

THE HONOR OF THE SALESMEN

by

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FADE IN

EXT. DESERT -- DAY

The sun hangs in the sky, a pure shade of red so that it resembles the Japanese flag. An armored samurai warrior makes his way across the desert.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

A samurai's journey consists of a million steps.

The warrior comes across an older, larger warrior, who casually turns and cuts the first warrior's head off.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

But none are important except his last.

The older warrior lifts up his mask in grim satisfaction.

INT. OFFICE (COLLEGE) -- DAY

A financial aid office at Cuyahoga University. Behind the desk sits a financial aid COUNSELOR, who has the same face as the murdering warrior from the desert.

Sitting on the other side is ARTHUR MARKS, 21. Arthur is tall, regular build and weight, and usually wears a funny t-shirt with a collared unbuttoned shirt. He never wears anything that associates him with the University. Arthur is the same as the wandering warrior in the previous scene.

ARTHUR

I don't understand. How can it be canceled?

COUNSELOR

Your parents did not provide the proper paperwork in time. Your financial aid depends on all your tax returns being in before the first week of school ends.

ARTHUR

My parents don't have tax returns for last year yet. They filed an extension.

COUNSOLER

Financial aid comes from the government. They have rules in place, which were not followed.

ARTHUR

Rules that we were not told about when we were here last week.

COUNSELOR

It's all available from our guide, or from the file online.

ARTHUR

You mean that guide?

He gestures at an immense manual with all manner of bookmarks, papers, and post-its protruding from the sides.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

And the non-searchable file, protected by password?

COUNSOLER

There's nothing I can do. If you'd like to try for a private loan...

ARTHUR

If my parents had good enough credit for a massive private loan, I wouldn't need financial aid.

COUNSOLER

You'll just have to wait for next semester then. Next!

INT. APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Arthur enters the apartment, and tosses an empty bookbag to the ground.

ARTHUR

Alice, I'm back!

ALICE BRADLEY, 20, a short, longhaired woman, slightly younger than Arthur, with an accent that suggests an exotic past without the looks to match, is sitting in front of the TV on a couch, flipping between three different stations.

ALICE

Hey, baby. How did it go?

ARTHUR

It turns out I'm going to have to get a job.

Arthur sits down on the couch and puts his arm around Alice. She leans in close to him.

ALICE

Oh? Your loan not as big as you thought?

ARTHUR

There is no loan. There's no financial aid. There's no scholarship.

ALICE

Did you win the lottery?

ARTHUR

I went to financial aid today, and all my aid is gone. Either I could produce eighteen grand right then and there, or become a drop out.

ALICE

Oh, that's terrible!

(beat)

ALICE (CONT'D)

You're not going back to Boston, are you?

ARTHUR

And leave you here alone? No way.

They have a slightly drawn out kiss, which leaves them both grinning when they separate.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Besides, I can't get out of the lease. I'd become the first guy to ever have a negative number for a credit score.

ALICE

You're such a romantic. You can work this out by next semester, right?

ARTHUR

I'm sure. Now all I have to do is find something temporary to keep us afloat.

ALICE

Come to the bedroom, and I'll keep you afloat.

She stands up and pulls his hand.

ARTHUR

I can't believe I always fall for such corny lines.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE COMPUTER SCIENCE BUILDING -- DAY

Arthur pulls up in his car outside the computer science building to drop Alice off.

ALICE

See? Now that you've dropped out, you can drive me to class instead of having to take the bus.

ARTHUR

Now who's the romantic?

They have a quick parting kiss before she exits the car.

ALICE

Good luck job hunting!

ARTHUR

How hard could it be? Knock on wood.

He knocks on the dashboard panel.

INT. DELUXE COMPUTER REPAIR -- DAY

Arthur enters the Deluxe Computer Repair, and sees the MANAGER.

MANAGER

We'd love to have someone like you on the staff. But we hired four guys last week when the semester started.

INT. MOVIE THEATER -- DAY

Arthur is speaking to another MANAGER.

MANAGER 2

You and every other student. We filled all of our positions last week, but if you leave your number, we'll call you if we need anyone.

INT. TRAM*LAW DEPARTMENT STORE -- DAY

Arthur, now sweating, his clothes dirtier, his resume more crumpled, speaks to another MANAGER.

MANAGER 3

We mainly hire locals. It's store policy to not hire students because they never last.

The manager gets up to head to a crisis in one of the checkout lines.

ARTHUR

But I'm not a student.

MANAGER 3

Close enough.

EXT. COLLEGE TOWN -- DAY

Arthur drives around town, looking at every store for a "Help Wanted" sign. He passes by a fast food chain with the sign in the window, shakes his head, then drives on by.

Soon, Arthur has found himself on a road he's unfamiliar with, heading out of town, but the road provides no chances for him to turn around.

Arthur looks more pensive as he continues down the mysterious road, now clearly in wilderness and away from the safety of the college town.

He spots a sign that says "JEFFERSON 5 miles."

He crests the hill over to Jefferson, a rural area that nonetheless has a number of chain stores and restaurants. He spots a large red building on his immediate left.

The building has a sign: "CIRCUIT SAMURAI" identifying the name of the business with the slogan "We Slash Prices!" below it. The sign also has an animated neon samurai slashing a dollar sign.

A banner hanging outside catches his eye: "HELP WANTED." Arthur pulls in and finds a space right by the front door, as if fate was telling him that he has come to the right place.

INT. CIRCUIT SAMURAI -- DAY

Arthur enters and is happy to survey what looks like a nice work environment. The aisles are lined with various electronic devices.

The staff are engaged with customers, many of whom seem to be the same age as Arthur. A pleasant song is playing on the overhead sound system. Arthur nods and approaches the customer service desk. There he finds GEORGE KIM, a bald Korean in his 50's, with weathered features that indicate a career smoker. George sounds like the "tough-love" kung fu masters from martial arts movies with a thick accent and a variable grasp of English.

GEORGE

Can I help you?

ARTHUR

(almost giddy)

I'd like to apply for a job please.

GEORGE

Austin! Applicant!

AUSTIN HENRY enters, who is roughly the same age as Arthur. Like the rest of the staff, he wears the red Circuit Samurai uniform, but the shirt is untucked, and his wavy hair indicates that he is just on the edge of being acceptable to a formal dress code.

AUSTIN

Hey man, right this way, I'll set you up on the computer.

Arthur is lead to the back where furniture is sold, and sat down at a nice desk with a price tag. On the desk is an ancient computer that is used for applications.

A few keystrokes from Austin later, the screen shifts to a friendly application screen.

AUSTIN (CONT'D)

If only we could get porn on this thing. If you have any questions with the technical stuff ask me, but I'm not allowed to help with any of the questions.

ARTHUR

Thanks, I think I'll be alright.

The animated application begins to play. A soothing female voice announces what he is doing.

APPLICATION VOICE

Welcome to the Circuit Samurai Application! This application takes approximately 30 minutes to complete. Please enter your contact information in the prompts below.

Arthur easily fills in the basics before advancing to the next screen.

APPLICATION VOICE (CONT'D)

Stealing is OK as long as it's nothing big. Agree, or Disagree.

Arthur laughs and answers.

APPLICATION VOICE (CONT'D)

Please indicate the amount it is acceptable to steal from your workplace.

Arthur fills in 0.

APPLICATION VOICE (CONT'D)

Unions exist to place undue hardships on employers. True, or Mostly True.

Arthur now is getting confused. The questions begin to go faster.

APPLICATION VOICE (CONT'D)

There is no use in having good friends since they will only let you down. True or False.

Arthur pushes a button, and the machine makes a "wrong answer" noise.

