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Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai

By Jim Jarmusch

"Every day when one's body
and mind are at peace,
"one should meditate
upon being ripped apart
"by arrows, rifles,
spears and swords,
"being carried away
by surging waves,
"being thrown
into the midst of a great fire,
"being struck by lightning,
"being shaken to death
by a great earthquake,
"falling from thousand-foot
cliffs, dying of disease
"or committing seppuku
at the death of one's master."

(Continues to read)

(Door closes)

(Electronic buzzing)

(Car lock bleeps)

(Engine starts)

(Rap music)

I'll get you
the rest tomorrow.

No problem.

(Electronic buzzing)

(Interference)

(Man) 'Listen, Frank...

'Don't fuck around
with the boss's daughter.'

(Frank) 'Don't break my balls,
Uncle Joe.'

(Joe) 'Asshole, listen to me.

'She's been in and out
of psychiatric hospitals.

- 'She's a wacko.'

- 'Yeah, yeah...'

(Joe) 'Vargo has put the
family money in her trust fund.'

(Frank) 'I already know.'

(Joe) 'You'll get clipped.'

Are you finished yet, Uncle Joe?

- (Joe) 'You'll get whacked!'

- I'm not fu...
I'm not fucking dead yet, so
let's get off the goddamn phone.
(Joe) 'Are you listening?
That girl's a fucking wacko.'
(Frank) 'Yeah, I know.'
(Joe) 'Vargo's crazy about her.
- 'You know what "crazy" means?'
- 'Yeah, I know, Uncle Joe.'
(Turns radio off)
(Knock)
Excuse me, Mr Vargo. Sonny...
Louie Bonacelli's outside,
said you told him to come.
Thanks, Angie.
- Excuse me, I'll be right back.
- OK.
- I almost hit the number.
- What did you play?
I played my license plate
number. You know what?
My fucking house-address number
came out!
(Both laugh)
Hey...
- Louie.
- What's up, Sonny?
Come on,
let's take a walk.
- Everything's set up?
- Yeah.
It's going down tonight.
I'm using my special guy.
What about the girl?
Morini put her on the bus...
to the seashore.
- Good.
- I don't feel good about it.
Handsome Frank's a made guy
and all. A good soldier.
- I feel a little bad.
- Forget about it.
Handsome Frank fucked up. Pay
your respects at the funeral.

Yeah...

(Music from TV)

'Home in!'

'One, two, three,

four, five, six, seven.'

Have some more wine, Louise.

I don't want any more wine.

(Turns sound off)

(Frank) What the fuck?

What do you want? My Rolex?

Whatever...

(Silenced gunshots)

Did my father

send you here to do this?

It's a good book.

(Louise) Ancient Japan

was a pretty strange place.

You can have it.

I'm finished with it.

(Pigeon coos)

(Louie)

I've got a bad feeling, Vin.

First Valerio calls me in for
a sit-down with Vargo himself.

(Louie) And now the bird.

Here, birdy-birdy.

Come here, you little fucker.

(Sighs)

Goddammit, this is ridiculous.

I can't write this small.

(Vinny) Can't we swag a fax
machine and get it to this guy?

It ain't the Middle Ages.

Come here, birdy.

I got him, Louie! Louie,

I got him. I got the sucker.

Little fucker, here we go.

Easy now, Mr Chicken, easy.

Mother of Jesus, Vin,

hold it still!

I don't want to hurt him.

- Ready?

- Yeah, OK.

Go home,

little birdy, go home.
(Bell tolling)
(Man's voice echoes)
'Shit! Shit!'
(Sirens wail)
'What's going on?
What's the problem here?'
(Gunshot)
(Whistles)
You little brat!
You want us to come up there?
(Boy) Fuck you!
(Louie) Then you gonna get it!
- You little prick!
- Eat me!
(Vinny) Cocksucker.
Hey, Louie. What the fuck
are you guys doing?
His mother went to work and
locked him in. He's mad as hell.
Vargo's waiting for us. You've
got bigger problems than this.
Johnny, you said the girl was
on the fucking bus last night.
- What happened?
- She was.
I don't know what happened.
Let's go.
Come on, Vin, let's go.
(Indistinct conversation)
- Ghost Dog!
- Knowledge to knowledge, baby.
(Attacker) Shit!
How you doin'? How are you?
They're inside, waiting for you.
- Condolences on Handsome Frank.
- Thank you.
- My thoughts are with you, Joe.
- They're waiting for you.
- I'm sorry about Frank.
- Thank you.
Sorry about your nephew, kid.
They whacked him.
What are you gonna do?

