

THE FORBIDDEN KINGDOM

by

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PROPERTY OF:
J&J Productions Limited

*GREEN Revision (May 5, 2007)
YELLOW Revision (Apr. 17, 2007)
PINK Revision (Mar. 24, 2007)
BLUE Revision (Mar. 21, 2007)
1ST WHITE (Feb. 20, 2007)

Production Note:

The following key refers to notations in the **Scene Headings** about where the various scenes will be shot:

AJ - Anji

Backlot - Var. Hengdian Studios permanent sets (e.g. Qin Palace)

CN. - Canada

DH. - Dun Huang

FY. - Fang Yan

HD. - Hengdian City location

Stage 1 - Studio Stage #1

Stage 2 - Studio Stage #2

Stage 3 - Studio Lot Bldg #A4

TBC. - To Be Confirmed

VSMX. - Visual Effects shot (digital still elements if nesc.)

WYM. - Wuyi Mountain

XJ. - Xian Ju

1 EXT. MOUNTAIN OF FRUIT & FLOWERS - DAY - STAGE 1

1

FLYING THROUGH CLOUDS over the mountain of legend.

A lone figure, just a speck from afar, moves in slow-motion poetry with a bo staff. An ancient martial art form, hypnotic in its beauty. FLYING OVER HIM, 360 degrees AROUND HIM as-- *

The staff cuts the air and leaves ribbons of mist that fall like blue silks. The adept wheels, leaps, lands bird-light on his bare feet.

THE MONKEY KING: otherworldly handsome in the blue mist of winter. Simian sideburns, hair pinned high, cascading long in the warrior-style. He handles his fighting stick as an artist handles his brush, flipping it--

UP INTO THE MIST

Where it seems to FLOAT IN SLOW-MOTION, a 6-foot stick weapon with a small bronze monkey figure on the end.

THE STAFF

Returns to earth and is SNATCHED from the air as the master does a jumping, reverse, slow-motion somersault into the dazzling Monkey Moon Staff Kung-Fu Form.

He freezes in his classic Monkey stance. Stares into the surrounding mist. He can sense something. Something that breaks the tranquility with--

A SUDDEN TATTOO OF CHINESE KETTLE DRUMS, urgent, booming, as a JADE WARRIOR explodes forward! He is in full armor and winged helm, wielding a massive "horse cutter," a Chinese military halberd.

He charges in clanking metal steps at Sun Wukong, but the sage refuses to flinch. The Jade Warrior attacks, swings his great blade. But the man-monkey is gone. The Jade Warrior recovers from his exertion...then he feels the CRUSHING BLOW of the staff from behind. He goes down.

An onslaught of JADE WARRIORS rush from the mist, armed with broad swords. They SLASH brutally into him and he falls in the mercurial form of 72 TINY MONKEYS, raining onto the rocks, and then forming back into-- *

THE HANDSOME MONKEY KING, taking a deep stance, staff held tauntingly behind his back. Defying the law of physics, the master takes the soldiers out. All but ONE SOLDIER who charges desperately with a tiger fork. *

(CONTINUED)

1 CONTINUED:

1

The Monkey King "flowers" his stick, gets it spinning, and SOARS INTO THE AIR, coming down with a 13,000 pound stick blow--

CUT TO:

2 INT. JASON'S ROOM - BOSTON - DAY - STAGE 3

2

JASON TRIPITIKAS (17)

jolting up from the dream.

On the wall above him: the classic BRUCE LEE POSTER FROM ENTER THE DRAGON. On the adjacent wall: posters from DRUNKEN MASTER and FISTS OF LEGEND and the 36 CHAMBERS OF SHAOLIN. On a TV in the background, the Shaw Brothers' B-grade chop sockey MONKEY GOES WEST.

No wonder this kid dreams in Chinese...

BEGIN TITLES

Jason is brought back to waking reality by the SIRENS and CONSTRUCTION WORK and STREET SOUNDS below his window. Attractive in a devil-may-care way, he gets out of bed and stands before a mirror in his underwear. The contrast between Bruce Lee's ripped physique and the young man emulating that very stance is, well...a contrast.

But this doesn't dissuade Jason from his daily ritual:

*

drops into a Bruce Lee stance and challenges his reflection, emitting a low, squealing mongoose sound from his throat. He grabs a hockey stick and attempts to use it like a stick weapon. He spins it, accidentally knocks the lamp down, and nearly knocks himself out.

*

*

*

*

*

MOTHER (O.S.)

*

(Boston accent)

*

Jason?! What are you doing up there?

*

*

JASON

*

Nothing, Mom...

*

HIP HOP BEAT thumps with heavy bass into--

3 EXT. BOSTON STREET - DAY - CN.

3

*

Jason pedals his bike down the street, starts to run a shortcut through a cross section of alleys and warehouses...

4

EXT. BRICK ALLEY - DAY - HD.

4

JASON'S POV: six young guys. Thugged-out SOUTHIES. Attitude echoes in the alley; one of the crew makes hand-sign.

JASON pedals east toward--

A4 EXT. SCHOOLYARD - DAY - HD. A4

Jason passes a schoolyard fence, basketball courts in b.g. where PLAYERS shoot hoops.

5 EXT. CHINATOWN - DAY - HD. 5

Where he wheels through the lion-crested gate and enters the jam-packed Chinese enclave, crossing the threshold into another world...

MOVING PAST fruit and fish markets, tee-shirts, live chickens, and toy Buddhas. He careens past-- *

A FRUIT MARKET where a CHINESE WOMAN is setting up her carts. Jason nearly spills her fresh goods as he races past, and she gives him an earful of Mandarin. He waves an apology over his shoulder. *

MARKET WOMAN *

[Watch where you're going!] *

A5 EXT. LU YAN'S PAWN SHOP - DAY - STAGE 3 A5 *

A small shop gunwaled with the bric-a-brac of a hundred years.

6 INT. LU YAN'S PAWN SHOP - DAY - STAGE 3 6 *

OLD HOP sits behind a security cage, sorting cash. Perhaps 80 and apparently blind, he wears second-hand sunglasses and a Red Sox cap.

As he sorts cash and places it in coffee cans, he stops for a taste of brandy. And that's when he hears--

CHIMES OVER THE DOOR as someone enters. Hop follows the sound of unlaced sneakers as the young man enters.

