead creatures snaffled old metal things, which were inside their graves, and ran towards the ninjas. The leader replaced his sword on the back with the recovered one, and took a defence position.

“Remember, Dragons, “he shouted to everyone addressing them by the names of the legendary creatures, “Never surrender.”

“We’d better make our way through them,” one of the ninjas exclaimed drawing his samurai sword, and preparing for the inevitable encounter.

Hundreds of angry skeletons were rushing towards 12 ninjas. The warriors were standing next to one another, tightly gripping their swords.

### 3.

These ninjas belonged to a Japanese special group called “*Dragons*”. It consists of twelve, well-trained, finest and masterful men of the Japanese islands. They all had been taught secrets of martial arts since they were little. Most of them came from poor families that couldn’t afford raising a baby. The rest were orphans after their parents had died, or had been killed. Each and every one of them had to master 15 martial arts style, including secret pressure point techniques, and also weapon techniques. They all have been raised in strict conditions. Their daily routine consisted of training, food and sleep. There was no time for any pleasure, play or love. The group has been formed in order to perform the hardest tasks and missions. For instance, eliminating bosses of yakuza, hostage rescue, or retrieving legendary objects that were stolen from museums, or disappeared long time ago. In this case, the meteoritic sword. The Twelve members of the group fear nothing, and always prevail. Their unique techniques, as well as extraordinariness, make them very useful in impossible

tasks. In 2002, the American government wanted to use the Dragons in Afghanistan to seize Osama Bin Laden. The Japanese government refused, for they didn't want to get involved in that case. They have taken part in many impossible missions so far, but they have never faced any supernatural activities.

#### 4.

Rotten skeletons were running towards the ninjas. In the darkness of the forest, one could see only the blueprints of the warriors holding glossy blades. One of the angry-looking skeletons, holding a katana sword only in one hand, as the second limb was missing, was in the front. He was aiming for the ninja standing the farthest on the left. The warrior took a defending position, raising his sword over his head. The skeleton erected his katana, and cut aiming at the head of the ninja, who placed his blade diagonally down to the right. The blades met. The skeleton's 400-year old sword didn't withstand the power of the fast cut of his opponent, and broke into half. The brave warrior turned over his sword just above the ground, so now the sharp edge was facing up, and cut diagonally up to the left, snipping the opponent's spine and two ribs. The bones fell limply on the dry soil, and stopped moving. However, the warrior didn't stop his moves on just two cuts. He quickly rotated the weapon through his fingers, so now his thumb was facing not up but down along tsuka, the Japanese name for a handle. He rapidly stabbed it to the back, placing the handle of the katana under his right shoulder. The shrill tip of the blade penetrated through the skull of another approaching skeleton. The ninja knew that stab wouldn't stop the undead creature, thus he pulled his sword back, quickly changed the grip, and threw a horizontal cut to the left. He made a spin at the same time, so when he turned around with a huge speed, the blade went through the skeleton's neck beheading the enemy. Hardly had the ninja finished his spin, when he jumped into the air performing another spin. He had eyed one more opponent, flying right at him. Cut. Another one was down. Still being in the air, starting the second spin, the ninja noticed yet another skeleton that was advancing towards the black Dragon from his right. The upcoming enemy, was holding his sword tightly on his right side as if to perform a diagonal cut down to the left. He intended to cut through the guts of the ninja. Being in one-third in his second spin, the warrior had no intentions of using his sword in this strike. His left leg chambered at the belt level. At the same time his right one straightened. He performed, so called, tornado kick. As he was facing the enemy, his right foot hit the skeleton's ribs, and went through it with an ease. The chest split into half. The warrior landed on the ground, and prepared himself for another strike. The whole manoeuvre lasted only four seconds. Long enough to take down four opponents.