That's the way it goes.

- Hey. Go in, they're waiting.

- Thanks.

Louie, how's it going?

(Knock on door)

I'm sorry we're late, Mr Vargo.

(Johnny) Mr Bonacelli was...

delayed on his way over.

Sit down.

(Sonny) Johnny,

step outside, have a smoke.

Sure, Sonny.

Mr Vargo.

We got a big problem here.

Seems like you're responsible.

Your mystery man fucked up.

Morini told me

he put the girl...

..Mr Vargo's daughter,

on the bus.

He did...but she got off and

went to Handsome Frank's house.

You wanted Handsome Frank

whacked... So he got whacked.

From outside. I set it all up.

No traces, no nothing.

(Louie) Morini said

that she was on the bus.

Jesus, it's lucky

he didn't do her, too. Right?

If he had,

you would be fucking dead.

- This is not a good situation.

- Where is she? Is she OK?

Don't worry

about Mr Vargo's daughter.

We need to eliminate

the scumbag who whacked Frank.

Frank was one of us. His killer

needs to be...neutralised.

Erased from the planet.

For the past four years, he's

done maybe 12 perfect contracts.

Perfect. Like a ghost.

(Louie) He's valuable.
Totally untraceable.
If he'd realised anyone would
be there, he'd have backed off.
He sure didn't know
that she was gonna...be there.
Louie, unless you wanna
be buried next to Frank,
tell us everything about
this mysterious, ghostlike,
(Sonny) untraceable
fuckin' button man.
OK, OK. Er, let's see...
I don't pay him by the job.
He'll only work if I pay once a
year on the first day of autumn.
First day of autumn, I settle up
for that past year, see?
The first day of autumn...
OK, OK.
Let's skip that part.
Where does he live?
Fucked if I know.
That's the next strange thing.
I can't call him. He contacts me
only through a bird.
Since I first started
contracting stuff out to him,
the bird comes every single day.
Hold it, hold it, hold it.
Did you say he contacts you
through a fucking bird?
Did I just hear that?
What particular
species...of bird?
It's a pigeon. It must be
a carrier pigeon or whatever.
Passenger pigeon!
They've been extinct since 1914!
Am I fucking dreaming here
or what?
OK, Louie, forget about
the bird. Let me ask you this.
Tell me, what does

this mysterious guy look like?

He's a big guy.

A big black guy.

- He's what?

- He said the guy's a nigger!

Maybe eight years ago,

I saw a guy, this guy.

'He was a kid

in a bad situation.'

(Man) Stupid-ass

motherfucker!

Get his ass up here!

You motherfucker!

What's the problem here?

'So I...

straightened things out.'

Anyway, about four years ago,
this big guy comes to my door.

This black guy, got a fucking
pigeon on his shoulder.

Fuck knows how he found me,
but he said he owed me.

I only saw him once after that
and we made this arrangement.

That's very touching, Louie.

Let me just backtrack
for a second.

The bird comes to your house
every day. Did he come today?

Yes, the bird
was there this morning.

(Sonny) Did he have a message?

The usual

"mission accomplished" message.

Uh-huh. And did you
send a message back?

No.

You'd called me in, so I figured
it was best to leave it alone.

Did you follow this bird?

Put a bug on it?

Anything like that?

No, I never had a reason
to do anything like that.