Hop listens as Jason walks through the treasure trove of used goods and pawned-off dreams. Makes his way to boxes of bootleg DVD's and videos.

Hop smiles now.

HOP

Ah. You. Back again. *

JASON

Hey, what's goin' on, Hop? *

(CONTINUED)

Jason rummages through imports with fast hands and expert eye, like a jeweler reading diamonds. He makes a find.

JASON (CONT'D)

Sick.

OLD HOP

Find good one?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JASON

10 Tigers of Kwangtung. This is
gold.

*

Bagging a score, Jason flips through more titles...

JASON (CONT'D)

The Bride With White Hair--Chinese,
no subtitles. When did *this* come
in?

Hop shrugs, takes another pull from the brandy bottle and
resumes counting and storing cash.

JASON (CONT'D)

You ever get in any early Shaw
Brothers? There's this guy who does
Leopard Style that I want to--

HOP

--leopard style, dragon style, fly
through air, fight on water.
Crouching Tiger, Spanking Monkey...

The old man laughs like a rascal.

HOP (CONT'D)

I know you. Another white boy who
wants to know Kung-Fu. Kick the
ass. Get the girls.

*

Jason smiles as he turns back to the DVD's. And that's when
he hears it:

A faint pitch, like RINGING STEEL, somewhere deeper in the
pawn shop shadows.

*

(CONTINUED)

*

JASON'S POV: the brick wall and a door to a backroom.

Jason knits his brow, listening to the sound. He starts forward, looks over his shoulder. He sees that Hop is busy at the counter, so he lays a hand on the door and eases it open...just a crack...

*

INT. BACK ROOM - LU YAN'S PAWN SHOP - DAY - STAGE 3

*

Jason looks in, starts to leave...when his eyes are drawn to something in the corner, on the floor.

*

AN ANTIQUE BO STAFF with a gold band and a small bronze monkey figure at the head.

The late day sun slants across it, casts its mysterious shadow on his young face. The antique staff seems to have a power that reaches out into the very depths of his soul. It disturbs him, but he cannot look away.

Jason picks it up.

And then a hand touches his shoulder, makes him jump.

HOP

Only storage. Come on. Computer games over here...

JASON

Where'd you get this?

Hop takes it from Jason and returns it to a rack on the wall.

OLD HOP

It was here when my grandfather opened this shop. Hundred years ago. He waited for a man to come pick it up, bring it back to rightful owner. Man never came. My father took over shop. He waited, too. Long time. Now me.

JASON

--that's a Northern Temple-style bo staff. Sometimes it's called a cudgel, same kind the thirteen monks used to save the Tang Emperor.

*
*
*
*
*

(CONTINUED)

7

CONTINUED:

7

He reaches up, gently touches it, like touching legend--

JASON

I've seen it before. That exact
one. I've had dreams about it.

*

Hop stops suddenly...then gracefully recovers.

HOP

You know why? You watch too much
Hong Kong Fooey.

Hop turns to leave.

HOP

Come on...I give you five awesome
Bruce Lee movie for very sick
price...

*

JASON

You're the man.

*

As they start out Jason hesitates, takes a last look back at-- *

HOLD ON THE MONKEY KING STAFF, lifeless eyes on the bronze
figure staring into nowhere....

8

EXT. SOUTH BOSTON NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY - CN.

8

Jason coasts down the avenue, his bike's basket holds a
plastic bag chockablock with bootleg DVD's. Looks like Jason
upped the ante.

9

EXT. SCHOOLYARD - DAY - HD.

9

The coast is clear, but GANG GRAFFITI looms on red brick. The name BOYOS is streaked in black spray paint. He decides not to take any chances when--

KAM (O.S.)
Jason...hi-yo...what's up?

KAM calls from a basketball court on the other side of a fence. She's pretty, but clearly of tough shanty Irish descent. A SOUTHIE GIRL with her is probably a mix of both Irish and Italian.

JASON
Not much. Cruisin'--

KAM
--I mean down in Chinatown. Robbie says you go there, like, every day. What's up with that?

Silence.

KAM (CONT'D)
What you do there?

He glances over his shoulder then faces her again. Then he says it:

JASON
Kung-Fu.

KAM
You serious?

JASON
Well...I'm...
(beat)
I'm really not supposed to talk about it. Not under the Kung-Fu code.

SOUTHIE GIRL
Why? You like a double black belt or something?

KAM
I bet his hands are registered as a lethal weapon.

Kam teases suggestively closer, touches the fence near his hand.

(CONTINUED)

But then someone comes into focus behind him: five Southie guys, strutting the swagger.

LUPU, a muscled hardcase who favors a do-rag, reads the scene.

*

LUPU

Hey, look who's marking time with the hoodsies...

"Mahkin'" time he says in the accent of Southie.

KAM

Hey, Lupo. I just seen your sister over on the T.

LUPU

Jay-Boy, you still ridin' this loser cruiser? You need a motor for this shit, man...

He snatches the shopping bag from the basket--

LUPU (CONT'D)

What you got here?
(dumping DVD's)
What is this?

JASON

Just some bootlegs. No big deal.

Lupo distributes DVD's to the gang. They grin at the bargain priced specials.

LUPU

Check out this pissa. Enter the Dragon...the Bride with White Hair...

SOUTHIE GIRL

Come on--let him go.

Lupo stares at the younger kid for a long moment. Does the staredown known as "mad dogging." A SOUTHIE power-pitches a basketball at Jason, into his stomach.

*

*

KAM

Don't.
(beat)
He knows Kung-Fu.

*

The back alley seems to hold its breath.

(CONTINUED)

LUPO

What, you think you're *Chinese*? You
hangin' out in C-Town? What's up
wich'you? Let's see some, Man.
Come on...

*

Lupo starts to do some footwork, throw out a few jabs at the smaller guy. Jason tries to block. But he doesn't have a clue. Lupo connects with a brutal punch to the chest.

LUPO (CONT'D)

You want some Tae Kwon Do?

*

Lupo executes a SPINNING BACK KICK that knocks Jason off the bike into the brick wall, lands him in some curb trash. Lupo's fighting arts are of the half-baked but dangerous Tae Kwan Do variety. He dances in a K-1 fighting stance...

LUPO (CONT'D)

Come on, cockroach, I'll Wu Tang
Clan your ass.

*

With the girls cringing and starting to look away, Jason's eyes are locked wide with fear. ANOTHER SOUTHIE darts in and contributes a kick to the kid's belly.