Meanwhile, other Dragon members were also dealing with hundreds of approaching undead soldiers. The warrior standing near the leader had already got rid of three opponents, and there were still six skeletons just about to cut him from six different angles. He didn't have much choice of defending himself using only just one sword. All his other colleagues were already fighting, and he couldn't count on any assistance from them. He had a few sharp shurikens at his belt, but using ninja stars at this situation was useless. His mind raced, and finally, he made a decision. The warrior jumped into the air, but not too high, as two sharp edges were coming at his head at a high speed. While he was in the air, he raised his weapon in order to block those blows, yet there were still four to be blocked. He kicked the two enemies coming from the front, while blocking the katana swords coming from above. Then he quickly twisted his body, so now he and his katana were facing down. His right foot kicked the fifth opponent. However, the falling blade of the previous one harmed his shin. The pain went through his body stopping the twist. He realised that one of the blades was on the point of penetrating his kidneys. The sixth skeleton was cutting horizontally. The ninja was falling towards the ground, but he made every effort to twist his body a little bit more. If he fell in

that position, the next blow would be deadly for him. The ninja felt only a gentle wind just over his chest. As soon as he, as well as the defeated opponents hit the ground. He winked, and as he was opening his eyes, he saw a sharp blade, speeding vertically right into his throat. The ninja raised his sword, tightened the grip, and the sharp edges of their weapons met for a moment. Neither of the weapons broke. The skeleton screamed out of fury, which was really unbelievable, as there was nothing in his throat that could produce the sound. He leapt of the ground, and changed the grip, so now he was holding the katana with his thumb up along the tsuka. The sword was facing down. The ninja could see the tip of the blade, and the undead dropping from the sky. There was no possible way of blocking it, hence, he rolled to the right scarcely avoiding the thrust. The Dragon had just enough time to rebound from the ground, and stand on his two feet. The wound on his leg got a little bit bigger, and a few drops of blood were running down along his calf. As soon as he stood up, he grabbed the sword facing his thumb up, and vertically cut up through the skeleton. The bones broke, and fell onto the ground.

The leader of the Dragons was in a greater danger, for he was the target of much more soldiers than the others. To make matters worse, having another sword on the back, made it more difficult to perform manoeuvres as accurately as the rest of the team. Having wiped out a dozen of skeletons, he had enough time to look around, estimate the number of approaching enemies, and to see whether his teammates were doing well. It wasn't easy to withstand attacks of so many enemies.

The Dragons had had many dangerous missions in the past. The largest number of enemies, they had fought simultaneously was around 30. In most of their missions, they had to take out enemies one by one, without even letting them know what had just killed them. In some cases, there were no enemies at all. They simply had to get inside some building, and take some important object. In other cases, the Dragons had to eliminate some bosses, drug lords and warlords that were too dangerous for the Japan to allow to have them on their soil. This case, however, was the most difficult of all.

The leader counted his men. One was missing. He quickly blocked another attack, kicked the enemy to the back, and counted his men one more time. Still, one was missing.

"Idaki!" he shouted, but there was no response.

Then he noticed one of the Dragons lying dead on the ground. The number of the skeletons didn't seem to be decreasing. He saw another ninja, who had just pushed away three undead creature, coming to Idaki. He crouched, checked his vital sites, and shouted with anger.

"Idaki!"

Then he threw himself at the upcoming dozen. All the others realised what had just happened. The leader knew that even though he had trained all of them in 15 martial art styles, their skills were not sufficient enough to withstand such a horde of enemies. Nevertheless, neither him, nor his teammates gave up, and fought at their best.

Other ninja jumped onto a bamboo tree. The skeletons chased him on the ground. Then he jumped on the second tree, and then on the third one. The skeletons were a little bit confused, because they didn't know where to run to catch him. Their enemy jumped on the tip of the next bamboo tree, so hard that it bent, and the tree hang a few inches above the eyeless skulls. Then he quickly swung his blade. Whoosh. All three heads fell down, as the ninja jumped up a little bit, so the tree got back to its natural position. The warrior made a flip, and landed on one knee. He was holding his weapon with one hand, pointing its tip at the dark sky, while his other hand banged with the fist against the ground, causing it to crack.

"No time to rest," he murmured to himself, and rushed towards one of his friend.

Some other Dragon was dealing with eleven enemies at one time. His fast spins, and rapid cuts, followed by blocks, efficiently eliminated the opponents one by one. He had to select the most effective, as well as the fastest moves, and had to choose wisely and fast. If he

decided to block the wrong blow first, some other strike would kill him. While he was in the air, performing another hook kick, he noticed much more enemies coming particularly at his direction. It was obvious to him that at this point he had to use the ultimate technique, which was the most suitable to decimate the skeletons. Some of the advancing opponents had already leapt into the air to perform either a cut or a stab, while others threw themselves down aiming at the legs. They were approaching from all directions. As he was landing, his grip tightened, and the ultimate technique began.

