

BEYOND THE SPIRITS OF AN IRON HEART

S01 E06 - "Moonlight Mile"

Juurouta seeks advice.

The evening rain continued to fall well into the night. As the echoes of the old temple bells sank in, Kiwami Juurouta stopped his hurried steps. The sound of steel footsteps mingled with the sound of rain pounding on the road, kicking up puddles of water as they approached. Juurouta quickly hid himself at the mountain gate. This was probably fate, too. The sound of sutra reading was quietly drifting through the grounds of the temple. Juurouta was led to the main hall. When he climbed the stone steps and peered in from under the eaves, he saw a monk sitting in the center of the hall. The chanting stopped.

"It's a killer. It's a very dangerous guest." An old monk with a meek appearance slowly turned around. Juurouta was unable to move, fascinated by the deep gaze behind his glasses. "Something is troubling you, isn't it?"

Juurouta didn't hide his surprise when he was hit with a figurehead. "How did you know that?"

"I've been a monk for a long time, you know." The old monk left the hall and looked up at Juurouta. "Shame on you."

"What? It's your job as a monk to listen to our problems..."

The old monk's smile drew him in and Juurouta began to recount the thoughts that strayed through his train of thought. The Kendo League was not publicly known. It's too ephemeral a competition to be shown, but existed in the dark world as an object of betting by enthusiasts.

Juurouta, who had reached the top of his game with overwhelming strength, was beginning to feel a void that could not be explained. The Iron Leaguer's AI was programmed at its core to compete and win, but what will he do now that he has no one to compete with? The unanswered questions that he had created himself demanded a solution, and he had come running away with nowhere to go.

The old monk stopped listening and meditated for a while. Before he knew it, the rain had slowed down and silence surrounded him. Just as Juurouta was beginning to wonder if there was any light at all, the old monk's eyes opened. "Is the way of the sword only to fight with it?"

A hint of concern flashed across Juurouta's face. "You can't beat the sword without the sword," he replied.

"Sometimes you can beat your opponent without drawing your sword. That's also the way of the sword." The old monk looked up at the night sky to urge the bewildered Juurouta on. The rain had stopped and the moon was peeking through the clouds. "The moon shines and wanes every night; there are nights where the moon doesn't shine at all,

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but the moon has not disappeared and there is still a bright moon in the night sky. Do you understand?"

He looked up as he was told, but the moon didn't help him with anything. "I don't understand the meaning of your words, Gobo."

The old monk turned to Juurouta. "Don't take my word for it. Words tell the truth, but on the other hand, they also tell lies. It's an inconvenience because it's all-powerful. Do not rely on words, but feel them, with your heart."

"Heart...?" It was an unfamiliar word.

"Yes. Grasped by the heart, it's the truth."

A bird suddenly took off from the bushes behind the house. Juurouta caught the sound of steel footsteps.

"It must be the pursuers the dojo master sent, I have to go."

"You're not coming back, are you?"

Juurouta shook his head.

"There is no longer what a man seeks in there." There was no longer any doubt in his face.

"Be careful on your way. Take your time."

"Thank you for your guidance." Juurouta straightened his posture and bowed.

"Heart—you will find it."

And Kiwami Juurouta decided to do just that, and disappeared into the depths of the darkness. A single clear sounding bell rang out in the foothills under the moon.