



Welcome to a world where ninja fight for secret villages, each trying to be the strongest and gain an advantage over the other. Not, it's not another volume of *Naruto* - although that would, you may be shocked to learn, probably be more interesting. Welcome to the *Nabari* world...

Miharu Rokujou is a fourteen-year-old student who really doesn't give a damn about anything - and he'd quite like to stay that way. He's constantly pestered by his classmate Koichi Aizawa and teacher Tobaru Kumohira to join their kendo club, though - and when Tobaru tries to tell Miharu that he's being targeted by ninja, Miharu understandably doesn't take him seriously. Until he *is* attacked by a ninja - at which point things start to get *really* strange...

Koichi and Tobaru, along with soon-to-arrive female ninja Raimei, are all representatives of the Fuma village, you see, and they've determined that Miharu is the current possessor of the village's forbidden power, the Shinrabunshou. With proper training, the Shinrabunshou would give Miharu the power to grant almost any wish, to change the past, or to erase things from existence - so it's only to be expected that the village would want to exert their influence over him as soon as possible. And before he learns how to use his ability.

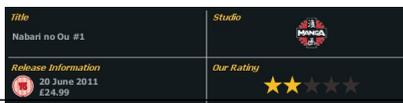
The Fuma are just one of several clans, though, each with their own forbidden techniques, and it's not long before we meet the first of them - the Kairoshu, most often represented by Yoite, possessor the the Kira ability - a power that allows him to inflict lethal damage on others, albeit at the cost of a little of his own life every time he uses it. That's a sign of how importantly the clans and villages view the pursuit of power - but Yoite is tiring of the battles that he's having to fight, and sees in Miharu a way out of that cycle of violence. If Miharu will agree to let him use it.

So begins a relationship between the two that's very much safe-distance, but where it's not much of a stretch to see the two getting down to a little BL action together. Ho-yay, as TVTropes might put it. Take that sort of relationship, add high stakes clan warfare and high-powered battles, and you also end up with an unhealthily large dose of angst to deal with, as Yoite and Miharu struggle to come to terms with who and what they are.

So far, so dull. The series doesn't help itself by simply not explaining itself very well, either - the conflict between the clans and villages is often spoken to in terms of the 'Nabari World' and the 'Human World', with Miharu spoken of as a potential King of the Nabari World (that's the *Nabari no Ou* of the title, translation fans) on account of his ability - but while you get the feeling that the real and Nabari worlds are two distinct, separate physical realms, there's no explanation given of what this really means, what the Nabari world is, or how you would travel between the two. Strange, given how key it seems to be to the show's concept. There's also no clear good guy / bad guy relationship between the villages - the Fuma present the Kairoshu as the villains,

because it's in their interest to do so, but they're using the same tactics and treating their own warriors as cannon fodder when it suits them, so they're clearly not so "good" themselves. When Miharū ends up spending some time with the Kairoshū himself, we see a group of normal people, clearly not outright "evil" themselves - and so you're left with no side to choose or cheer on. That's another fairly big flaw.

End result, is that I have no idea what the series is trying to do, and it's so overburdened with emotion and angst that I couldn't work up much enthusiasm to watch it. This set (the first of two) is only 13 episodes, but it took me a month to get through it, and that alone tells me a lot. If the second set can put some clear distance between the groups, some different motivations that can be clearly identified with, and if there's more of an effort made to explain the significance of the "Nabari World", then perhaps the show can still dig itself out of the hole it's dug itself in to. But I can't say that I'm hugely hopeful, and I wouldn't rush to recommend this volume in the meantime.



1 - The Awakened One

Miharū Rokujō is a fourteen-year-old student who really doesn't give a damn about anything - and he'd quite like to stay that way. He's constantly pestered by his classmate Koichi Aizawa and teacher Tobari Kumohira to join their kendo club, though - and when Tobari tries to tell Miharū that he's being targeted by ninja, Miharū understandably doesn't take him seriously. Until he *is* attacked by a ninja - at which point things start to get *really* strange...



2 - Raimei Arrives

Raimei Shimizu, a samurai from the Fuma Village, has come to test the possessor of Shinrabunshō. That would be Miharū - and she quickly finds that he's not at all what she expected. In the course of her testing, she learns that Miharū simply doesn't want to hurt others, and is looking for a way to seal the power that's inside him, so she convinces Tobari and Koichi to take Miharū to Fuma Village and seek help there. As the four approach the village, though, Raimei realizes that something is wrong...



3 - Surprise Attack

The Fuma Village is attacked by ninjas from the Kairoshū clan, who are after the Tenpenka, the 'forbidden technique' of the Fuma Village. One of the attackers, Yoite, overpowers Miharū, Tobari, Koichi, and Raimei - but despite this, Yoite's attack doesn't go entirely according to plan...

**4 - Duty Declared**

Yoite retreats from the Fuma Village, in possession of the Tenpenka for the Kairoshu clan. The battle has left its marks on Miharu and the others - some of them lasting - but with the village having suffered a number of deaths in the battle, somehow his own injuries don't seem to bad. But this may just be the beginning, as village leader Kotaro hatches a plan to raid other villages - just as the Kairoshu are doing...