## 5.

The Dragons had learnt this technique at the age of 15 when they were being taught proficient manoeuvres to take out a large number of opponents. The technique was used to choose the moves wisely, but fast. Every block was another strike. Every dodge was another kick or stab and every twist had to disorient the opponent. The Dragons had to practice it on numerous convicts; usually members of yakuza, who thought they would have eluded death penalty by fighting against 15-year old boys. It was undoubtedly a bad choice for the criminals. Since that time, the whole team mastered the ultimate technique, and could use it only in situations like this.

## 6.

The numerous enemies were coming in all directions. The determined ninja uttered a large "kia"-shout, bent his knees, and lift off the ground up in the air holding his katana sword above his head. The kia-shout is used by many martial artists to gather strength before a difficult manoeuvre is performed. Being in the air, 5 feet above the ground, the warrior kicked into split, tearing off the skulls of two enemies on both sides. As he was dropping onto the ground, he cut diagonally to the left eliminating three more creatures. As soon as he felt the ground, his knees bent, and the Dragon jumped again turning his head and shoulders to do a spin. His sword was at his right arm, ready to do a horizontal cut, which he did as soon as he rotated 180 degrees. The sharp blade went through the rotten jaws of three opponents, detaching them from the joints. The black man landed crouching, and began another spin, which was now low. He straightened his right leg, which easily hooked the jawless enemies. When he finished the full spin, his katana cut horizontally through advancing skeletons from the opposite side. Afterwards, he made another spin, still crouching, which was a continuation of the previous spin and sword cut. The wheezy katana penetrated the groin of the falling skeletons, which was the end for their undead lives. One of the enemies, who had come from the right, was speeding towards the ninja with his sword aiming at the warrior's heart. Another two had jumped from the front willing to stab the squatting Dragon. The ninja pointed his sword with the blade up, and quickly jumped into the air. The sword of his staved into the pelvis, and went up through it. If it had been a human, the sword would have penetrated through the guts, but as it was only a skeleton, the next thing the tip met, were the vertebrae of the neck, then the skull. He chambered his legs, so that the second skeleton skidded below him. The man changed the grip, and pointed his polished weapon directly down, and while falling, he punctured the neck of the third skeleton detaching his greyish skull from the rest. As soon as his feet touched the ground covered with a bulk of bones, he turned his sword, to have its blade pointing up, still holding it with thumb down. Then he made a spin, and got rid of the enemy, who had just flown under him. As he was cutting through this opponent, he noticed another one coming towards him. When the spin finished, the warrior performed a backflip, or rather flash kick, which was a flip to the back with a lethal kick up. The kick was effective, and another enemy was taken down. Some other creature was advancing from the left, and had already been in the air, but without any sword. The opponent threw himself at the legs of the Dragon, to knock him over, but, after doing the



backflip, the ninja, turned around, bent, and pushed himself hard off the ground, doing an aerial; a handless cartwheel. When he was upside down he stabbed the flying skeleton causing his spine to break, and deactivate the creature. However, the man didn't finish the move. There were still two opponents flying at him. He had no choice, and no possibility of protecting himself from this one. Fortunately, the skeletons had no weapons. The three characters met in the air. The impact of the bags of bones was so hard that made the ninja fall, and release his katana. He fell on his back onto the ground, and had to face two blades, coming at his stomach, from opposite direction. The blades were approaching really fast, and there was nothing he could do to avoid it. Rolling was not an option in this case. The only alternative he could do, was preparing himself for taking the lethal blow. When the steel weapons were a few inches above his body, another blade appeared from the left. It was turned with its sharp edge up. The rectangular metal sword stopped moving to the right when its tip was just above the lying, helpless ninja. Next, it began moving up, and pushed back the upcoming blades. Then it killed their owners. The ninja looked left, and saw one of his teammates reaching out his hand in order to help the warrior to get up, and return to fight.

"Thanks, that was a close one," the ninja sighed picking up his sword.

"I couldn't let me lose another one of us," came the answer.

The ninja took a glimpse over his shoulder, then looked around, and realised, that there were only eight members of Dragon still fighting. He looked at the ninja one more time as if he wanted to express his sorrow about losing his friends, but he didn't say anything. Suddenly, his colleague opened his mouth, and his eyes grew open, as a shiny steel sword came out of his chest.