APPLICATION VOICE (CONT'D)

It is maddening when the court lets guilty criminals go free. True or False.

Arthur flags down Austin.

ARTHUR

Is this serious?

AUSTIN

Sorry man, can't help you with the questions.

APPLICATION VOICE

You are somewhat of a thrill-seeker. Agree, or Disagree.

Arthur finally finishes the application, completely unsure if he answered correctly or not. Austin approaches and puts a friendly hand on Arthur's shoulder.

AUSTIN

You're in luck, Amy the GM has room to see you now.

Austin leads him into the back of the store, past an Employee's Only sign.

ARTHUR

GM?

AUSTIN

General Manager. She's one of the best we've had. Way better than the last guy. He spent the first two hours of every day in the can. He lasted four years.

INT. AMY'S OFFICE (CIRCUIT SAMURAI) -- DAY

Austin leads him into a small office in the back before Austin returns to his duties.

Standing in a corner examining some of the various charts on the walls is AMY MILLER, 55, the manager of this Circuit Samurai.

She is noticeably short, fierce in her management, but still a mother on some level.

She reaches down to pick up sheets coming off her printer.

AMY

Hello there...

She scans the printout.

AMY (CONT'D)

Arthur.

Arthur extends his hand first to shake.

ARTHUR

Good evening, pleased to meet you.

AMY

Let's see what we've got here.
Computer science major, that's good.
Some experience working at other big
stores. What's your school schedule
like?

ARTHUR

I'm wide open. I'm taking this
semester off from school.

AMY

Good, we need flexible part-timers.

ARTHUR

I'm available full-time, actually.

AMY

We don't have any full-time positions
open, but we promote from within
when a spot opens up.

Arthur looks disappointed, but nods. Amy continues to read through his application.

AMY (CONT'D)

The pay range you list here is above
what we offer, but a raise comes
after 90 days of working here,
followed by another 9 months later.
We also have a commission program
that brings your take home pay closer
to this scale.

ARTHUR

Sounds good to me.

Amy flips the page to the quiz answers section, and looks noticeably crestfallen.

AMY

Of course, that's mainly for salesman.
We can start you as a customer service
representative.

ARTHUR

Oh. Was it something on my quiz? The
questions were a bit confusing.

AMY

(brusquely)

I'm not allowed to discuss the quiz
results. I am prepared to offer you
associate customer service
representative, if you'd like the
job.

ARTHUR

(quickly)

I'll take it. Thank you.

He shakes her hand again.

Amy opens up a cabinet, and produces a Circuit Samurai uniform
shirt. She places a xeroxed manual and blank name tag on
top, and gingerly hands it to him. He reverently takes it.

AMY

You'll report for work on Monday.
You'll be trained by George, the
assistant manager of customer service.
Read the employee manual before then.
You'll be the first to use it since
it's been revised.

EXT. CIRCUIT SAMURAI -- DAY

Arthur leaves the building, and pumps his fist in the air.

EXT. JAPANESE SHRINE -- DAY

A knighting ceremony. A very serious ceremony where a wise,
older and larger samurai gives a younger recent inductee his
armor, while performing an elaborate looking ritual.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Becoming a Samurai was the dream of
all. The Samurai embodied all that
was noble in the world. Only by
proving that one was completely and
totally dedicated to their lord could
they be properly become a Samurai.
Complete obedience was asked, and
nothing less was tolerated. Every
task was to be carried out without
question.

The ritual complete, the old Samurai hands one final piece to the young Samurai: a name tag.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Such as it is with the Salesman.

INT. ARTHUR'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Arthur and Alice sit on the couch, he reading the employee manual given, and she at work on homework.

ARTHUR
"Such as it is with the Salesman."

ALICE
Sounds like they take it pretty seriously.

ARTHUR
Yeah, it's a lot different than the grocery stores I worked in, when we'd have cereal throwing contests.

ALICE
Mmm.

ARTHUR
What are you working on?

ALICE
Network Engineering. So far it's pretty tough, and I have to pass it this time because it won't be offered for another year.

ARTHUR
Oh, great, you mean the Network Engineering course that's required for all CompSci majors like myself?

ALICE
Umm, oops. You're welcome to look at my work whenever you want.

ARTHUR
(devilishly)
I'll take a look at your work right now.

He tosses the manual to the ground, and begins tickling her sides and grabbing at her clothes. She screams in delight.

The phone RINGS. Alice slides off the couch and runs to the phone.

ALICE
(out of breath)
Hello? Oh, hey, Greg.

ALICE (CONT'D)
 (yells over to Arthur)
 Greg and Ray and a few others are
 going out to eat, do you want to go?

ARTHUR
 I probably shouldn't, since I have
 to get up early. How about tomorrow,
 after I get off work?

ALICE
 Tomorrow would be better for us.
 Sounds good.

She hangs up the phone.

ARTHUR
 We can celebrate not being kicked
 out onto the street. As long as I
 get the hang of this strange samurai
 code.

INT.. ARTHUR'S APARTMENT (BEDROOM) -- DAY

The alarm clock rings. Arthur shuts it off, and climbs out
 of bed. Alice rolls over in the bed, taking up the entire
 thing.

Arthur pulls on his work clothes, last being the red polo
 shirt he was given. It's too short, in such a way that it
 seems impossible that it fits anyone. He does his best to
 tuck parts of it into his pants before heading out.

INT. CIRCUIT SAMURAI (FRONT COUNTER) -- DAY

Arthur enters through the front doors and spots George behind
 the customer service counter, and begins to walk over.

An irate female CUSTOMER walks past several of the other
 employees who are working on stocking the halls and approaches
 Arthur.

CUSTOMER
 Excuse me!

ARTHUR
 (stops)
 Me?

CUSTOMER
 Where do you keep the cables that
 make your computer go faster?

ARTHUR
 If you're talking about RAM, you'll
 have to ask one of those guys, I
 just started...

CUSTOMER

(interrupting)

None of them know anything! It's not RAM. It's a cable you plug into the back of your computer and it makes it go faster.

ARTHUR

I'm sorry, I don't think that exists. I'm studying computer science, and I haven't heard of anything like that.

CUSTOMER

I'll just go back to Furniture Depot where I saw it.

The customer walks out the front door. Arthur finishes his journey to George, who was apparently watching the whole conversation but did not intervene.

GEORGE

You're late.

Arthur checks the time- 11:01, one minute past when he was supposed to arrive.

ARTHUR

Sorry about that, this lady thought I worked here and was asking me for this...

GEORGE

You need to clock in before your scheduled shift, fully dressed.

Arthur considers protesting, but then thinks better of it.

ARTHUR

Sorry.

GEORGE

Time clock back here. Type in Social Security number, then clock in. Make sure to clock out for all breaks.

Arthur tries this, and receives a sound that indicates an error.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Your numbers won't be in system until next week. You come see a manager when you arrive, and for every break until then. Now, the register.

The two head to the register behind the customer service counter.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

You enter in social security number as login, and birthday as password. Then register ready to go. You scan items, push tender, take money. Simple. We try test now.

George leaves from behind the counter, grabs a few random items from various shelves, and returns with them. He places them on the counter and stands there impatiently.

Both are silent for a while.

George makes a gesture, and Arthur suddenly gets it. Arthur scans the items, and pushes the total button.

ARTHUR

It comes to \$14.25.

GEORGE

Wrong.

ARTHUR

Wrong?

GEORGE

Wrong. When a customer approaches, you say "Can I help you, sir?" Then you say "It will be a pleasure to serve. Do you have a Circuit Samurai Honor Card?" Then you take card, scan it.

ARTHUR

Do you have a Circuit Samurai Honor card?