I realise the arrangement I made
with this guy is pretty weird,
but he's always
shown me complete respect.
A whole new century
is coming,
and Mr Vargo wants
every member of this family
to make it a priority
to erase this weirdo.
This guy is a professional.
Going after him
could be dangerous.
Handsome Frank was one of us,
so we're gonna peel
this nigger's cap back.
Better him than you, right?
Now, what the fuck
is his name?
- Ghost Dog.
- What?
- Ghost Dog.
- Ghost Dog?
- He said Ghost Dog!
- He calls himself Ghost Dog.
A lot of these black guys,
gangster type guys,
they all got names like that.
- (Mr Vargo) Is that true?
- He means like the rappers.
(Sonny) The rappers got names
like that - Snoop Doggy Dogg,
Ice Cube, Q-Tip, Method Man.
My favourite was always
Flavor Flav from Public Enemy.
(Sonny) He got the funky
fresh fly flava.
"Live lyrics
from the bank of reality.
"I kick da flyest dope manoeuvre
technicality, to a dope track."
- I love that guy.
- I know nothing about that,
but it makes me

think about Indians.
They've got names
like Red Cloud, Crazy Horse,
Running Bear, Black Elk...
(Makes a sound like an elk)
(Nervous laugh)
- That kind of shit.
- Indians, niggers...same thing!
- Johnny!
- Sonny? Mr Vargo?
Go outside. Get Sammy the Snake,
Joe Rags, Big Angie.
- Get 'em in here.
- Right away.
(Deep sigh)
(Pigeons coo)
(Breathes deeply)
(Man shouting in French)
Yes!
(Overlapping voices)
(Rapping)
(Continuous rapping)
(All) Hey! Peace, Dog!
Is that your dog?
No. I thought
maybe it was your dog.
What?
What?
He's really staring at you.
- Maybe he wants my ice cream.
- I don't think so.
If he's bothering you,
why not tell him to go away?
Go on.
I've seen you before...
'cause you always carry
that briefcase.
You live on the roof
of the building down from me,
where the birds
fly out from.
Mom says you talk to nobody
and you got no friends.
- I don't know your mom.

- Is it true?

What?

You never talk to nobody
and you got no friends.

- No, I'm talking to you, right?

- Yeah.

Right.

You got your lunch
in that box?

- What you got in the briefcase?

- I asked you first.

No. Not my lunch.

I got my books.

You wanna see?

Books? Yeah, OK.

(Ghost Dog)

"The Wind in the Willows".

I read that.

- You did?

- Yeah.

Toad Hall and that stuff.

It was great.

You did read it.

(Ghost Dog)

"The Souls of Black Folk".

I read that, too.

Where did you get that?

From Ms Andrews, my teacher.

I didn't read all of it,

but I plan to.

You got time.

"Night Nurse"?!

- You read that?

- No, I just like the cover.

Right...

"Frankenstein".

That's a good book.

- Yeah, better than the movie.

- You thought so, too?

Yeah.

- Can I see it?

- Yeah.

"He sprung from the cabin window
upon the ice raft,

which lay close to the vessel.

"He was soon borne away

by the waves,

"and lost in darkness...

and distance."

Hey, that's the end!

Don't give away the ending.

"The monster...Frankenstein."

"Rashomon". What's this about?

(Woman calls) Pearline?

(Ghost Dog) You can borrow that.

You just gotta promise

that when you read it,

you come tell me

what you think.

OK, I will.

Is it true you got

no friends, then?

No. My best friend's

right over there.

- You wanna meet my best friend?

- I don't see anybody.

He's there

in that ice cream truck.

What do you think, I'm a chump?

I'm not going there.

I hardly know you.

Whatever.

Well, all right.

(Woman) Pearline,

where are you going?

I'm going to get ice cream.

I'm coming right back.

(Man shouting in French)

This is my best friend, Raymond.

Raymond, this is...

- Pearline, right?

- Yeah.

(Raymond) My best friend.

Well, OK. Thanks.

(Ghost Dog)

Chocolate's my favourite.

Yeah. Me, too.

- What language is he talking?

- French.
- He only speaks French.
- Do you understand French?
No. I never understand
a word he says.
- And that's your best friend?
- Yeah.
- Bears?
- Yes! Bravo!
- What's he talking about?
- Bears, I guess.
(Ghost Dog) I gotta go. I got
some business to take care of.
For the ice cream.
That book, read it and tell me
what you think, OK?
- OK.
- OK.
Take it easy, Raymond.
(Heavy breathing)
That fucking thing loaded?
- Yeah, OK.
- Come on, let's do it.
Ready?
That could be him right there.
Should I shoot him?
No, that ain't him.
Vargo said it was a black guy.
So, what's he?
What are you, Puerto Rican?
- I think he's an Indian.
- What the hell are you?
Cayuga.
Cayuga? What the fuck
is Cayuga?
(Sam) Puerto Rican,
indian, nigger...same thing.
(Sam) We should
waste him to be sure.
It ain't authorised, so let's
go. I wanna get the right guy.
- Stupid fucking white man.
- What?
I said stupid fucking white man.