"No!" he screamed desperately watching the bleeding man falling onto the ground. The wounded teammate tried to say something while dropping, but the blade damaged his lungs.

"*How could I have been so careless?*" his mind raced seeing a skeleton emerging behind the body.

"*He did save me,*" the useless thoughts hit his mind. "*Yet, he couldn't save himself. Or what should be more important, I wasn't able to protect my friend.*"

As on the spur of the moment, he lost orientation, and didn't see that the very skeleton had just pulled back his sword, and was ready to attack him to. Not thinking any more, the ninja made one step to the back, held his sword on his right side, turned around to the left, then raised his chambered left leg into the air, and next jumped from the right one as if to perform a tornado kick. Yet, he didn't straighten his leg, but raised the katana above his head, then cut diagonally down to the left, splitting the skeleton into half, the cut didn't stop there. The warrior moved his sword behind the head, still being in the air, and cut for the second time, cutting the eyehole off the enemy's skull. Then, he landed on one knee. He could feel the bones of the defeated opponent falling around him. The smell of rotten bones filled his nostrils.

"Tokutei!" a familiar voice came from the right. He jumped back on his feet, and rushed rapidly at the rest of the enemies, killing them in anger one by one. The Dragons had been taught never to be overtaken by anger. However, in this case, losing five of his teammates was an agony to him. They were not only his teammates, but also friends and family. He had spent basically his whole life with them. They had trained together, had meals together, and gone on every missions together. The pain filled his heart, but he knew he couldn't give up. There was still a chance to end this right.

Meanwhile, a few metres from him, two other ninjas were using each other's help to cope with undead enemies. One of them had already lost his mask. It was a black-hair Asian man with a scar on his forehead. His mate was still wearing a dark mask with a wide space for eyes. They occasionally used each other's backs to roll over to the other side, dodge the coming unblockable blows. While one was rolling over, the other one was estimating what

moves he should use next in order not to be slashed. Cut, block, kick, chop. Over and over again.

After series of fancy effective moves, when the whole ground was covered with broken bones and metal weapons, the remaining 7 ninjas were slowly getting tired. To perform such skilful manoeuvres, one has to use a lot of strength, and, of course, must be fit and strong. One of them was still using trees to annihilate the opponents. While he was jumping from one tree to another, a few skeletons threw themselves into the air to slice the man. They could easily jump as high as him.

The key to perform a high jump doesn't lie within the leg muscles. The bigger the muscles are, the harder it is to jump higher. The key lies within the bones themselves. Scientists have proved that if we didn't have any muscles in the legs, our body could jump as high as 7 metres from the ground. So how do ninjas jump so high? They use the ground to rebound. The stronger they jumped onto the ground, bent, and use all the cumulated energy to leap, the higher they will fly.

Seeing the skeletons leap as high as him, the ninja froze for a moment in disbelief. To defend himself, he performed a horizontal rotation, holding his katana in one hand. As he was rolling, his sword was doing a vertical circle, which was so fast, that observing from the ground it looked like a full car wheel of silver colour. The speeding blade went through the upcoming bones, splitting them into separate pieces. Then he pushed his legs forward to land onto the tree, and leap out of it. To his surprise, as soon as he touched the bamboo bark, he wasn't able to rebound off it. The tree pushed to the back, leaving the ninja helpless in the air. The warrior looked down, and saw several enemies, who had chopped the tree. The man had really little time to think what to do next, and what was more important how to survive the fall among the mad soldiers. While he was falling down, he felt a dreadful pain which sieved through his body. He realised that there was still one enemy in the air, who he had failed to kill because of the tree incident. The creature had stabbed the falling defenceless ninja in the back, the blade went through the lungs and the heart, coming out through the shoulder. The skeleton released his weapon, and kicked the man. As a result, the dying body gained more speed. The warrior's body zoomed down right into the blades waiting for him. Slash, strike, thrust, cut. His blood trickled onto the tree, the ground, and the enemies. The other Dragons didn't notice it because they had too much fighting to do, and now when there was yet another one of them missing, the chances were dropping.

7.