GEORGE

Make sure to say "Did you find everything you were looking for?"

ARTHUR

Did you find everything you were looking for?

GEORGE

Then when finished, say "Your total is..." Take payment, give change, say "Thank you for shopping at Circuit Samurai, have a nice day."

ARTHUR

Your total is \$14.25.

GEORGE

Red button clears transaction to start over.

Arthur pushes the button, and the two stare at each other again. George makes the same impatient gesture.

ARTHUR

Oh, err, can I help you sir?

GEORGE

I'm ready to be rung up.

ARTHUR

It will be a pleasure to serve. Do you have a Circuit Samurai Honor Card?

GEORGE

No.

ARTHUR

Did you find everything you were looking...?

GEORGE

(interrupting)

Wrong!

ARTHUR

What do I say if the customer says I'm wrong?

GEORGE

No, if customer says no to bonus card, you say "It's absolutely free, and you can earn rebates on your purchases. Shall I sign you up for one?"

ARTHUR

(faking exuberance)

It's absolutely free! And you can earn rebates on your purchases! Shall I sign you up for one?

GEORGE

No, I have one. You can scan a card, or look it up by pushing that button and typing in customer's phone number.

Arthur has gotten the game now, and types it in before continuing to scan.

ARTHUR

Did you find everything you were looking for today?!?

GEORGE

Yes.

ARTHUR

Your total will be \$14.25!

George presses the button to clear transaction.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Thank you for shopping at Circuit Samurai and have a nice day!!!

GEORGE

Not bad. Need practice.

ARTHUR

None of this was in the manual I received. I thought I'd be receiving training.

GEORGE

(confused)

This is training. You need practice now. You ring people up. If you need help, push page button on phone, and call me up.

Arthur nods. George heads off to restock shelves. Arthur starts to fiddle with the different shelves and drawers around the register. A short time later, a WOMAN walks up and places her basket on the counter.

ARTHUR

Hi, can I help you with something today?

WOMAN

Fine.

Arthur pauses, then begins to scan.

ARTHUR

Do you have a Circuit Samurai Honor Card?

WOMAN

No.

ARTHUR

It's completely free and earns you a rebate back...

WOMAN

I don't want one. I have far too many cards as it is.

ARTHUR

(continuing his speech)

I can sign you up for one right...

WOMAN

No more cards! I am tired of everyone having a card! A card for every store I go to! I can't carry around that many cards! You should just be able to take my phone number and use that for a card!

ARTHUR

I can do that.

WOMAN

(pauses)
No more cards!

ARTHUR

That's \$29.50.

The woman swipes her credit card, signs, and takes the bags.

WOMAN

Tell your bosses: we're sick and tired of cards!

The woman storms out. Arthur stands there confused, and maybe even a little hurt.

Noticing the scene, GARY RAY stops scanning inventory at the end of an aisle, and walks up.

Gary, 23, has dark hair with a clean bowl haircut but hasn't touched a razor for a few days. He wears a faded version of the Circuit Samurai uniform.

GARY

Hey man, don't let it get to you. Some people are just crazy, especially here in old Jefferson.

ARTHUR

My first customer just blew up at me for doing what I was told to do?

GARY

It happens, you just get used to it. I'm Gary.

ARTHUR

I'm Arthur, nice to meet you. Can I ask, what's up with George?

GARY

He's a bit uptight, and even after all this time here doesn't seem to understand the American lifestyle. He likes making us stay late to close up.

ARTHUR

Oh good. Hopefully I can play the "I don't know where anything is" card.

GARY

He's sexist too. Only the men have to stay. The women get to go early.

ARTHUR

Great. Guess I'd better tell my girlfriend that scheduled until 10 doesn't mean home at 10.

GARY

Get used to it. You're at Circuit Samurai now: the company's bitch.

Gary glances over to the side.

GARY (CONT'D)

Oh, here come's Kevin with another sale. Like he needs it.

ARTHUR

Why's that?

GARY

He's number one in all the sales numbers, so he makes the best commission. And his dad's a big VP and pays everything for him.

George peeks out from an aisle.

GEORGE

Gary! Get back to inventory!

Gary mock salutes and heads back to his aisle.

KEVIN KEEL, 19, blonde and athletic with a crisp clean uniform, approaches behind the counter carrying a piece of software. Kevin is the James Bond of retail salespeople, with a license to sell.

KEVIN

Hey, what's up, I'm Kevin.

ARTHUR

Hey, I'm Arthur.

KEVIN

That guy over there will be coming over for this shortly. My numbers are 5163 when it asks for sales credit. I can't believe he's actually going to buy this.

Arthur looks down at what's in his hand. It's a copy of Windows.

ARTHUR
Windows? Why is that odd?

KEVIN
He came in and asked for the "200 dollar jukebox program" his friend told him about.

ARTHUR
But, every computer has a built in "jukebox."

KEVIN
I know, so I sold him Windows, which is \$200. Just don't say anything to him, we get sweet commissions on these. Thanks, man.

Kevin heads off to help another group. The JUKEBOX MAN approaches, a man in his 40's.

ARTHUR
Hi, can I help you?

JUKEBOX MAN
Yes, I'd like to buy this. I can't wait to finally play CDs on my computer.

ARTHUR
(hesitant)
Glad to help, I'm sure. Do you have a Circuit Samurai honor card?

JUKEBOX MAN
Right here.

ARTHUR
Your total is \$215.09.

Jukebox man hands over exact change, and takes his bag.

INT. CLASSROOM -- DAY

PROFESSOR GENE stands at the head of the Computer Science Lab. Alice and GREG, 21, Arthur's best friend on campus sit next to each other behind computers.

PROFESSOR GENE
Matthew Lake? Right. Arthur Marks?
Arthur? Has anyone seen Arthur?

ALICE
He had to drop out, professor.

PROFESSOR GENE

Oh, I'm sorry to hear that. Tell him
to see me if he has a chance.

The professor continues reciting names in the background.

GREG

(to Alice)

Way to go. I'm sure he'll love to
hear that his favorite professor
knows he's a college drop out.

ALICE

I didn't mean to.

GREG

I know. You guys coming out tonight?

ALICE

Of course. It's Art's first day of
work, and I'm sure he'll want a few
margaritas afterwards.

GREG

Great. A group of us is going at 10,
we want to have enough time to eat
before they close.

ALICE

Art gets off at 10, so we might be a
little late, but we'll be there.

INT. CIRCUIT SAMURAI - NIGHT

The clock strikes 10. George approaches the counter, and
takes out the money from the register. The Jukebox Man rushes
in through the front door and approaches the counter.

JUKEBOX MAN

I need to return this. This is
Windows! My computer already has
this!

GEORGE

We cannot take back opened software.
It's the law.

JUKEBOX MAN

I already have Windows. Your salesman
lied to me. You have to take it back.

GEORGE

I am sorry. Return policy clearly
says that we cannot take back opened
software.

JUKEBOX MAN

Oh yeah? Where does it say that? You need to have a sign up for a policy like that!

The point of view changes to show the gigantic sign behind the customer service counter (and behind George) that says in large letters "OPENED SOFTWARE CANNOT BE RETURNED". George makes the same impatient gesture he made before, but towards the sign.

JUKEBOX MAN (CONT'D)

You expect your customers to read all that? You can't have too many signs up. It's unfair!

GEORGE

If you call number on the box, company will take it back.

The Jukebox Man grumbles something, but takes his box and leaves. Arthur steps out from the side, where he had been avoiding Jukebox Man.

ARTHUR

A good note to end the day on.

GEORGE

A manager will always count down your register. You can go home...

Arthur starts to leave.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Right after reshops.