The street crew laughs and mimic the huffing sounds coming from their victim. Lupo moves in for the kill when--

*

SOUTHIE #1

Yo, Lupo...

*

*

The crew member is holding the empty plastic bag with Chinese characters on one side and "Lu Yan's Pawn Shop" on the other.

*

SOUTHIE #1

He's hangin' out where dat old
Ching-Chong cashes checks.

*

*

*

Lupo eyes the bag...then turns slowly back to Jason.

*

Jason can see the girls trying not to look at him, down on the concrete, humiliated. He gets up, tries to walk his bike out.

*

Lupo blocks his path, shoves him against the red brick wall.

*

LUPO

You in tight with the old man?

JASON

I know him...

*

(CONTINUED)

LUPO

Well, listen up, Trips -- we know him, too. He keeps cash in that shop. In back. In coffee cans. Am I right?

*
*
*

YOUNG SOUTHIE

He got my X-Box in there, too--

LUPO

--shut up, Frio.

Jason tries to meet Lupo's gaze as the sun lowers behind the warehouses.

LUPO (CONT'D)

You gettin' us in there, Dawg. Old man let you in, we go in behind you. We're gonna jump his Chino ass.

Cornered by coyotes, Jason tries to collect his breath.

10

EXT. BACK ALLEY - LU YAN'S PAWN SHOP - NIGHT - STAGE 3

10

*

Jason and THE GANG step out of back alley shadows and approach a simple door. Under Lupo's vigilant gaze, Jason reluctantly raps on it.

*

Lupo looks up and down the alley, on alert. He tosses a cigarette butt down on the walk.

*

JASON

He ain't here, man. He's gone home. Why don't we just --

*

To Jason's dismay, the CHAINLOCK rattles...and the door opens a crack.

HOP

Who is there?

Jason says nothing. Lupo elbows him, but he still can't find words.

HOP (CONT'D)

Ah. Kung Fu boy. You back for more good price movie?

JASON

Yeah. Yeah, Hop. I...

Jason wants out of this, but Lupo and his boyos are hovering.

(CONTINUED)

10

CONTINUED:

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10A.

10

JASON (CONT'D)

I thought about that twenty for the
price of ten deal that you...

*

(CONTINUED)

10

CONTINUED: (2)

10

HOP

I told you. Best deal in Chinatown.
Come on in...

11

INT. BACK ROOM - LU YAN'S PAWN SHOP - NIGHT - STAGE 3

11 *

Old Hop, in retro tee and underwear, leads Jason through the second-hand clutter of the back room. He turns on a small mermaid lamp. Looming in the shadows behind Jason is Lupo and the others.

HOP

You want tea? Red Sox game is on.
Yankees winning. Very bad.

*

Hop goes to a kettle on a hot plate and pours some tea.

HOP (CONT'D)

Who is with you? Friend?

*

Jason panics, tries to figure out a next move, a way out, or a way to get Hop safely out. But Lupo suddenly surges forward, knocking Hop into the wall. Shelves of junk tip over. Coffee cans spill: nothing but used trinkets.

LUPO

Where you keep the cash!?

Old Hop hits the wall, hands splayed. On the wall above him hangs the ancient staff.

HOP

Please...

LUPO

You stay right here. Don't you
move...

He slams Old Hop against the wall then joins his crew as they spread out into the front room.

Alone with Hop, Jason doesn't know what to do, what to say...

A11

INT. LU YAN'S PAWN SHOP - FRONT ROOM - NIGHT - STAGE 3

A11 *

As the gangbangers rummage through the pawn shop, a few trying to get in the security cage--

Old Hop comes out of the back room wielding the staff with martial arts skill. He cuts air with the weapon as he charges.

*
*
*

A SHOT rocks the shop.

Lupo stands there in the dark, aiming a HANDGUN.

(CONTINUED)

A11

CONTINUED:

A11

JASON

No. . . .

Hop staggers back, feels Jason's presence.

HOP

Take it...

He presses the ancient bo staff into Jason's hands just as he falls.

Lupo turns to his gang, everyone momentarily stunned. Even Lupo himself.

SOUTHIE #1

What the hell, man...

LUPO

That old guy was crazy! You see him come at me?

Jason remains frozen, staff in hand.

HOP

Must return it...to rightful owner.
Run...

Jason stands with the staff, looking right at Lupo and his gun.

LUPO

You didn't see that, Yo.

Jason breaks out of his terrified trance and runs out the back door--

12

EXT. BACK ALLEY - LU YAN'S PAWN SHOP - NIGHT - STAGE 3

12

THE GANG runs out the back door into the empty alley. They see--

Jason, running into the service entrance of some laundry shop, up the stairwell.

13

OMITTED

13

A13

INT. STAIRWELL - NIGHT - HD.

A13

He starts inside, but Lupo and the gang are charging up the steps.

LUPO

You're dead...

B13

EXT. ROOFTOP - CHINATOWN - NIGHT - TBC

B13

Jason emerges from the well house on the roof.

*

(CONTINUED)

*

(CONTINUED)

B13

CONTINUED:

B13

With the antique staff held awkwardly in his hands, Jason is surrounded.

JASON

Lupo, come on, Man...don't...

LUPO

You got nowhere to hide...

But the staff seems to force Jason backward...like it has a life of its own... His pulse pounds and his ears ring, that faint RINGING NOISE as --

Jason steps back...off the edge of the roof.

14

EXT. BACK ALLEY - LU YAN'S. PAWN SHOP - NIGHT - STAGE 1 14

IN SLOW MOTION:

Jason falls. Two stories down, free-falling. Gripping the staff...through lamp light and alley mist...falling...

Falling...

CUT TO:

15

INT. HUT - MIDDLE KINGDOM - DAWN - STAGE 3 15

JASON

Jolting awake. Sweat-soaked, but alive. Just a cruel dream and the relief of waking up in his bed. But then, as he sits up, he sees something strange. The staff is beside him.

He looks around as his blurred vision slowly pulls into focus: he's in a small thatched hut, spare and primitive.

He crawls off the bamboo mat to find that he's wearing strange clothing: a sleeveless cloth jerkin, pants, and common sash. Short leather boots.

IN THE CORNER, TWO CHINESE CHILDREN are in a curious tug of war with his confiscated sneakers. They are amazed by the laces, the smell of rubber...