Another few minutes passed. One of the living Dragons was spinning around using the ultimate technique; a spin followed by a cut, then by a kick, then by a twist with a cut, a block, a kick, a strike and punch. The number of the opponents was far too great and many an experienced warrior would actually be unable to restrain such an enormous invasion. The amount of the opponents was too great, and there were far too many bones on the soil, that made it harder to leap up into the air, or to keep balance. Nothing good could come of out that. Twenty rushing blades from all directions at once, were impossible, both to be blocked, and to be ducked out of. The failure was inevitable. The Dragon managed to block four. Actually it was three as his katana broke one of the approaching steel tips. He also succeeded in avoiding four other blows by twisting his body. Yet, there were eleven others that he couldn't stop. As a result, his body came to bits, and litres of blood pour onto the bones. Not waiting long the skeletons rushed towards the remaining five. Their target was now those two warriors, who were using each other's backs to fight better. Once again, the greater number of enemies made it inconceivable to withstand the horde. Another two Dragons fell victim to the undead. The Dragon leader noticed it, but he didn't stop fighting, nor did he let any thought hit his mind. He had to stay focus. It was when the first Dragon fell victim to the skeletons,

when he realised that their mission was no longer a priority. Their only priority was to survive, the basic human instinct.

## 8.

It was over an hour since the battle started. Three ninjas were left; the leader, Tokutei, and the one who had brought the sword from the castle- Sato. Tokutei pushed away two enemies, and noticed Sato being attacked from all directions. He rushed up to him, and leapt off the ground straightening his right leg. The powerful kick pushed one enemy to the back. Split a second later, after the kick, he swung his leg, and kicked away another opponent. As soon as he landed he slashed two more.

“Take the right!” Sato shouted trying to catch his breath.

Tokutei took a short glance at him, and noticed his tired face. Then he jumped high, made a spin, cut off the approaching enemy’s hand. Second spin, the backbone broke. Third spin, kick away two opponents. Duck, a sweep kick within a spin. Stand, a side kick, then without putting his leg, a round kick. A dozen of moves like this, and he stopped. Not because of the fact that he was exhausted, but because a horrible shriek came right from behind him. He turned his head, and saw Sato falling on his knees. There was a skeleton right in front of him with his sword raised and blood dripping off it. Almost immediately Tokutei bent a little bit to gather as much energy as he could, and jumped into the air to throw a split kick getting rid of two enemies. He took a glimpse at the leader noticing too many opponents speeding towards him. He quickly lifted off the ground, jumped onto the tree, and from there he whizzed towards his master. The leader had a nasty gash on his arm that restricted him from moving the sword as rapid as he would do. Yet, his powerful legs went through the ribs, temples, and other bones of the enemies with ease. He was surrounded by more than fifty skeletons, and it was much tougher to spring into the air. He made a rapid spin to the right, then jumped kicking two opponents with his left leg, which was followed by the right one, also eliminating a couple of skeletons. He heard his mate coming from the left, which made him glad. Tokutei was the best Dragon. He had mastered all the techniques three times faster than his teammates. The leader, yet, wasn’t fast enough, and exposed himself to three cuts from the other side.

“Master!” Tokutei shouted angrily, seeing him falling on one knee, and then tumbling down. As soon as the ninja reached his master, he slashed through three closest skeletons, then quickly grabbed his master’s katana and started to spin. He was holding two lethal swords horizontally, making a 3 metre, shining, three-dimensional figure eight. All of the remaining skeletons made a dash at him. The level of adrenaline in his blood, as well as hatred, made the ninja move so fast that the blades of the swords crossed the same point five times in a single second. All the creatures were treated like a paper in a shredder. The fountain of bones trickled from the lustrous noose, spreading within 30 metres from it. When there were no more skeletons left, the spinning stopped. The Dragon dropped the katana swords, filling his lungs with air, and crouched at his maser. The leader slowly raised his head, and tried to sit up. Tokutei took off his mask. He had a typical Japanese complexion, slanting eyes, short black hair, and sweat all over his 28-year old face.

”Master! It’s over. It’s over now.”

“Tokutei, “said the leader weakly trying to push himself higher off the skull under him.

”I must take you to the hospital, Master,” the young man cried.

“No, Tokutei, this is it, my life is bound to terminate this very night.”

“No master,” Tokutei shouted desperately tearing his mask, and trying to cover the wound. “I lost ten brothers tonight. No more deaths, no more suffering.”

The leader raised his hand, and reached out for the katana on his back, and said, “The Dragons will exist no more. This is the end of us.”

He took out the weapon, and put it onto some rotten ribs lying on the soil.