George holds up a basket full of items and hands it off to Arthur.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Alice finishes writing out a note, taking the time to draw little hearts on the outside. At the same time she's talking on her cell phone.

ALICE

Hey Greg, can you pick me up? I think Arthur's running late on his first day. Yeah, it's probably just because it's his first day. I'm sure he won't make a habit of it. You'll just have to show me a good time until he gets there. Yep, see you soon.

INT. CIRCUIT SAMURAI - NIGHT

Gary begins to take Arthur on a tour of the store.

GARY

Reshopping is like shopping on Bizarro World. You place each item back where it goes on the shelves, straightening up as you go.

As they walk, items are placed on the shelves. Some are in the appropriate place, while some are placed behind other, different items.

GARY (CONT'D)

Over here is electronics: printers, computers, fax machines, all that stuff is over here, and where the real selling happens. This is the best area for salespeople because of our commissions. We make some money on every product we sell, and then we make a lot of money on selling extended warranties.

ARTHUR

I see. It always annoyed me when I shopped at a store and I had someone trying to force a warranty on me.

GARY

Now you know why: they're worth cash to us. People who work here always buy them, but that's because we know how to use them. Our retail-fu, we call it.

ARTHUR

I get it. Still, if they ever make me a salesman, I'd try not to be one of those obnoxious guys.

The two have moved to the other side of the store, with higher rows that block vision to the rest of the store. The supplies section contains paper, cables, and various other accessories.

GARY

I stopped being a salesman, but they drag me over sometimes. I know a lot about computers and I've been with the store forever. I just couldn't deal with the pressure of trying to sell all the time. So I asked to be over here in supplies. It's more mindless work like stocking when working over here.

ARTHUR

I can't imagine the commission is very good over here.

GARY

Nah, we sometimes get a bonus if a printer gets sold with some paper, but that's about it. Speaking of which, there's also...

Gary leads Arthur to a corner of the store. The walls of the corner are lined with ink cartridges, separated by a barrier. Gary removes keys from around his neck and unlocks a door allowing access behind the barrier.

GARY (CONT'D)

...THE WALL! You will hate the wall. Ink cartridges have no rhyme or reason. We try to keep them loosely organized by manufacturer, but oftentimes whoever is putting them away just gives up and puts them wherever.

GEORGE (O.S.)

(over loudspeaker)

Associates to the front.

The employees, several of whom Arthur had not spoken to, all congregate in the front. There are about 7 people there altogether, including a few high school age girls.

GEORGE

Everyone, this is Arthur, he new guy in customer service.

The assembled mass mumbles something resembling a hello.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Now, girls go. Strong men, stay. Some printers in the back need to go up.

The girls head out the front; the guys groan. Several of them take off their work shirts and head to the back. Arthur follows along.

INT. APARTMENT- NIGHT

Arthur opens the door to the apartment, shuffling his feet with even the simplest tasks appearing to be a great chore for him.

He notices the note on the counter- "ARTHUR" on a folded slip of paper, surrounded by hearts. He opens it and reads it.

INSERT: Handwritten note. Alice's voice reads along with the note.

ALICE (V.O.)

Hey baby, I've gone out with Greg and the guys to San Pedro, I didn't know what time you'd be out.

Arthur looks over at the clock- 11:17.

ALICE

Head on over, we should be there until after 11. Oh, and your mom called, she said the tax returns are still held up.

Arthur puts the note down, shuffles into the bedroom, and falls on the bed.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

The samurai from earlier stands among many other young samurai, each making the same motions as an instructor in the front for combat training.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Anyone can be a soldier. Anyone can wave a sword and rend their enemies. The Samurai is something else. The samurai is an ideal given form, completely dedicated to the cause of serving their master.

The instructor performs a complicated maneuver, and only the Arthur-samurai is able to repeat it.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Only when embodying the cause completely, can a warrior become a samurai.

INT. CIRCUIT SAMURAI - DAY

Arthur stands at the customer service desk, dealing with an OLD LADY. She is frail, short, and hunched over.

ARTHUR

Here's your receipt, and your paperwork for the warranty Kevin told you about. If you have any problems with the printer, just call this number here, and they'll walk you through whatever needs done. Do you need any help taking this out?

OLD LADY

No, I think I have it.

The Old Lady lifts a large printer over her shoulder, puts the warranty paperwork in her mouth, and grabs a bag with accessories with the other hand.

ARTHUR

Have a nice day, and thank you for shopping Circuit Samurai!

The lady exits, and Kevin swings behind the counter to talk to Arthur as he finishes putting away everything from the sale.

KEVIN

You got my numbers in there for the sale credit, right?

ARTHUR

Of course. I sold her the extra ink, though, so my numbers are in there for that.

Arthur presses a button to print a receipt, and shows it to Kevin.

KEVIN

She turned me down for ink!

ARTHUR

Hey, I just had to explain how the printer companies only give a quarter full cartridges to come with it, and she didn't want to run out while printing fliers for her Church's tractor pull.

KEVIN

(reluctantly)
Pretty impressive.

ARTHUR

Thanks. Now, just have to close out before the meeting.

Arthur closes out his register and efficiently lays it out for a manager to take.

Employees, both in uniform and out of uniform, cluster near The Wall. Amy and George are working on setting up the area, including chairs and fliers.

Soon, everyone is seated, and Amy begins her speech.

AMY

Thank you all for coming. I have a number of announcements to make. First, I want to welcome our newest team member, Arthur. Even though he has only be here a few weeks, we have decided to promote Arthur to Associate Electronics Salesman.

Arthur grins. Gary and Austin gives him congratulations in their own ways. Kevin simply nods, and doesn't look thrilled.

AMY (CONT'D)

Secondly, on a sadder note, George will be retiring in two weeks.

Several people clap, which gets a glare from Amy.

AMY (CONT'D)

However, we already have his replacement lined up, and it's keeping it in the family. Please welcome George's daughter, Kim, who will be taking over his position as Assistant Manager.

KIM KIM, 31, enters from the employee area, a fairly round Korean woman with short hair. She is wearing a solid gray shirt, in contrast to the light pink shirts that the other managers are wearing. She speaks with a much better command of English than her father, with only a slight accent.

AUSTIN

(whispering)

Her name is Kim Kim?

AMY

Kim is fresh out of the new management training program, and has some exciting news for us. Kim?

KIM

Good evening everyone. Circuit Samurai is going to be going through some major changes shortly. The President of the company has developed a program called Back to Bushido.

ARTHUR

Back to Bushido?

GARY

The first Circuit Samurai store was in Bushido, Kansas. They claim it's still the best store.

KIM

Back to Bushido is designed to put the emphasis back on customer service so as to provide a better experience than our chief competitors, Tram*Law and Office Despot.

AMY

Which of course we all want.

The crowd mumbles agreement.

KIM

Some of the major changes you should be aware of. First, our slogan will no longer be about prices. It is now "An Honor to Serve" to show our new emphasis on customer service.

AUSTIN

(quietly)

And because we were getting our butts kicked in prices anyway.

KIM

You all will be receiving new uniforms to go along with the new branding. The sign outside will be replaced too.

GARY

(quietly)

Seems like another random corporate shift. No biggie.

KIM

As of next week, when the Back to Bushido plan officially launches, individual employees will no longer receive commissions based on what they sell.

This draws a very strong negative reaction from the crowd. Kevin leans forward to the edge of his seat and shouts in surprise. Arthur looks shocked as well.

KIM (CONT'D)

Instead, every employee in the store will receive bonuses based on several scores in various areas for the store as a whole. So each store must now act more like a team.

ARTHUR

(quietly)

That doesn't sound too bad.