You red nigger-looking
Sitting Bullshit motherfucker!
Sam, you're losing control.
Let's get out of here.
Cayuga, my ass!
You better learn to keep
your fucking mouth shut,
or I'll blow your fucking brains
out myself. You dumb fuck!
(Rap music)
Hey, what the heck
is going on, fellas?
What? What?
Ah, shit!
I don't think that's him.
- How the hell do you know?
- It doesn't feel right.
Now he's got his own wings,
he can fly with his pigeons.
Vargo said, if he even looks
like him, shoot him, right?
I know. Let's go. I gotta take
care of something for Sonny.
(Bird fluttering)
Fuck. I knew
that was gonna be you.
You gonna kill me?
You might as well kill me.
I'm your retainer.
I follow a code.
I've always
given you my respect.
That's why you've got that
big fucking gun to my head?
Forgive me. I don't
mean you no disrespect.
- How the fuck did you find me?
- Called me for a meeting.
Yeah.
Everything seems
to be changing all around us.
You can say that again.
When you did that guy the other
night, was a girl there?

I wasn't instructed
to eliminate her.
I know,
it's just that...
things have gotten
all complicated now.
They're gonna whack you,
Ghost Dog.
If they don't find you,
they're gonna whack me instead.
- Probably whack me anyways.
- Ray Vargo?
The whole family's
looking for you.
- The underboss, Valerio, too?
- Of course. He pulls all the...
Hey... How the fuck do you know
so much about our organisation?
- Who was the girl?
- She's...
Forget about her,
I can't talk about that.
I'm warning you
that they're gonna kill you.
- Maybe me, too.
- Better me than you, Louie.
Well... Right now,
I'd have to agree with that.
(Morini) Hey, Louie!
Sorry I'm late...
and I'm real sorry
about this.
Jesus Christ!
You just shot Morini.
(Louie) Valerio's fucking
brother-in-law!
- He was gonna shoot you.
- What?
See if he's dead.
I don't think
he's getting any older.
Roll him over.
(Sighs)
Now you really better shoot me.

There's no way
I'm gonna explain this.
Fuckin' Morini!
OK, shoot me.
Go ahead, kill me now.
I'm your retainer. It's against
the code of the samurai.
If you're my retainer,
whatever that is,
then do what I tell you!
Oww!
- What did you that for?
- You told me to.
(Ghost Dog) I don't
mean you no disrespect.
Now you've got an excuse.
Tell them I attacked you both.
You better watch your back,
Ghost Dog!
Like you said, everything
seems to be changing around us.
Nothing makes sense any more.
(Ghost Dog)
I'm gonna take your knight.
(Ghost Dog)
Talking about ice cream?
It's amazing.
How the hell is he
gonna get it down from here?
(Man speaks Spanish)
(Raymond) Ah...
I gotta go.
I got business to take care of.
The sun's coming down.
(Cooing)
Yeah.
There is something
you could do for me.
(Coos)
Yeah.
(TV) 'And now,
my newest invention.'
'(Buzzing)'
'I can turn diamonds...

into jelly beans!

'But do you think I'm happy?

'No! I'm frustrated, frustrated,
frustrated, frustrated!

'You ask why? Felix the Cat
and his bag of tricks.

- 'It's magic!'

- 'I'll make a canoe.'

'Magic and more magic!'

(Banging)

(Sonny) I thought

we discussed this yesterday.

(Man) All I want is my money.

(Sonny) There's people here. We
can discuss this another time.

(Man) Every time

I have to come get my rent.

It's every three months.

(TV) 'I'll try to

get the bag like this!'

'It tickles!'

(Sonny) Sanchez,

I've got bigger problems.

I'll clear it up tomorrow.

Pay me that money

or I'll call the City Marshal.

Three months rent!