**5 - Greed**

Miharu, Koichi, and Raimei leave Tobari and Kotaro to seek and destroy the Engetsurin, the sacred book of the Banten Village, but to no avail. Yamase-sensei returns to ask Miharu a favour, but Koichi and Raimei are onto him and ambush him - at which point it's revealed that Raimei has issues to settle with the Kairoshu: namely, her brother Raiko, who killed their clan to join them. Meanwhile, Kotaro tests the extent of Tobari's ninjutsu, to prove a point, while Yoite pays Miharu a little visit of his own...

**6 - Choices**

Raimei and Koichi awaken to find Miharu gone - he's been taken by Yoite, who demands that he use his power to change the past so that he never existed. Miharu's really not keen on using it - the power to change the world in that way is not to be taken lightly - but when Yoite threatens to kill Tobari, Koichi and Raimei if he doesn't co-operate, Miharu decides that it's best to do as he's told. Not that Yoite has long to live for anyway. While Miharu returns to the others, for now, Yoite asks Kazuhiko Yukimi, his caretaker and squad leader of the Kairoshu clan, whether or not he is truly alive in the first place...

**7 - A Mind Made Up**

The Banten clan is approached by Yae Oda, president of the Fog Blue Corporation and leader of the Togakushi Village. By offering the Izuna Shingan, the kinjutsusho of the Togakushi Village, as reward and using the very technique to hold their secrets hostage, she asks them to assassinate a man for her: Eugene Frosty CEO of the Frost Company and a man who's been

warmongering in deprived countries so he can profit from the resulting weapons sales. He also seems to have connections with the Kairoshu. Meanwhile, Raimei heads back to the Fuuma Village to see what has been learnt about Raiko...



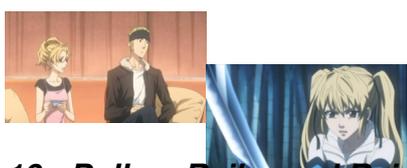
8 - A Mind Passed Along

Yukimi and Yoite step in with Miharu as their hostage, preventing Tobari's assassination attempt. Frosty flees to the parking, where Yae vows revenge on his aide Nowake. After the others four arrive, Yoite is forced into using his Kira technique - and fearing for his friends' lives, Miharu tries to stop him. Meanwhile, Koichi completes the mission and hypnotizes Nowake into taking the blame for the killings when the police arrive. Yae, meanwhile, has to deal with both the way in which her ability went so badly wrong, and by the revelation that there was a spy in her camp all along...



9 - Prelude

A murder brings Raimei closer to finding Raiko, and Koichi is sent to stop her from doing anything drastic. Miharu, meanwhile, is staying with Tobari while his grandmother is away. At a gathering of the Kairoshu clan, Yoite begins to show signs of his life force leaking due to his overuse of his kira ability, prompting him to leave and find Miharu. Miharu has already explained to Tobari that he's willing to use the shinrabanshou to help Yoite. Hanabusa Seki, a paleontologist, finds Yoite unconscious near Tobari's house. Raimei arrives at a garden where Raiko attacks her.



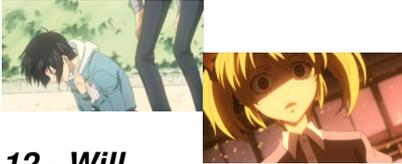
10 - Polka - Raiko and Raimei

Raimei and Raiko confront each other. However, Raiko fatally wounds Raimei, leaving her for dead, and takes her sword, Kurogamon, with him when he retreats. Yoite, meanwhile, has been carried by Hanabusa to her home - which she just happens to share with Tobari. She's insistent that Yoite should be treated well while in her house, but Tobari's not so keen - and neither, it seems, is Yoite. Later, Yoite asks Miharu to bring him the Engetsurin kinjutsusho and the Izuna Shingan kinjutsusho, reminding him that he still holds his friends' lives hostage...



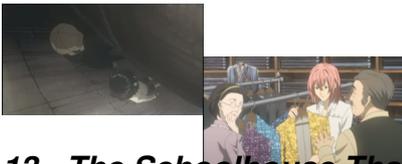
11 - Curtain Call

Raimei, released from the hospital, is determined to retrieve her katana, despite being warned that she's not fully recovered yet. Meanwhile, the Banten clan has encountered Gau Meguro, an assistant of Raiko and a member of the Kairoshu clan. At Raimei's home, he tells her the truth about the day Raiko killed the rest of their clan. Raimei returns to the site of their fight and, after seeing Raiko there, demands Kurogamon back. During the ensuing battle, Raiko, about to finish Raimei off, accidentally slashes Gau when he jumps between them...



12 - Will

When Miharu goes to visit Gau, Raimei tells him that Tobar told her about his promise to Yoite and says she'll help him. Miharu meets up with Yoite and retrieves the Izura Shingan kinjutsusho, before announcing to the Kairoshu clan that he is joining them and giving them the scroll. Meanwhile, the Banten clan, as well as the Kairoshu clan, receives an invitation to an academy located in the Kouga Village. Miharu, Raiko, Yukimi, and Yoite set off toward it...



13 - The Schoolhouse That Never Sleeps

Representatives of the Kairoshu and the Banten clans reach the Alya Academy located in the Kouga Village to discuss the future of the world of Nabari, and are welcomed by the students of the academy since the leader of the village is on his deathbed. Secretly, everyone is just after the Daya, the kinjutsusho of the Kouga Village. Tobar is unable to understand why Miharu has defected to the Kairoshu clan, while the students of the academy attack the Kairoshu and the Banten ninja under cover of night...