An OLD WOMAN speaks Chinese from where she sits on a mat in the opposite corner, watching him. She is tiny and ancient, cooking tea.

OLD WOMAN

[Have some tea. It will help revive you...]

(CONTINUED)

15

CONTINUED:

15

She offers the young man tea, but he is already crawling in a panic toward the sunlit doorway.

16

EXT. FARMING VILLAGE - DAWN - XJ.

16

Jason stumbles out to see:

A vast and lush mountain range, stretching to sharp peaks and plateaus. Somewhere high up there in the mist, terraced paddies. Like a Han Dynasty silk landscape painting come to vibrant life, it holds an ancient and magnificent depth.

JASON stands, numb.

JASON

What the...

And he keeps turning, searching in all directions for a familiar landmark--

JASON (CONT'D)

...where....

PEASANTS walk past him, carrying wooden buckets on shoulder poles. He watches them go, confused then approaches A FARMER who works a wooden rake.

The Farmer squints up at him, grinning with few teeth. They seem to treat him like he's been there for a while.

JASON (CONT'D)

What...what is this place? I don't know where...I...where am I? I fell and...

The Farmer gestures a very far drop, a bad fall. A head blow.

FARMER

[The women found you near the river. We thought you were dead.]

Jason studies him, bewildered and unable to understand the language.

But then the Farmer's amiable smile fades. His eyes narrow.

OVER JASON'S SHOULDER

Coming on the sound of MARCHING HOOFBEATS, a mounted platoon of 20 SOLDIERS IN ARMOR, wielding spears and halberds.

A16

EXT. FARMING VILLAGE - DAY - MOMENTS LATER - XJ.

A16

A YOUNG GIRL is dragged from a hut by Soldiers and forced into a bamboo cage where THREE OTHER VILLAGE GIRLS are already imprisoned.

JASON

Stands alone, watching, desperate to make sense of what the hell is happening.

IN THE VILLAGE

a YOUNG MAN runs forward to help the captured girl.

YOUNG MAN

[No! Leave her alone!]

*
*
*

SOLDIERS seize him, hold him back. At the order of the Platoon Leader...they lay a blade to his throat.

JASON

doesn't just run, he rampages. He sprints down a village road toward fields.

THE PLATOON LEADER

Whips his helmeted head around. The Ghengis Khan look-alike spots the young villager fleeing. He gestures and THREE MOUNTED SOLDIERS break into a gallop after the defector.

17

EXT. FARMING VILLAGE ROAD - DAY - XJ.

17

Jason is running for his life as GALLOPING HORSES bear down.

He sprints down the mountain road, but the THREE MOUNTED SOLDIERS overtake him, cross in front of him and dismount with ease.

Aiming tasselled spears, the soldiers approach, but then they stop short when they see the staff the young peasant holds. They speak urgent CHINESE to each other.

JASON

(re: bo staff)

What, this? You want *this*?

As they circle Jason and the staff, one of the Soldiers draws a broadsword. SCREAMING at Jason, he insists he lay the weapon down. They are about to slay him when, from roadside, a SINGING VOICE distracts them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A man in an unwashed cassock and soft boots rides a lazy
DONKEY. Drunk as a Shriner on a Vegas bender he sits the ass
backwards and sings a tavern song. He is LU YAN.

(CONTINUED)

Jason watches as the drunkard draws near, dismounts, and presents his begging cup.

LU

[Hello! Can you donate a few coins to a traveling poet?]

One of the Soldiers shoves him backward.

JADE SOLDIER

[Away, Old Man.]

The wanderer totters, legs tripping over each other, his body like a wet noodle. But somehow, as he staggers past, a Soldier goes down. Hard.

LU

[Who you calling old?]

Before Jason can even register what is happening, the drunken guy careens forward, his head tilted back, small jug at his lips. Another Soldier attacks him with his sword, but Lu ducks it and FIRES A KICK with such velocity that it adjusts the man's neck with a sound like dry pine CRACKING in a wood splitter.

Jason is witnessing the remarkable dance/contortion display of Drunken Fist Kung-Fu.

The Jade Horse Soldier charges forward with his spear. Lu unseats him, disarms him. And hits a pressure point at the attacker's neck.

All is quiet.

Lu looks right at Jason, tries to focus on him. And *hiccups*.

LU

[Run to the paddies and hide in the reeds.]

JASON

I don't speak Chinese...

Lu is now staring at the staff, confused.

LU

[Where did you get that?]

(CONTINUED)

JASON

I don't understand a word you're
saying!

LU

That's because you're not
listening.

Taken aback for a moment, Jason looks into the vagrant's eyes
as THE WORDS ECHO IN ENGLISH.

JASON

Behind you...

Lu turns on an unsteady heel and sees two Soldiers charging
with halberds.

*
*

LU

Are there two, or am I seeing
double?

Lu swallows the attack, lays waste to both soldiers.

*

Jason takes a deep step back.

And now, at the SOUND OF SOLDIERS' VOICES back down in the
main village, he grabs the reins of a riderless horse. He
swings up into the saddle then offers a hand down to the
stranger.

*

LU

Hurry...

A17

EXT. ROAD LEAVING FARMING VILLAGE - DAY - XJ.

A17

Jason and Lu escape on horseback, a beautiful Chinese vista
behind them.

18 OMITTED 18

19 INT. TEA HOUSE - NIGHT - BACKLOT 19

A TEA CUP...

Jason and Lu sit in a dark back area in a place filled with SILK ROAD BANDITS and PAINTED WOMEN. While Jason sips the tea, Lu drinks wine and eats wolfishly from bowls of rice and meat. He eats like he hasn't had food in days.

JASON

I don't know where I am... or how I
got here and who those guys were
that wanted to kill me... but
whatever you did back there was
sick.

*
*
*
*
*

LU

No. Drunken Fist. Secret Gong-Fu
from the South. I am Lu Yan,
traveling scholar. What land do you
come from, Monk?

*
*

JASON

I'm not a monk. I'm Jason. Jason
Tripitikas from South Boston. Is
this a dream?

*
*
*

(CONTINUED)

LU

No. Where you came from is the
dream. Through the Gate of No
Gate.

*
*
*
*

JASON

What is that like a wormhole or
something?

*
*

LU

You are either zen master or you
carry something very special.

*
*
*

JASON

This? It was in a pawn shop waiting
for a man to pick it up...and
return it to its rightful owner.