KIM

And every salesman will be rated based on these Bushido scores as well. Consistent under-performers will be let go, and the top performing salesperson will have the highest consideration for raises.

KEVIN

They can't do this! I broke records this month!

AMY

Thank you, Kim. I know that if we all keep up the same level of customer service, we will be well rewarded. This is a great chance for us to work as a team.

INT. REDNECK BAR - NIGHT

Kevin, Austin, Gary, and Arthur are out to dinner at a seedy looking bar in downtown Jefferson.

KEVIN

No commissions? Bullshit!

GARY

They've tried a lot of crazy things over the years, but this is certainly new.

AUSTIN

Guess we were losing lots of money. We can't compete on prices with the big guys, so I guess they're trying to compete on service.

GARY

No kidding, you been in a Tram*Law lately? Employees aren't there to help. They're there to stock, and maybe watch for stealing if they get paid above minimum wage.

ARTHUR

Were the commissions really that juicy?

KEVIN

Easily a few hundred bucks on each paycheck. My new Pontiac is going to have to wait for a while now.

AUSTIN

Cry me a fuckin' river, man.

Kevin laughs and steals Austin's beer, downing it while Austin struggles to get it back.

ARTHUR

I wasn't getting many commissions as a cashier anyway, so I guess I won't miss it. I just have to keep the job or be out on the street.

GARY

Don't you live with your girlfriend?

ARTHUR

Yeah, but I pay for the apartment. Her mom and dad take care of all her tuition and expenses. I don't know if they'd spring for the extra money to support me... we haven't been dating for quite that long.

GARY

I wouldn't worry too much about losing your job. It's pretty tough to fire people.

AUSTIN

They'll just cut your hours back.

ARTHUR

What?

AUSTIN

The managers can do whatever they want with your hours. There's only a few ways you can get fired, because they don't want to get sued. If they want to punish you, they'll cut your hours back to nothing. Or change your department to make you miserable until you quit.

ARTHUR

So, I should still worry.

GARY

I guess so, yeah.

Arthur's cell phone rings.

ARTHUR

Hey Alice.

ALICE (V.O.)

Hey you. When are you coming home? I thought we could have dinner with the guys.

ARTHUR

Oh, that sounds good. But... I think I'm going to need to be picked up. I've had a few beers. Or something they claim is beer.

ALICE (V.O.)

Let me guess... you've already eaten too?

Arthur looks down at the plate of buffalo wing bones in front of him.

ARTHUR

In a manner of speaking. But I'll still come along, there's always room for more drinks!

The other guys raise their glasses to that.

ALICE (V.O.)

I'll be right over.

ARTHUR

Sorry guys, I'm popular tonight. I'll see you all next week when I become a salesman.

KEVIN

Just be prepared for some tough competition.

They toast to that.

INT. SAN PEDRO'S BAR AND GRILL - NIGHT

Alice and Arthur find the table where Greg, BRIAN (21), and BETH (21) are already sitting.

ALICE

Sorry we're late, somebody decided to leave his car in Jeffertucky.

ARTHUR

As part of an employee bonding exercise to discuss crazy changes, we decided it best to go to a bar.

GREG

What kind of crazy changes?

ARTHUR

There's this new sales program at work. They're taking away commissions, and replacing it with this elaborate system of numbers based on attachments, warranties, mystery shops...

Nobody is really paying attention to Arthur, so he trails off.

GREG

That does sound crazy. Speaking of which, did you hear about the assignments that Professor Gene has been giving out?

ALICE

No, I keep forgetting to tell him.

BETH

You might not see your girlfriend for a while. We're practically building our own operating system.

ARTHUR

That does sound pretty complicated...

BRIAN

You start on yours yet, Greg?

GREG

Are you kidding? I haven't defined all the pointers yet.

ALICE

That's farther than I've gotten. I still need to come up with a design spec on paper!

BRIAN

That was due last week. Professor Gene is going soft on us seniors.

ARTHUR

He can be a nice guy.

There's a short silence. A WAITRESS approaches and starts taking their order.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Fishbowl margarita please.

WAITRESS

You gonna share that? We don't serve it to individuals.

ARTHUR

She and I will share it.

ALICE

I can't, I don't want a hangover tomorrow for class.

GREG

I'll help you finish it. I'd like a plate of moz sticks too, please.

Greg turns back to Arthur.

GREG (CONT'D)

So how's the job going, other than crazy shit?

ARTHUR

I got a promotion to Salesman.

BETH

Ugh, I could never be a salesman,
it's like being a professional liar.

BRIAN

I'm sure the money's worth it, right
Art?

ARTHUR

Well... so far, it's not great, but
there's these commissions... which I
suppose I won't be getting either.

BRIAN

Just dump it. I'm sure you could
pick up some programming freelance
that pays way better.

ARTHUR

I've tried a few times, but they've
all been looking for degrees. And
I've been working so hard to get the
promotion, I haven't had a lot of
time to look around.

ALICE

He's just doing it until he can go
back to school.

GREG

If your parents ever file their taxes.

ARTHUR

Look, it's hard, ok? Owning a small
business is complicated.

The waitress comes and serves everyone's food, and puts the
gigantic drink in front of Arthur. Arthur takes a big swig.

BRIAN

So... how did everyone do on that
linear algebra exam?

Arthur leans back in his chair as everyone else begins to
talk to each other in the language of College. He takes his
fishbowl margarita in his hands, and drinks deeper.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

The young samurai rides on horseback through a farm, where
poor villagers are tending the fields.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

The Samurai's path is a lonely one.
Though he seeks honor for his family
and his master, he never joins them
in comradery.

(MORE)

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

He may even revel with other samurai,
but their path is not his. Only their
fate is the same.

The Samurai gallops off into the sunset away from the town.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Such as it is with the Salesman.

INT. CIRCUIT SAMURAI FRONT COUNTER - DAY

Arthur clocks in, then turns to be startled by George standing
right behind him.

GEORGE

Yesterday, you were an employee.
Today, you will become a salesman.

ARTHUR

Today I will have a heart attack!
How did you do that?

GEORGE

Be invisible for stocking, but ready
to appear as soon as a customer needs
help.

ARTHUR

That doesn't answer my question.

GEORGE

When you are truly a salesman, being
where needed will be natural, like
breathing. Come, let me teach you
how to breathe.

George heads towards the electronics equipment section.

Arthur breathes in and out into his hand a few times, looks
at his hand, shrugs, then follows.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Back to Bushido is customer service.
You are providing customers a service
by making sure they have everything
they need.

George stops at a large printer. With each sentence, he
gestures dramatically at a piece of merchandise to go with
the printer.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Printers need ink. Printer without
paper is like car without tires.
Printer without cable is like man
without head. Printer without ink is
like pen without-

ARTHUR

Ink?

GEORGE

Hand. Printer need all these. But printers break, and people stupid. That's why you sell warranty. Warranty on everything that can be plugged in. Warranty all the time.

ARTHUR

So what does the warranty do?

GEORGE

Good question. Every other store: warranty is shit. Warranties that come with them are shit too. Our warranty?

ARTHUR

(hesitant)

Not shit?

GEORGE

Watch your language. But right. If product under warranty break, customer calls number, and they send a check to buy new one. No problem. Or they can bring it here to swap.

ARTHUR

That does sound pretty good.

GEORGE

Customers used to shitty warranties. They see our warranty, they use other warranties to wipe their ass.

ARTHUR

That's not a required part of my sales pitch, is it?

GEORGE

There is no sales pitch. You telling the truth. You overcome all objections to sell product and attachments.

ARTHUR

What if they don't want the attachments, like they already have a cable?