What kind of operation are
you guys running here anyway?

What? What?

I don't think the boss

buys your story, either.

Morini was family.

He was also my brother-in-law.

Sonny, I'm sad about

what happened, but I got shot!

You think

I'm making this up?

I don't know

what I fucking believe!

Joe, Snake. Go to the garage,
get some cars.

First thing tomorrow,

take Mr Vargo

to his castle in the woods.

- Right now?

- No, next fucking week!

Let's go!

(Old man) Passenger pigeon!

(Sonny) Somebody grab

the goddamn thing!

- Grab him, Vinny.

- Yeah.

I got him. Here you go.

(Sonny) Get out

with that flying rat.

Just get the message off him.

Send him home, Vinny.

It says, "If a samurai's head

were to be suddenly cut off,

"he should still be able

to perform one more action...

"with certainty."

What the fuck

is that supposed to mean?

It's poetry.

The poetry of war.

(Electronic buzzing)

(Car lock bleeps open)

(Engine starts)

(Dub reggae)

(Ghost Dog)

Excuse me, excuse me!

Step into

the alley, please!

(Man) OK!

(Children giggling)

(Bird squawking)

(Woodpecker)

'(Ghostly laughter)'

'(imitates laughter)'

(Car horn sounds)

Plan B.

(Bleeping)

Hello, I'm Bob Solo.

I'm with West Side Realty.

I have an appointment

with Mr Vargo.

How did you
get in the gate, Mr Solo?
Mr Valerio gave me the code.
It's very important. I may have
a buyer for the estate.
(Joe) Go inside, Sammy.
Check this out.
I'll stay here
with our Mr Solo.
Mind if I stretch my legs?
No, you stay in the car,
Mr Solo.
OK.
Why don't I
give you my card?
Jeez...
You sonofa...
(Joe) Sonofabitch!
(Television blares)
Jesus, it's the fucking birdman!
(Groans) Ah, Jesus...
I've been expecting you.
It's you again.
You borrowed my book.
Goddammit! You shot me in
the same place as last time.
I'm your retainer.
I don't mean you no disrespect.
Besides, I don't want
to put too many holes in you.
Where's Sonny Valerio, Louie?
(Ghost Dog)
I'll see you later, Louie.
(Door closes)
(Louie) Vinny? Vinny?
(Vinny) I'm in here, Louie.
Wow!
(Ghost Dog) That's
a big bear you killed there.
Yep. The fucker
weighs about 300 pounds.
(Ghost Dog) Yeah.
It's funny. I didn't even know
it was bear-hunting season.

What are you, a game warden?
Some kinda Fed?
No, no. I'm just asking,
you know, just asking.
Well, I'll tell ya.
There aren't too many of these
big black fuckers left here.
So when you get a clear shot
at it, you sure as hell take it.
That's why you shoot 'em...
..'cause there're not
that many left?
I don't think
I understand your question.
You know, there ain't that many
coloured people here, neither.
You oughta get back in your car
and go about your own business.
Yeah...maybe you're right.
Jesus Christ,
you fucking hit my knee!
(Moaning)
You know, in ancient cultures...
bears were considered
equal with men.
This ain't no
ancient culture here, mister.
Sometimes it is.
(Gunshot)
(Cartoon sounds)
(Man coughing)
'Aaaahh...'
(Laboured breathing)
(Vin) You know, Louie...
There's one good thing
about this Ghost Dog guy.
What's that, Vin?
(Vin) He's sending us out
in the old way. (Chuckles)
Like real fucking gangsters.
Hang on, Vin. You're gonna
make it. Just hang in there.
(Siren)
Oh, Christ! Fucking five-o.