*
*
*
*

Lu registers this news.

*

JASON (CONT'D)

What?

*
*

LU

It has long been foretold that a
seeker will come to end the reign
of the Jade Warlord.

*
*
*
*

JASON

Return the staff to who?

*
*

LU

The Monkey King.

(Reverent)

Born of a stone on the Mountain of
Fruit and Flowers...

*
*
*
*
*

(CONTINUED)

In hushed tones, the Drunken poet tells the tale:

*

LU

...With his weapon in hand, he
could summon the five elements. His
qi became like fire, his stick-
fighting like magic. He defied the
order of the land, but the Jade
Army could not defeat him...

We move past Lu to see an ornately CARVED SCREEN behind him.
A depiction of FIVE ELEMENTS MOUNTAIN becomes...

20

OMITTED [MERGED WITH SCENE 1]

20

21

EXT. FIVE ELEMENTS MOUNTAIN - DAY - VFSX.

21

*FIVE ELEMENTS MOUNTAIN looms in a mist like five tall
fingers. A MAGNIFICENT PALACE rides one peak while, higher
up, the mist seems to gradually change color, connecting
earthly mountain and the Jade Firmament.*

LU (V.O.)

And so, to preserve harmony, the
Jade Emperor invited him to the
peach banquet at the Gold-Gated
Palace...

*

22

EXT. PEACH BANQUET - DAY - STAGE 1

22

*IN THIS ANCIENT MIST: A PEACH BANQUET is held in the royal
orchard, CIVIL OFFICIALS and JADE ROYALTY sit drinking wine.*

*ALONG AN ORCHARD PATH walks the irrepressible MONKEY KING.
His eyes move alertly side to side, assessing a great phalanx
of JADE SOLDIERS, holding spears and royal banners.*

*At ten paces from the throne he is stopped by the bladed ends
of two spears and encouraged to kneel. King Monkey looks at
each of the spear-wielding soldiers. The contrarian refuses
to prostrate himself.*

*Facing him now is the young and fierce High Minister of War.
He is known in these parts, where heaven touches earth, as
the JADE WARLORD.*

(CONTINUED)

JADE WARLORD

Alas...you are the rebel they call
the Monkey King. I see you bring
your most renowned weapon.

MONKEY KING

Who are you?

JADE WARLORD

I am his Heavenly Father's Immortal
Minister of War and Strategic
Military Affairs.

MONKEY KING

Oh, Yes. I think I met your army.

*King Monkey smiles a handsome grin, full of mischief. The
Jade War Lord seethes. He'd like to take the vile demon's
head right now. But he contains himself.*

JADE WARLORD

It is required that you make the
proper gesture to an immortal
before advancing.

*The Monkey King nods in understanding. But instead of
kowtowing to the warlord, he turns his back and bends a moon.
Shows his ass.*

*Jade Warlord turns red with rage. He hefts his weapon: a
crescent moon dao.*

But King Monkey has vaulted into a peach tree.

LU (V.O.)

Raising havoc at the Gold-Gated
Palace, the Monkey King ate the
forbidden peaches...

*Now he drops upside down from branches and raids a banquet
table, creating an utter donnybrook...SCREAMING WOMEN...*

LU (V.O.)

He drank the immortal elixir, he
swallowed Lao Zi's pills of
indestructibility...

*

*King Monkey slides like an Olympic bob sled the length of the
fancy table, quaffing wines and elixir...*

*AT THE THRONE: QUEEN MOTHER and JADE EMPEROR sit at peace.
Wearing silk brocade, his cool August One has an insouciant
bearing, eyes as serene as a mountain pond. Vessel of wine in
hand. He watches the antics with a kind of quiet amusement.*

(CONTINUED)

Jade War Lord readies his bladed weapon, but Jade Emperor lifts a patient hand. As he speaks, he writes CALLIGRAPHY which appears magically in the mist...

JADE EMPEROR

He's a bit unrefined, that's all.
Give the naughty monkey a title and
let him go.

JADE WARLORD

Let him go? Heavenly Sage, you are
the Supremely High Emperor...but
this barbarous ape breaks every
rule in the Books. He refuses to
conform to order. He raided the
banquet and drank the immortal
elixir...

*

*But Jade Emperor and Queen Mother are already cooling their
heels into the orchard mist, escorted by GUARDS.*

JADE EMPEROR

Give anarchy nothing to oppose and
it will vanish by itself. Do as I
say, Good Minister. Give him a high
title and send him on his way.

*Alone and seething, Jade Warlord turns a hateful gaze on the
offender.*

LU (V.O.)

The Most Compassionate Emperor
ascended into meditation, leaving
the Jade Warlord in charge by
mandate of Heaven.

*

JADE WARLORD

Monkey...

*The handsome Monkey King turns around in a slow, arrogant
manner. He takes a taunting bite of a peach.*

MONKEY KING

It is required that you make the
proper gesture to an immortal.

JADE WARLORD

Very well then...

*Jade Warlord makes a gesture indeed. He brings his right fist
into his open left hand and, with an earth-crushing sound,
makes the sign of martial challenge.*

(CONTINUED)

22

CONTINUED: (3)

22

JADE WARLORD

Let us see just how good your
gongfu truly is.

*

*Monkey King finishes his peach, wipes his hands on his ass,
then returns the ceremonial martial gesture.*

CAMERA SOARS FROM PEACH BANQUET, across FIVE ELEMENTS
MOUNTAIN, into--

23

INT. JADE WARLORD'S ARMORY - NIGHT - BACKLOT

23

*

*SWORD CLASHES AGAINST STICK in a brutal duel as Jade Warlord
thrusts his dao at the rebel. King Monkey parries with his
stick, leaps/spins/fires a kick.*

*A superb martial artist, the Warlord ducks the kick and
sweeps the master off his feet. But Monkey King rolls,
attacks, and knocks the dao from the Warlord's hands. He
dances around the Warlord, juking and ducking and taunting.*

*The Warlord uncorks a brilliant somersault and leopard
strike, but the Monkey King vaults him and scissor kicks,
knocking his opponent to the palace floor. Again, he jukes
around him, tugging at a legging as if threatening to kick.*

*The Warlord pulls himself to his boots and takes a deep
stance. He channels his highly-developed qi energy and uses
it to throw a fire filled urn. The Monkey King cocks the
staff and swings, connecting with the urn. It explodes in a
shower of sparks and debris.*