GEORGE

Then you not telling enough truth! They have paper, is it good paper? They have cable, is it right cable?

ARTHUR

Ah. Photo paper instead of plain paper, that kind of thing?

GEORGE

Yes, gold cable faster than regular cable, double ink lasts longer than single ink. All helps customer.

George leans around Arthur.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

There, first customer.

DIGITAL CAMERA CUSTOMER is looking at the digital cameras on the wall, picking them up, and looking through the view finders.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Go over there and try.

ARTHUR

Wait, I haven't been trained on the different kinds of cameras.

GEORGE

That is not part of training. All you need is on tag. Sell camera bag, memory card, and...

ARTHUR

Warranty. Got it.

Arthur puffs himself up and approaches the customer.

DIGITAL CAMERA CUSTOMER

Hi there, could you help me with something?

ARTHUR

Absolutely. Are there some questions I can answer?

DIGITAL CAMERA CUSTOMER

I have some questions about this model here.

DCC gestures to a beat-up camera clearly marked "DISPLAY MODEL ONLY" with a clearance price tag.

Arthur moves closer and picks up the camera, and hands it to the customer. As the customer takes it, Arthur tries to take a subtle glance at the tag.

ARTHUR

Sure, how can I help?

DIGITAL CAMERA CUSTOMER
How many Megapixels does it have?

ARTHUR
Four.

DIGITAL CAMERA CUSTOMER
What kind of memory does it take?

ARTHUR
SD, which stands for Secure Digital.

DIGITAL CAMERA CUSTOMER
What kind of lenses does it come
with?

Arthur's eyes go to the tag again, which has no information
on this.

ARTHUR
The regular one. Nothing extra or
fancy.

DIGITAL CAMERA CUSTOMER
Sounds good. I'll take it.

ARTHUR
I'll get the packaging from the back.
Did you need a memory card to go
with it?

DIGITAL CAMERA CUSTOMER
Yes, I'll take a 1 gigabyte card.

ARTHUR
How about a case for it?

DIGITAL CAMERA CUSTOMER
I think my old one will work.

ARTHUR
This one has extra pockets and is
contoured to the camera. And it's
clearanced too.

DIGITAL CAMERA CUSTOMER
That sounds good. I'll take it.

ARTHUR
Hey George! Can you get the packaging
out of the back for this one, and
unhook the camera here for the A20?

George nods in the background.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)
I'll meet you right up there at the
front register in just a minute.

The man takes the camera bag, and walks up to the front. George approaches and taps a few keys into a security panel to unhook the camera.

GEORGE

Good, but warranty?

ARTHUR

I'll get him up front.

George hands him the camera, the memory card, and paperwork for the warranty.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Here's everything for the camera. George will be right out with the packaging. We offer an extended warranty...

DIGITAL CAMERA CUSTOMER

No.

ARTHUR

I'm sorry?

DIGITAL CAMERA CUSTOMER

I don't want a warranty.

ARTHUR

Just to let you know, ours covers any damage and instead of having to send it back...

DIGITAL CAMERA CUSTOMER

(overlapping)

My son worked at one of these kind of stores and he said that all warranties are scams.

ARTHUR

...You just receive a check to replace it.

DIGITAL CAMERA CUSTOMER

No.

ARTHUR

I'd really recommend it in this case, since it's a display model and already is showing some damage.

DIGITAL CAMERA CUSTOMER

I don't want it.

ARTHUR

(pauses)

It's only \$14.99.

DIGITAL CAMERA CUSTOMER
What's my total?

ARTHUR
\$86.78.

The DCC swipes his credit card. George walks up and hands the packaging to Arthur. Arthur deliberately places the camera gingerly in the bag, and carefully stacks everything else around it.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)
Without the warranty, you have two weeks to return this if there's any problems.

DIGITAL CAMERA CUSTOMER
If there's any problems, I'll just come back and sue you.

ARTHUR
Very mature. Have a nice day.

DCC guy leaves. Arthur shakes a bit, and turns to George.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)
I know I didn't get the warranty.

GEORGE
You did fine. Next time you get warranty with non-crazy man.

INT. FAMILY RESTAURANT - DAY

All the Circuit Samurai employees are gathered around tables. The decorations indicate that this is George's retirement party.

AMY
And we certainly will miss how clean he kept the store every night. Now to say a few words, here's the man of the hour!

George stands. Arthur and Alice enter the restaurant, and sit down at the table with Kevin, Austin, and Gary. In the background, George is giving a long winded speech that the table is ignoring.

ARTHUR
Guys, this is my girlfriend Alice, Alice, this is Kevin, Austin and Gary.

They shake her hand and say a few pleasantries.

ALICE

So these are the guys that you spend more time with than me.

ARTHUR

I can't really help it since we work together.

KEVIN

At least we should have shorter days now that George is leaving.

AUSTIN

I dunno, I heard that Kim's even stricter. More emotional too, being a woman.

ALICE

What do you mean by that?

AUSTIN

No offense, but all our woman bosses cry more and yell more.

ARTHUR

Austin's just kidding, I'm sure.

GARY

Austin's a big fan of women, trust me.

ALICE

Art, I've got some studying to do, can we go?

ARTHUR

I wanted to get a free meal, I don't have my parents to fall back on for food.

ALICE

Are you saying...

George's speech suddenly cuts through the talk.

GEORGE

And finally, I glad to retire because now I can bang Missy the cashier girl all I want.

All eyes go to Missy, a very young cashier in a skimpy outfit chewing gum who doesn't seem phased by all the attention. The only person in the restaurant not with their mouth open is Kim, who is shaking her head in her hands.

INT. CIRCUIT SAMURAI - DAY

Arthur is restocking inventory when a CUSTOMER, a 40ish redneck in cutoffs and a dirty baseball cap, moves towards him from the cashier station. Arthur, ever vigilant, meets the customer halfway.

ARTHUR

Can I help you with something today?

CUSTOMER

I hear you're the guru.

ARTHUR

I suppose so. What are you looking for?

CUSTOMER

My printer doesn't work no more.

ARTHUR

Did you buy it here?

CUSTOMER

Nope.

ARTHUR

Is it one of these that we sell?

CUSTOMER

Nope.

Arthur suppresses a sigh, but clearly is getting more annoyed at something that is not his job.

ARTHUR

What's wrong with it?

CUSTOMER

It streaks and sometimes won't print.

ARTHUR

Can you be more specific?

CUSTOMER

Nope.

ARTHUR

I recommend replacing the ink cartridges for the streaking, and replacing your cable with a new one.

CUSTOMER

And that'll fix it?

ARTHUR

It'd be the first things I try.

(MORE)

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

If not, you'll have to talk to the company who made your printer. It's usually cheaper to just replace it.

CUSTOMER

I'll head back in if it doesn't.

The customer heads off to The Wall of Ink. Arthur looks back and forth, seeing if there's any managers on the floor and if there's any more incoming customers.

Satisfied that he's in the clear, he walks to the back to talk to Austin.

ARTHUR

How is it that people have turned the question of "are you smart?" into a trick question?

AUSTIN

That's Jefferson. Folks who grew up on farms but wanted to live in a city. Many of these people are still on their first printer.

ARTHUR

I know, but how is it out job to diagnose their computer problems that have nothing to do with what we sell?

AUSTIN

That's customer service, I guess. Back to Bushido says that if someone calls and asks for a tune-up and oil change, we say that we can do that.

ARTHUR

But I could be giving them bad advice, or in this case, slanted advice that gives me money. It's like calling a Doctor's office and saying that your back hurts, and wanting to know what's wrong with it without any examination.