“Yet, not for you,” he sighed weakly with a shivering voice.

Tokutei looked at him closely trying to understand his words. At the same time he tightened the knot of his mask on the wound.

“What are you saying, Master?”

”I have failed you all. I could not protect you. I... brought only shame to the team. Such dishonour. ”

“It’s not dishonour, Master. The skeletons... there were too many of them.”

“I had sent for help... too late,” he shook his head, and dropped his eyes. “But you... you out of all of them were able to end this. I always believed in you, Tokutei.”

“You’re wounded. You’re talking nonsense, Master” Tokutei replied dealing with another wound.

“Tokutei... stop. Let me... do what I should do,” the leader said with a cough. Then he grabbed the little dagger; tanto, at his belt, and took it out.

“No, no, no, Master! You can’t do this. You’re the only one I have got now...”

Suddenly, a loud noise came from the forest as the ground shook.

“It’s ...not over... yet.”

The leader grabbed the blue katana, and handed it to the warrior

“Take the katana, and ...go. Go... before they come here.”

While he was saying this, his eyes closed, and he couldn’t bear sitting any more, he slowly slid down onto the ground among the smelly bones and a vast puddle of his own blood.

“I won’t leave you here, Master.”

“Tokutei... go... I must ... finish it.”

Having said that, he tightened the grip on his tanto, and placed it with the blade facing his stomach.

“Go!”

Tokutei grabbed the blue katana sword, and stood up. He heard dozens of shrieks coming from the left. It was his way out. Not thinking much, he took a glimpse at his master one more time, then started to rush towards the shrieks. As he was running, a silent moan hit his ears. It came from the back. The ninja knew what it was. His master had exhaled his very last breath as he had committed seppuku.

Seppuku, also known as hara-kiri is the Japanese ritual suicide. A warrior commits it either because he doesn’t want to be killed by enemies, or he brought shame and dishonour. The ritual is performed by thrusting a short sword; tanto, into the stomach and moving it to the right.

Tokutei was zooming towards the horde of skeletons. He could see them emerging from the darkness just half a mile ahead. He placed his regular sword on his back, and drew the blue one. The enemies noticed the bluish glow, and prepared themselves to attack, and destroy the last human, who had entered the cursed land. Tokutei focused his mind, raised his sword, and accelerated. Suddenly, some strange sound came from the distance. It sounded as if it was far behind the horde, and it was getting louder and louder. It was coming from the dark sky. The ninja looked around, and tried to catch a glance of the objects that were making it. The horde stopped, as several bright lights cut through the forest. The huge rails were coming from above at a small angle. The rattle got loud enough to be recognised as a group of helicopters. Shortly afterwards, the man’s eyes spotted the machines in the sky. The huge birds hang a few hundred feet behind the undead. The ninja made a few steps back, still looking at the whole situation. He was baffled.

“What’s going on?” he thought, as he noticed a dozen of men sliding down the ropes that were hanging from the helicopters.

The enemies were determined to kill anyone. Seconds later they dashed at the unknown men. Almost immediately the shots spread. Tokutei reacted quickly, and jumped onto the bamboo tree to hide there. He was observing what was going on, trying to figure it all out. The bullets went through the bones, perforating and breaking them. It all lasted for only half a minute. Then an American voice shouted.

“Clear!”

“Clear!” some other voice reacted.

Tokutei was staring at them, still trying to work it out.

“Who are these guys,” he thought.

Then another voice came.

“Search for the Japanese.”

He saw several men spreading in all directions. Three of them were slowly walking towards him.

“What were those pieces of crap, huh?” one of them asked kicking some broken skull.

“I don’t know. They only told us what we may expect, but nothing more.”

Tokutei tried to see what these men were wearing, but the bright light behind made it impossible to see anything but the blueprints. He waited until the men came closer, so he could easily attack them. As they were right beneath him, he pushed himself off the tree, and landed silently behind them. He quickly rose his sword, and prepared for a cut, but then one of the men turned around, and raised his hands apart.

“Whoa, whoa, whoa, easy there,” he said with a little bit fear.

The two other men turned around.

“It’s ok, we’re friendly,” the other one added.

Tokutei, still confused, lowered his sword. He noticed that these men were wearing American Army uniforms.

“We’ve got one,” the soldier shouted. “Where are the rest?”

“All dead.”