*Then the Warlord summons more energy to sweep an array of
weapons off the walls and hurl them at King Monkey*

*But the rebel flips the cudgel to masterfully deflect each
weapon into the surrounding columns, walls, ceiling. And now
Monkey King plucks a hair from his head and blows on it to
the left; he plucks another and blows on it to the right.*

*

*

*

*TWO MONKEY KINGS leap to life on either side of the stunned
Warlord. He spins in all directions, trying to slash the
real one. A THREE MONKEY ATTACK closes in on him, but he goes
vertical and escapes. The three Monkey Kings merge back into
one.*

*

*

*

*

*

*

*The staff vibrates with energy emitting a SONIC HUM. The
Monkey pulls it close and with a single finger stops the
vibration. In triumph, he strikes a mocking pose with his
stick.*

(CONTINUED)

JADE WARLORD

Most excellent stick fighting, Sun
Wukong. But without your
weapon...you are nothing but a
lowly hermit. No more weapons. No
more qi magic. Fist against fist.

*

*The Warlord ceremoniously hands his mighty blade to an
ATTENDANT.*

(CONTINUED)

King Monkey wrestles with this decision. But his daring, contrarian nature gets the best of him. He twirls his staff, jumps, and plants the weapon upright in the tiles. *

Unarmed now, he strikes an uncanny monkey stance and circles the Warlord. He coos and taunts like Bruce Lee; He smiles and Rope-a-Dopes like Muhammad Ali; No punch can touch him as he stings like a bee...and SMACKS the Warlord flying.

Humiliated, the Warlord begins to do slow breathing, palms out. Summoning his deepest internal force, he BREATHES WITH THE SOUND OF ONE HUNDRED SNAKES HISSING...and he explodes at Monkey King, palms outward, in a violent but graceful pirouette, his robes whirling like mist, and with everything he has he projects A BLINDING HEAT WAVE OF QI.

The Monkey King sees it coming, tries to strike first. But something is happening to him. His legs are going heavy, his arms slow, as if he is mired in a mud. Still, he fights forward with all he has, stumbles, falls...gets back up. He is trying to get to his staff!

He cannot reach it. So with the last of his energy he thrusts an open palm toward it and SENDS IT SPEARING THROUGH THE AIR, straight at the Warlord's head. He ducks, and it CRASHES THROUGH THE LATTICE SCREEN into THE MIST. *

The Warlord's Qi has transformed him into SOLID ROCK. *

JADE WARLORD
 Martial art...is based on
 deception, my friend...

As the CROWD GASPS, Jade Warlord--spent from the effort, walks away. *

In the dust of the aftermath, a single monkey hair floats in a shaft of light. On a breeze it drifts weightlessly and mysteriously out the window. *

THE WARLORD stands, looking out over the Middle Kingdom below like a tiger on a high ledge.

LU (V.O.)
 When the Monkey King was imprisoned
 in stone, so, too, was the spirit
 of the people. The spirit of
 freedom...

The Warlord is watching--

25 EXT. GATEWAY TO FIVE ELEMENTS MOUNTAIN - DUSK - TBC. 25

HIS ARMY descends on the Middle Kingdom.

LU (V.O.)
And so it has been, with no hope
for the Middle Kingdom...

*

X-DISSOLVE OVER:

AA25 EXT. HUTS ON FIRE - NIGHT - FY AA25

*ONE HUNDRED JADE SOLDIERS ride roughshod over villages,
burning huts, pillaging...*

X-DISSOLVE OVER:

A25 INT. JADE WARLORD'S FOUNTAIN ROOM - DUSK - BACKLOT A25

The STONE MONKEY KING, caught in a pose of anguish, has been
placed as a benign decoration at the center of the palace
fountain. Imprisoned forever.

The image becomes wavy and resolves as a reflection in...

X-DISSOLVE OVER:

26 OMITTED [MOVED TO SCENE AA25] 26

27 INT. TEA HOUSE - NIGHT - BACKLOT 27

...Liu's teacup. More tea is poured into it. Lu gazes
wistfully into the steam of the tea.

LU
That's what I heard, any way...
(a sip of wine)
Long time ago...

*

JASON
How long has he been imprisoned?

LU
Five hundred years. Give or take a
few decades...

Jason looks confused.

*

(CONTINUED)

LU

The Great Sage is immortal. Which
means he cannot die, only suffer in
his stone prison.

*
*
*
*

As Jason tries to make sense of it all, he feels eyes on him.
A WAIF CHILD in hooded cloak sits in the corner playing a
small lute. A PATRON tosses a coin to the floor, but the
mysterious urchin never takes its eyes off of Jason.

*
*
*
*

JASON

How do I get home?

*
*

LU

Only one way.

(whisper)

You must deliver the divine weapon
to Five Elements Mountain...

(intense whisper)

You must free the Monkey King.

*
*
*
*
*
*
*

Jason sits, unnerved.

*

JASON

I can't free the Monkey King--I
gotta get home. My mom's going to
kill me, I gotta get out of here...

*
*
*
*

LU

Inn Keeper! More wine!

*

JASON

Look, don't you think you had one
too many?

*

LU

Wine is my inspiration. In some
parts I am known as the Poet.

(a toast)

Ganbei.

*
*
*
*
*

(CONTINUED)

The INN KEEPER approaches the table with a bill, sets it
before Lu. The drunkard slides it over to Jason. *

LU *

In some parts I am also called The *

Beggar. *

Jason gives a how convenient look as he digs in his pocket, *

produces a few crumpled American bills. The Inn Keeper holds *

one to the light and squints at it. He begins chattering *

irately, demanding proper payment. His WIFE appears and joins *

the protest, summoning-- *

THREE JADE OFFICERS *

Who approach the table. *

LU *

(to Jason)

How good is your *gongfu*? *

Silence. A worried one.

LU *

Ah. He who speaks does not know. He

who *knows*...does not *speak*. Surely, *

you are masterful.

The pale expression on Jason's face says it all... *

28

INT. TEA HOUSE - A MOMENT LATER - NIGHT - BACKLOT

28 *

The Inn Keeper hasn't taken a breath, protesting and displaying the strange currency to the officers. One officer examines the bill, but the other is staring at something else. He whispers to his partner and the soldier drops the bill, draws a broad sword. When the Inn Keeper spots the staff, he, too, reacts. Lu sees what's going on:

JASON

What do we do now?