AUSTIN

People 'round here don't see it that way. Remember, to them, you're the expert, that's why you have the job.

ARTHUR

Yeah, a few dollars above minimum wage is really an expert salary.

KIM (O.S.)

Arthur!

Arthur is startled.

ARTHUR

(loudly)

So you say the warranty covers any damage? I'll take it!

KIM

Arthur, come here.

ARTHUR

No problem, Kim, was just working on a practice customer situation with Austin.

KIM

Yes, good, but come here for a minute.

Kim looks very serious. Arthur is afraid that he's been caught, or being punished in some way. She leads him into the backroom.

ARTHUR

Someone should watch the floor while I'm gone, right?

KIM

It's covered. Take a look at this.

Kim shows Arthur the newest Back to Bushido chart, freshly printed and displayed in the back room.

ARTHUR

The Back to Bushido monthly sales chart. I didn't do that bad, did I? I had a few problem customers...

KIM

Try reading it.

Arthur pans across.

ARTHUR

I'm number one. In almost everything.

KIM

And you've gotten every single mystery shop correct.

ARTHUR

That's... I don't know how...

KIM

You're living the Back to Bushido code, that's how. And as a result of these numbers, we've decided to award you the position of full-time Salesperson.

ARTHUR

Thank you!

Behind them, Kevin comes in and takes off his jacket as he prepares for his shift.

KEVIN

Hey guys.

KIM

Kevin, just in time, go ahead and clock in and take a look at this with me.

ARTHUR

I should get back to the floor.

KIM

No, stay a second Arthur. Kevin, these are this month's Back to Bushido numbers.

Kevin looks them over, and tries to hide his annoyance by playing it cool.

KEVIN

Good job, Art.

KIM

As a result, we've decided to give Arthur the position of fulltime Salesperson.

KEVIN

(no longer hiding his
annoyance)

What? I have way more experience than him. I applied for that job months ago.

ARTHUR

I should get out to the floor...

KIM

Yes, but since Arthur is not in school, we can schedule him for more hours. But the good news is, we have a bigger budget for this month's bonuses. Whoever comes out on top is going to see a pretty nice increase in pay.

ARTHUR

Thanks for the heads up.

Kevin and Arthur go out onto the floor, but the customers there are already being taken care of by the other employees.

KEVIN
 Congratulations on the promotion.

ARTHUR
 Thanks. It's not that big a deal.

KEVIN
 Not that big a deal? That's extra money man, I need it if I'm going to have that new ride by Christmas.

ARTHUR
 And I need the money if I'm going to have a shot of going back to school, or else be stuck here forever. I think that's a bit more important.

KEVIN
 You're so good at this job, maybe you deserve to be here.

Arthur is not happy about hearing that. He tries to respond a few times before coming out with it.

ARTHUR
 I guess we'll just see who earns the bigger bonus this month.

KEVIN
 Yes we will.

ARTHUR
 I'm going home then. Good luck matching my warranty sales from today.

INT. CIRCUIT SAMURAI - NIGHT

Kevin and Kim are the last ones remaining, the other employees and remaining customers head out of the store as they turn off the lights.

KIM
 It's going to take me a while for me to close out the books tonight. Do you mind sticking around a while?

KEVIN
 No problem. I'll just do some stocking.

KIM
 Good idea.

Kevin heads to the back, and on the way, grabs a screwdriver, a black marker, and a roll of tape.

He takes a printer down from the stock shelves, carefully removes the tape sealing the box shut, and takes out the

printer. He pulls away some of the packaging, and removes a few pieces from the printer.

He pockets the pieces, and reseals the printer, good as new. He makes a mark on the label, and returns it to the shelf.

INT. CIRCUIT SAMURAI KIM'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Kim picks up the intercom.

KIM

We're done Kevin, thanks. Meet me at the front.

INT. CIRCUIT SAMURAI STOCKING ROOM - NIGHT

Kevin places another marked printer back in the stocks, carefully placing the marked printers together, before heading to the front.

Kim is standing there by the front, waiting for him, in her jacket with purse slung over her shoulder.

KIM

Get everything stocked to your satisfaction?

KEVIN

Much better now.

They exit the front doors.

INT. CIRCUIT SAMURAI - DAY

Gary is restocking and scanning the ink, when a family approaches. A mother, father, a daughter, and son. They are dressed nicely in Sunday church clothes. They are all smiles as they approach The Wall.

Gary puts down his scan gun, and smiles.

GARY

Hey, can I help you guys today?

HUSBAND

Yes sir, you can. I need some ink today.

GARY

What kind do you need?

The husband's cell phone rings. He apologizes to Gary and answers it.

HUSBAND

Hello? What? Those fucking niggers did that? We oughta string them up.

The husband looks to his family, who all nod in agreement with him.

WIFE

(to Gary)

Those people are always causing problems.

The kids nod again to this, still smiling. Gary stands there dumbfounded for a minute. The husband finishes his conversation and hangs up.

HUSBAND

Sorry about that, nigger kids on my lawn again. I think it's a Lemart 72 printer.

GARY

I refuse to help you people. You're going to have to get it yourselves.

Gary walks off, leaving the family standing there. Gary ducks into the backroom and breathes in and out a few times, visibly upset. After a few seconds, he hears complaining outside, and peeks.

Kim is talking to the husband.

HUSBAND

And he said he refused to help me. I demand to get a discount, and that he be punished.

KIM

Yes sir, I'll have a talk with him. I'm sure there was some kind of misunderstanding. Go ahead and take the cartridge on us.

WIFE

I hope my children didn't learn anything from this whole unpleasant experience...

The family leaves the store. Kim comes back to talk to Gary.

KIM

We'll have a talk tomorrow morning about this. Clock out and head home.

INT. CIRCUIT SAMURAI - DAY

Arthur enters the backroom, and takes off his jacket. He examines the new Back to Bushido sales chart. He hears Gary coming towards him.

GARY

That is some grade A bullshit right there.

ARTHUR

Hey, what's going on?

GARY

Apparently I don't fit into corporate's flavor of the week, so I've been fired. We're supposed to agree with racists now.

ARTHUR

What? That's crazy!

Gary gathers up the things from his locker.

GARY

They were just looking for an excuse. I don't sell many warranties anymore. Christ, I've been with the company longer than the people who wrote these rules!

ARTHUR

We can't lose you! It's only two weeks until Black Friday! We need everyone, especially someone as experienced as you.

GARY

Experience, sales, helping the good customers. None of that matters. I have to get out of here.

ARTHUR

At least you won't have to deal with any angry customers today.

Gary shrugs and leaves, his possessions barely contained in his hands.

Arthur tracks down the gathering of Kevin, Austin, and a few of the other employees, who are taking advantage of the managers being distracted to relax and talk.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Did you guys here about Gary?

AUSTIN

That's some crazy shit right there.

KEVIN

Sorry to see him go, but he's never really been much of a salesman.

ARTHUR

How can you say that? He was your-our- friend. And he stood up for what he believed in.

KEVIN

That doesn't mean he was good at his job.

ARTHUR

But it was meaningless. One bad customer experience and a month of few warranty sales, and he's done?

KEVIN

You would know about off months, wouldn't you? Seems I've locked in the bonus because of my warranty sales.

Arthur had missed this when looking at the charts, and starts to come up with a comeback to be competitive, but thinks better of it.

ARTHUR

Come on, we've got to do something.

AUSTIN

What can we do? They're the bosses.

ARTHUR

We could... we could say we won't work unless they take him back.

AUSTIN

Whoa there Spartacus, I need this job for rent and food and most importantly, beer.

The other cashiers standing around nod in agreement and mumble to each other. One says "Beer is important." Kevin leans back on the counter, still smiling.