“Each and everyone?” the soldier asked in disbelief.

“Yes,” came a serious answer, as he put away his sword.

The second soldier grabbed a walky-talky and said.

“We came too late, general. They’re all dead.”

“Damn it!” came a scratchy voice. “Bring this one here.”

“Yes sir!”

Tokutei was full of questions, but he asked none. Instead, he prepared himself to be escorted towards the helicopters.

“Come with us.”

As they were walking, one of the soldiers scanned the area, and could help asking.

“What were those things?”

“Skeletons of soldiers from the seventeenth century.”

“So, the old man was right, they do exist.”

## 9.

The four men came towards the helicopters. Their propellers were spinning slower and slower until they completely stopped. Tokutei saw about twenty men, all wearing army clothes waiting near the machine. He also saw one man talking to them. The colours of his uniform, as well as the numerous stars sewed onto it, revealed his military status; a general.

“Sir, this is him.”

“I see, you’re dismissed.”

The general came closer to him, scratched his head and said.

“We came as soon as we received a signal from your leader.”

Tokutei half-closed his eyes, and looked left. Then he remembered one of his master’s last words. I had sent for help... He had thought then that master was being delirious because of the numerous wounds, but now it all made sense.

“The bodies...” he murmured pointing towards the direction he had come from. “They are all over there, about a mile from here. They all need proper burial.”

“Of course,” the general replied, and looked at his men. “Everyone, go over there and bring the bodies.”

The ninja’s pupils grew.

“The skeletons... they have risen twice, so far. What if they will...”

“They won’t,” some voice interrupted.

Both Tokutei and the general looked towards the helicopter, where the voice came from. They saw an old man coming out from the machine. It was a tall man in his early 60’s. He had short grey hair, a short moustache and a beard. Tokutei knew him. He had come to their base a few hours before the mission. But he couldn’t remember why.

It was almost 6 in the evening. Tokutei and his teammates were in a typical Japanese room. It had paper walls, and many traditional Japanese symbols around. There were eleven men inside. Some of them were putting black ninja clothes on. The others were polishing their weapons.

“Do you think we will be back before midnight?” one of them asked sticking some shurikens behind his belt.

“I hope so, Idaki. Tokutei is cooking tonight.”

“Yeah,” Tokutei answered with a silent laugh. “Don’t count on traditional food tonight. I’m gonna prepare...”

He didn’t finish, as his attention focused on the main door. He saw two men walking in. One of them was wearing white suit, and looked like American. The other one was their leader.

“One hour to go,” the master said, then the two men disappeared in the second room.

Tokutei raised his eyes. The man in white came up to them.

“It’s definitely over now. Thank you Bishop. I’ll take it from here,” the mysterious man said.

The general nodded, and walked away. The man came up to Tokutei, cleared his throat, and looked at the warrior.

“Hello Tokutei. My name is Arthur,” he reached out his palm in order to get a handshake, but Tokutei was not familiar with this gesture.

In Japan people bow to one another, although the handshake is getting more and more popular among the Japanese teenagers.

“First I would like to say how deeply sorry I am because of what happened. I tried to explain to your master what might happen, but he wouldn’t listen.”

“Did you know about the skeletons?”

“That is correct. And this is one of the reasons I came today.”

“There are more? What reasons?”

Arthur looked around to check whether nobody followed them, or nobody was in a distance to hear them, then sighed.

“Yes. You see, we came here to help you with this very mission. I talked to your master how dangerous it may be, but he was stubborn, and believed you would manage without our help.”

“This is not the answer to my question,” Tokutei replied without any emotions.

“You’re clever. You have always been, thus I chose you.”

“You chose me? I don’t understand.”

“Well,” the old man said feeling perplexed. “I know you’re confused right now, but I will explain everything to you one at a time,” he added.

They reached the point where the last helicopter was standing. Arthur stopped, took a deep breath, started to talk.

“15 years ago I visited you.”

Tokutei squinted his eyes, trying to move back with his memories, and then it hit him.

“This is where I know you from!” Tokutei exclaimed.

“That’s correct. I spoke to your master then. We agreed to recruit two of the Dragons to the USA. Yet, the problem was which two. I really admired your training then. The ultimate technique, the perfection, the accuracy.”

Tokutei was listening to every word with a lot of attention. It was his team he was talking about. He tried not to let any thoughts into his mind, but the words he heard woke old memories.