LU

Never a good question to ask a fool. Or a drunk.

The Officer approaches Lu.

LU

It's a fake. You can find anything these days on the Silk Road --

*
*

JADE OFFICER #1

Get out of the way, Old Fool.

*
*

LU

Who you calling old?

The staff glimmers in lantern light. The Jade Officers' eyes widen. A GREAT BUZZ thrums in the tea house.

JADE OFFICER #1

Hand over the weapon. Or die.

Angry, Officer #1 grabs it from Jason, knocking the young man against the wall. But as he tries to secure it, the weapon seems to challenge his control, drive him a few steps backward with an unseen force. HIS MEN gather around it, awed, as he finally gets a solid grip, contains it. *

Lu watches the soldiers cross the tea house with the confiscated staff.

*

(CONTINUED)

But he winks at Jason, then takes an unsteady step away from the table and puts his swerve on, knocking over tea cups. *

LU
(slurring)
Hey, turtle head...

The Jade Officer stops, looks over his shoulder. The drunk is slewing toward him, holding to the walls.

LU
I found it. Least you can do is buy me a cup. *

The Jade Officers laugh. Not the head guy though. He hates a mean drunk. He unsheathes a dagger.

JADE OFFICER #2
I can pierce your heart from ten paces.

LU
You couldn't hit a pig in the ass with a shovel. *

Jade Officer #2 goes primal. He throws the dagger at the pest. Lu ducks, then uses the floor to corkscrew himself upward and KICK THE OFFICER in the chin. The STAFF goes flying...

Into the air...

Jason catches it--which makes him the sudden target of three halberds.

Lu staggers, strikes. Takes down soldiers. Jason hurries through the crowded tea house, but his path is blocked by the rear guard, all wielding drawn blades and spears.

Lu cuts in, tries to fight them back, but he gets thrown into Jason and the two CRASH THROUGH A RICE PAPER SCREEN.

They scramble for a door out, but 2 SOLDIERS spill in. Lu yanks Jason hard the other way and UP THE TEA HOUSE STAIRWAY to--

5 SOLDIERS chase them up the stairs but they escape out a door to--

B28 EXT. TEA HOUSE BRIDGE - NIGHT - BACKLOT

B28

Lu and Jason race across the bridge but are soon blocked by TWO SOLDIERS with tiger forks on one side; those 5 Jade Officers on the other.

Jason is a trapped spectator as Lu meets the onslaught with a series of blocks and strikes. But when a Soldier gets him across the neck with a cudgel-choke all seems lost. He is strangling Lu red in the face.

And then the Soldier pitches and drops, a dart in his back. Lu and Jason look down--

C28 EXT. HITCHING POST - NIGHT - BACKLOT

C28

That cloaked tea house urchin stands near some horses, tuning the lute. Her hood falls back to reveal a Chinese girl. GOLDEN SPARROW twists a tuning peg on the headstock of her lute, bending a haunting, discordant note as she pulls the tuning peg free. It is, in fact, a second dart and she hurls it.

D28 EXT. TEA HOUSE BRIDGE - NIGHT - BACKLOT

D28

The second dart strikes a Jade Officer who was about to bring a blade knifing down on Jason. The officer topples before Jason even turns.

With the bridge now being overrun, Lu yanks Jason with him off the side of the bridge, grabbing the lantern strings and swing-falling down to--

29 EXT. HITCHING POST - NIGHT - BACKLOT

29

Golden Sparrow is stealing a horse, but a SOLDIER tries to stop her. With impressive speed, she executes a spinning back kick and breaks the soldier's jaw.

She slings her lute on her back then mounts with speed as Lu clutches at a horse.

Golden Sparrow cuts the rope on a third horse and spins it toward Jason.

LU

Such skill, Child. Are you from the northern mountains?

GOLDEN SPARROW

She is Golden Sparrow. From the south.

(CONTINUED)

29

CONTINUED:

29

Jason is not from horse country, and he's making a mess of snagging a stirrup. The horse keeps moving away from him, frothing, tossing its head...

LU

Why does somebody's daughter hide
in a tea house with bandits?

GOLDEN SPARROW

Because she is running from worse.

*

MORE SOLDIERS are charging and YELLING. When Jason sees them, he loses his grip on the saddle again, loses the stirrup. And so Lu reaches down, grabs him by the shirt, and yanks him skyward. He's on.

They start for the road out, but here comes TROOPS. Nowhere to run except STRAIGHT THROUGH THE OPEN DOORS OF A--

*

30

INT. BROTHEL - NIGHT - BACKLOT

30

The three horses CLIP-CLOP single file through inside alley, making scantily-clad BROTHEL GIRLS scream and leap out of the way.

A PAINTED GIRL happily recognizes Lu-Yan.

PAINTED GIRL

Look! It is him! Back again!

OTHER GIRLS gather with giggling enthusiasm. Lu tries to smile off his embarrassment as Jason eyes him.

They rip through hanging silks, knock over small tables of tea sets--

THREE HORSES EXPLODE OUT THROUGH THE RICE PAPER WALL; in SLOW MOTION.

*

*

31

EXT. ALLEY OF BAMBOO - NIGHT - AJ

31

*

Side-by-side, in steeplechase unison.

*

They're gone.

- 32 OMITTED 32
- 33 EXT. MOUNTAIN SIGNAL BEACON - NIGHT - STAGE 1 33
- A flare shoots up from a town in the distance. A Jade Soldier LOOKOUT with an eye patch made from hard leather sees it then strikes fire to his SIGNAL FLARE. It fires into the night sky. In response, ANOTHER ROCKET IGNITES and RAINS FIRE distantly...and another, as a SERIES OF CHINESE FIREWORKS relay a Morse-like code northward.
- 34 OMITTED [COMBINED WITH SC. 33] 34
- 35 OMITTED 35
- 36 EXT. BATTLEMENTS - NIGHT - BACKLOT 36
- A FINAL SIGNAL FLARE shoots up THROUGH THE CLOUDS.
- A SENTRY sees the flare signal. He lowers his spy glass, disturbed.
- 37 INT. JADE WARLORD'S THRONE ROOM - NIGHT - BACKLOT 37
- THE DOORS BOOM OPEN, spilling in the last rays of daylight. FOUR SOLDIERS carry in a bamboo cage containing THREE YOUNG VILLAGE WOMEN.
- At instructions from INNER-DOOR GUARDS, they cart the cage down the aisle toward the throne, set it down, and kowtow together.
- The immortal Jade Warlord, adorned in silks, surveys from his throne as the Soldiers now open the cage and prod the human chattel out on their bare feet. They stand there, terrified.
- The Warlord takes a bored bite of a peach and studies the girls in silence.
- The girls cower as the Warlord approaches, towering over them. He moves the hair from the eyes of a dirty-faced girl, looks her over, then gestures toward some dark hall. He does the same with the second girl. Soldiers drag the rejected girls toward an uncertain fate. Maybe to the tigers.
- But the third girl garners the Warlord's interest. He takes her hair in his fingers. (WHAT FOLLOWS IS IN MANDARIN AND SUBTITLED):

(CONTINUED)

HERALD

[My Lord. A sentry...]