(Female officer)
Remain inside the vehicle.
When you're in the city,
you never see a cop,
but here, they're like
the fucking Gestapo!
Like we're in some
fucking foreign country!
My friend has to get
to a hospital.
What happened to your arm?
I'm fine, it's my friend here.
(Officer) License
and registration, please.
We don't have time!
Don't push me, mister!
Remain inside the vehicle.
(Louie) Oh, yeah...
This is terrific.
What's the situation here, sir?
Let's get the fuck
out of here, Louie!
Jesus, Vin! You just
iced a woman, you know that?
You know what you are, Louie?
You're a fucking
male chauvinist pig.
What do you mean,
I'm a male chauvinist pig?
- You just shot a broad!
- A cop!
I just shot a cop.
They wanna be equal...
I made her equal.
(Vinny gasps and moans)
(Chokes)
Vin?
Hey, Vin!
You with me over there?
Oh, no. No...
(Raymond's ice cream jingle
in the distance)
Hey, Raymond.
I ain't seen you

in a while, man.
That little girl, Pearline?
She probably wanted
to give me that book back.
I wonder what she
thought about it. Hey, man...
It's a little big,
but one of those Haitian tailors
can cut up,
fit it for you.
Yeah, that's for you.
(Woman) Hi, guys!
My fucking Jaguar! Shit! Fuck!
You got a phone? Oh, man.
(Thunder)
(Experimental jazz)
Shit!
(Thunder)
(Rap music)
(Muffled music)
(Sonny sings along)
(Muffled music)
(Rap music continues)
Shit!
What the fuck?
(Sonny falls)
(Rap music continues)
Ghost Dog.
Power and equality.
Always see everything,
my brother.
(French voices on radio)
Raymond! Raymond, man. Hey.
You look worried.
Don't worry, man. It's OK.
It's all right. I need to get
inside the truck, all right?
Let me get in the truck.
Turn around, man.
Turn around, turn around.
No, no... No, thanks.
I'm not hungry.
Here, I wanna give you this.
I don't want

you to worry, Raymond.
Don't you worry about nothing.
Everything happens for a reason.
You know that guy who was here,
with his arm in a sling?
Yeah...I know that guy.
He's name's Louie.
I'm his retainer.
See, once, a long time ago,
he helped me out.
(Man) You motherfucker!
(Louie) What's going on?
What's the problem here?
(Ghost Dog)
'And I owed him for that.
'See, a samurai must ALWAYS
stay loyal to his boss.
'No matter what happens.'
Anyway, me and him, we're
from different ancient tribes.
And now,
we're both almost extinct.
Sometimes...
you gotta stick
with the ancient ways.
The old-school ways.
I know you understand me.
I know you understand me.
(Pearline) Hello?
Anyone home in there?
No, but thank you.
I'm not really hungry.
Ghost Dog,
I brought your book back.
I finished it a few days ago,
but I didn't see you.
What did you think?
I liked
all six different stories.
Ancient Japan
was a pretty weird place.
But I especially
liked the first story.
It's one story, but each person

sees a totally different story.

- That was really good.

- "Yabu No Naka".

That's my favourite, too.

Well, thank you
for returning it,
and thank you for your comments.

- Will you do me a favour?

- What?

Take this book...
and you read it some time.
You don't gotta read it
right away.

OK. Is it good?

Yeah, well... I liked it a lot.

It's not exactly a story,
it's kind of a...

(Louie) Ghost Dog!

(Bells tolling)

You should go home now.

What is this, Louie?

(Ghost Dog) "High Noon"?

This is
the final shoot-out scene?

(Louie) I guess it is.

Yeah...

Well, it's very dramatic.

(Ghost Dog) It's very
dramatic... and I understand.

You have to avenge the death
of your bosses, right?

Well, OK, then.

(Gunshot)

(Gunshot)

Stay back!

Raymond! Stay back.

Now you're gonna be the boss
of your own clan, right, Louie?

'Cause...there ain't
nobody else left...

Ain't that right, Louie?

No, not exactly, Ghost Dog.

Stay there!

It's like you said,

better you than me, right?
(Louie) Nothing makes
any sense any more.
It's OK, Louie.
I've seen everything
I need to see.
Do me one favour, though.
One favour.
What do you want me to do?
You take this book...
and read it some time.
Then, later on...
you can tell me what you think.
Yeah...sure.
(Cooing)
(Gun clicks)
(Cartoons on TV)
Let's go!
Let's get out of here!
This is my book.
No, Miss Vargo, I got it
from the guy, from Ghost Dog!
(Louie) Can we get out of here?
It takes place in ancient Japan.
You should read it.
We can go now.
Pearline,
you're in the way, honey.
Why don't you go in the other
room to read your book, darling?
(Rap music)
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