“We made a decision, that as soon as I find what I am looking for, I will come for two of you. Two excellent ninjas pointed by your master were, Sato and you. I personally chose you, not only because of your masterful techniques, but also because of the symbolic meaning of your name.”

“My name?” the warrior asked curiously.

“Oh, it’s so obvious, isn’t it?” the old man said.

“*Toku* means an answer, and *tei* means an older brother.”

“Have you ever considered it not as two separated phrases, but as a whole name?”

The ninja thought about it, and realized what it meant. His eyes grew wide open.

“That’s right,” Arthur said, “You are special, particular.”

“But still, why did you need us?”

“Let me ask you something first. How did you feel when your team got attacked by the skeletons?”

Tokutei looked up and replied, “I wanted to stop it. I wanted to kill as many as I could, so my team could return safely home.”

“This is what I do. I stop such supernatural creatures from interfering with human world. Did you know that every year more people die because of a vampire bite, than because of a terrorist attack?”

“Wait, are you saying that you and your men kill monsters?”

“Well, actually, they are the U.S. Army, so only me. And not only monsters, but also demons, ghosts, and so on.”

“And you want me to join you? Give me one good reason.”

“I already did,” Arthur smiled. “I understand that it is difficult for you to cope with right now, but believe me, I know what you are feeling.”

“Do you? I just lost my whole team there!” the warrior replied with an angry voice.

“And they were everything I had! So can you say that you understand, huh?”

“Tokutei, I really do. I lost my wife 17 year ago.”

On hearing this, Tokutei calmed down and continued to listen.

“She was my only family, too. And to make things worse, she didn’t die of a disease, or a in an accident, but from a demon, so yes, I do understand what you’re going through right now.”

“I have been looking for five individuals for 15 years now. I have checked over 500 people, and you, Tokutei, proved to be the best fighter. I really want you to join my team.”

Tokutei dropped his eyes, and tried to think what to say next. All the thoughts from the night tried to mess with his head. *No, not yet.*

“You saw what these creatures had done with your group,” the old man continued.

“And there are, believe me, worse, far worse creatures in the world.”

The ninja still didn't know what to say, too many things happened in such a short time. "Look, you have nowhere to go, no one to live with. Join me, and start your new life. Don't you want to avenge your team? Your family?" Arthur tried to manipulate him. The Asian guy raised up his head.

"I wanted to say no, but since I have no choice now I will go join you."

"Follow me," Arthur said with satisfaction.

The old man started walking back to the helicopter. Tokutei made a step and stopped.

"What about this sword?"

The old man turned around.

"This sword is currently the most powerful cold steel weapon in the world. Hold on to it," he said with a smile, and continued walking to his machine.

Tokutei didn't move yet. He saw the soldiers coming back with the bodies. He couldn't repress the memories any more. Silence set in, as his mind raced. He was very confused, and couldn't think rationally what to do next. Having been left alone, as all his friends were gone. Friends who he spent all his life with. Friends who he could easily call family. Friends, who were the only people he truly knew. And now, this man in white wants him in his team. This new life, new home, new purpose to help people. And this legendary weapon he was carrying on his back.

"Please follow me," Arthur's voice stopped the silence, and the thoughts left his head.

"We'll fly to your home to bury the bodies. Then you will be given money, tickets, and everything you need. In one week you will fly to San Francisco. There we will meet again." Tokutei was listening with patience, but said nothing.

"I know you need some time to recover from the shock. But believe me; a better life is awaiting you."

They both entered and sat inside the helicopter. The pilot turned the engine, and a moment later, the machine slowly took off. Tokutei was sitting comfortably, gazing through the window at the forest and soldiers putting bodies into the other helicopters. He couldn't stand it anymore. He turned his head away from the window, covered his eyes, and let his tears flow. Arthur was sitting next to him.

*"I wish he'd listened to me," he thought. "One mistake, one late signal, and almost all of the Dragons are dead."*

The machines headed towards the Tokyo city, leaving the bamboo forest filled with bones.

## **Book 0- Part 3- Dan Night**

### SUMMARY

Dan is a nineteen-year old orphan. He belongs to NYVHA (New York Vampire Hunters Association) One day he received a message that a big vampire shipment is going to happen that very evening. The mission is to kill all of creatures before they spread into the city. However, not everything goes, as they expected...

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