ARTHUR

But look, you wouldn't have this job or have come as far if Gary hadn't been around. He taught you all kind of tricks of the job.

AUSTIN

I'm really going to miss him. It won't be the same going through the day without him mock singing along to Hootie and the Blowfish.

ARTHUR

Yes, or when he'd leap on the front counter for an air guitar solo. We're the most important people right now. They wouldn't have time to hire a new staff right before the busiest shopping time of the year.

KEVIN

That's more bonus for me. You guys are welcome to throw away your jobs and not be able to afford Christmas, but I've got a car to buy.

The assemblage murmurs to themselves again, including one who says "Don't forget the beer."

AMY (O.S.)

Come on guys, break it up, there's customers all over who need help.

Arthur pleadingly looks at the staff as they head off to different departments. Austin and Arthur make eye contact. Austin shakes his head and hurries off to the back, away from Amy.

Amy walks over to Arthur.

AMY

There's someone that needs help over in computers. Better get over there before Kevin does.

ARTHUR

Can I talk to you?

AMY

That's what an open door policy is for.

The two silently move to the backroom, passing the other employees, who stare at Arthur as he passes by in fear.

INT. CIRCUIT SAMURAI AMY'S OFFICE - DAY

Amy has a seat behind her desk, Arthur sits down in the chair in front.

AMY

What's up?

ARTHUR

It was wrong to fire Gary.

Amy stands up and clasps her hands behind her back.

AMY

That's corporate policy. He didn't follow the Back to Bushido code.

ARTHUR

But he was good at helping people, and knew his stuff.

AMY

Even still, that's not what customer service is about, which is why we have Back to Bushido.

ARTHUR

We don't measure people being happy with their purchase. We don't measure when a salesperson sells what a customer needs, instead of what we want them to buy.

AMY

That's unfair. You know why we sell warranties, and extra ink, and paper. It's for the customer.

ARTHUR

Sometimes, but not always. Corporate has no idea what actually goes on in the floor. Gary understood that, and he genuinely cared about customers.

AMY

Look, Arthur, I can't take him back. His numbers were low, and the customers yesterday raised a strong complaint against him. Add in his attendance problems, and it made the most sense. I know he was your friend, but it had to be done.

ARTHUR

It's not about him being my friend. How are we going to get through Black Friday and beyond without him? We're short staffed as it is.

AMY

You leave that to the managers. It's our job to deal with that.

ARTHUR

But it's us non-managers that are going to have to pick up the extra slack, so we do have to deal with that.

Amy has been diplomatic, but starts to become more annoyed with Arthur's accusations.

AMY

Arthur, you're just going to have to trust us that we know how to run our business. Perhaps you should worry about your own attendance problems, and your slipping numbers. Kevin is topping the charts.

ARTHUR

I've been having some problems with my girlfriend.

AMY

That doesn't excuse you from coming to work on time and bringing your best work ethic. Perhaps we can do something for you. Anyway, if that's all, I'm sure Kevin wants to be relieved to go home.

Arthur stands up to leave, defeated.

Amy picks up the intercom as Kevin leaves.

AMY (CONT'D)

Kim to the office, please.

INT. CIRCUIT SAMURAI - NIGHT

Arthur finishes his reshops, and comes to the front. Kim is waiting for him.

KIM

Arthur, before you go, we've got a change of schedule for you.

ARTHUR

Not mornings again?

KIM

No, we've actually decided that you need some time off, and we have a position that should help while you deal with your problems.

ARTHUR

What do you mean?

KIM

Corporate has started a new overnight stocker program. Your hours will be 10 PM to 8 AM for four days a week.

(MORE)

KIM (CONT'D)

You'll go to different stores, starting here, and help them restock over night and do any kind of rearrangement of the store that's necessary.

ARTHUR

What about my Back to Bushido numbers?

KIM

They'll be assessed differently for you. It's only a temporary position while the stores prepare for Black Friday. Look at it this way: you won't have to deal with any customers, and you'll have more time to get to work.

ARTHUR

At the cost of my sleep and back pain! Is this some kind of punishment?

KIM

Of course not. We have an open door, no retaliation policy. We just decided that you could use the change. Report here tomorrow night at 10 for the first session.

Arthur grumbles and leaves.

INT. ARTHUR'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Arthur closes the door and drops his stuff to the ground.

ARTHUR

Alice? You here?

Loud screaming and moaning is heard from offscreen. It is the voice of Alice.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Oh fuck no.

As Arthur walks that way, he hears the voice of Greg shouting in pleasure. Arthur's feat becomes heavy and his gut wrenches, as every moan seems to pierce him. He finally makes his way to the bedroom door, and raps on the door.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

I can't... I can't take this right now. The two of you just need to get out.

ALICE (O.S.)

Oh shit.

ARTHUR

I don't want to hear anything. Just go.

ALICE (O.S.)

Just hang on a second, I have to get dressed.

This is not what Arthur wanted to hear.

ARTHUR

Fine, just get out!

There are some more rustling sounds from inside the door.

ALICE (O.S.)

Please, baby...

ARTHUR

I don't want to see you or him! Just have him take you back to his place, and leave! I need to sleep, but I'm sure not going to fucking use that bed anymore!

GREG (O.S.)

I can't...

ALICE (O.S.)

(interrupting)

Shh. I'm not going back with Greg. He's leaving out of here. I'm coming out.

ARTHUR

No! Just have him take you back to his dorm. Get out of here, I don't want to see you!

The door opens. Greg is gone out the window. The bed is tossed about, with sheets and blankets and pillows lying on the ground. Alice stands there in the doorway, dressed in full. She is crying, and her eyeliner is running down her face.

ALICE

I don't want to go with him.

ARTHUR

Right, he's got a roommate, that's why you did it here, right? Well thanks for ruining my apartment forever. Fuck, the city is ruined, and, oh yeah, our relationship!

Arthur can't bear to look at her for long. He sharply turns around and sits on the couch, hoping that she'll leave.

ALICE

He just kissed me, and it just started happening. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to. I'm sorry.

ARTHUR

You've wanted to do that for a while. Don't let me stop you. Enjoy your life together. I'll just die here, but at least I won't have to look at you.

ALICE

No, don't say that. I love you. You're the best thing to ever happen to me.

ARTHUR

Just leave me alone. Stay in the bedroom if you have to. But I don't want to see you right now.

ALICE

Please don't break up with me.

She lets out a long sob, and escapes into the bedroom, and shuts the door.

Arthur lays down on the couch, still in his work uniform. He grabs a nearby blanket and pulls it over him, resting his head down on the arm rest without any pillows.

He tries to sleep, but is too tormented to stay still and rest.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

Arthur's fitful night is interrupted by visions of the samurai world. The two overlap, flashing in between him in the real world trying to sleep on the couch and being confronted by hallucinations in the samurai world.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

A samurai must obey his master.

Amy as a ornately dressed lord sends Arthur as a samurai into a blistering sandstorm.

ALICE (V.O.)

Come on, let's go study.

Alice pulls Greg by the hand in a calm part of the desert, as Arthur looks on fighting against the sandstorm. Alice and Greg are both dressed normally.

GREG (V.O.)

He's not going to be home for a while, is he?

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Sepukku is the only way to regain honor.

ALICE (V.O.)

No, don't stop.

NARRATOR

A samurai is only a ghost, given temporary use of a corpse.

The sandstorm rages around the samurai. He collapses to his knees. He removes his mask, and stares blankly at the sky, his face ashen white, his eyes closed.

There is a loud moan of pleasure from Alice. Arthur's eyes come open, and he is left, in the dark, on his couch.