Herald prostrates himself with a noisy clatter of armor. The Warlord ignores him, resumes his interest in the FEMALE PRISONER. But--

HERALD

[It is word from Two Forked Ridge. Most urgent...]

JADE WARLORD
(calmly, to his servants)

[Since when is my sport interrupted by a gate man and he is not--]

HERALD

[--the divine cudgel of legend...]

Pin drop silence.

HERALD
(nervous breath)

[It was seen. Down in the Middle Kingdom...]

JADE WARLORD

[Impossible.]

HERALD

[First in a peasant village in the south...then in a tea house near Ch'ang-an. It is in the possession of an emissary from a foreign nation. The report is confirmed by a high general in His Lord's Jade Militia.]

The Warlord absorbs this, shows no emotion.

HERALD

[People of the villages are beginning to whisper of prophecy--]

JADE WARLORD

[--Mortals are always whispering of prophecy. It's their opium.]

(CONTINUED)

The Warlord ponders for a moment as the captive girl remains before him, her eyes downcast.

JADE WARLORD

*[Summon the one from Moon Lake. The one
born of wolves.]*

HERALD

[Ni Chang...]

The Warlord's eyes smile at the thought. The thought of unleashing such a killing machine from the gates of Hell.

EXT. PURPLE BAMBOO GROVE - DAY - AJ

BIRDS SING SWEETLY in a mist.

Breathing heavy, Jason and Lu walk their horses into the trees. Lu sounds like he's having lung failure. It has been a long night of running for their lives. *

Golden Sparrow walks her horse off and away from the men. She has removed the dark cloak to reveal a sleeveless blouse, satin leggings, and silk brocade shoes. Her twin short-swords are sheathed in a sash. *

She feels Jason looking at her, turns her eyes on him. *

JASON

I don't know what we would have done if you hadn't come along. You really saved our lives-- *

GOLDEN SPARROW

--She does not think the Drunken Immortal needed his life saved. But you were about to be cut to pieces, boy. *

JASON

You're Immortal? *

LU

There are eight of us ordained by the Jade court. Each for the different ways of humanity. Detachment, inner-essence, ambivalence, and so on... *

JASON

Which one are you? *

(CONTINUED)

LU

Foolish and useless, chaser of
women.

*
*
*

Jason reacts.

*

LU

What do you run from, child?

*
*

GOLDEN SPARROW

Bounty hunters trying to stop her
from reaching the Five Elements
Mountain.

*
*
*
*

LU

Ah, the Forbidden Kingdom. What
business do you have there?

*
*
*

GOLDEN SPARROW

None of yours, old man.

*
*

LU

I suggest you keep riding West and
only stop to water your mounts.

*
*
*

(CONTINUED)

JASON

You're not coming?

LU

The journey to Five Elements
Mountain crosses barrens and
deserts and unspeakable dangers.
Worst of all no wine.

GOLDEN SPARROW

His elixir.

Jason doesn't understand.

GOLDEN SPARROW (CONT'D)

Every Immortal has one.

LU

I'm very sorry but without wine I
would perish. You must understand
this.

JASON

No. You must understand this. This
is insane.

LU

Do you wish to get home?

JASON

Yes.

Lu suddenly sweeps Jason's legs out, drops him on his ass.

LU

Then listen well: if you die here,
you will be found dead in the world
you left behind, do you understand?

Lu turns, leads his horse away. He's leaving.

LU

My jug is getting low. I must say
goodbye.

JASON

(getting up)

Lu-Yan. Lu...

GOLDEN SPARROW

Let him go. You are the one to
return the staff, not him.

Jason looks at her in a fair panic.

(CONTINUED)

GOLDEN SPARROW
How good is your *gong-fu*?

Silence. A deep one.

GOLDEN SPARROW
Ah.
(dismounting)
He who speaks does not--

*
*

(CONTINUED)

JASON

--He who doesn't speak doesn't know jack.

LU

--he's got no gongfu. None.

*

Lu gets a boot in a stirrup, tries not to look back. But Jason comes after him--

JASON

Lu. Wait.
(beat)
Teach me.

Lu turns a look on him, furrows his brow.

JASON

Teach me to fight.

LU

I gave that up long ago. You will find masters along the way. There is a temple of fighting monks up in-

*

GOLDEN SPARROW

--If you ask him again he will be bound by honor.

LU

Did anyone ask you?

*

JASON

Is that true?

*

*

Lu Yan doesn't want to admit it. He struggles to resist but finally relents and nods.

*

*

JASON

Teach me kung-fu.

Lu takes a drink, wipes his mouth with the back of his tattered sleeve. Jason stands there, breathing hard, hanging his every hope on Lu-Yan's answer.

LU

What did I do to deserve this?

Sparrow gives a cynical chortle as she picks the horses' hooves with a blade.

DISSOLVE TO:

39

EXT. GRASSY VALLEY - DAY - FY.

39

Jason is cutting a swath through six foot high grass with a bamboo rod. Shirtless and sweat-drenched, he stops to get his breath. It doesn't help that he's got all of Lu's belongings strapped on his back like a Sherpa...

*
*

(CONTINUED)

Because Lu and Golden Sparrow are behind him on their horses. Sparrow ponies Jason's riderless horse beside her.

LU
Swing soft, cut *hard*. Soft is
hard, hard is soft. At same time...
(losing patience)
He's terrible...

*

Jason sighs, positions the stick again and uppercuts from the left, then from the right, clearing grass.

Lu feels Golden Sparrow looking at him, discouraged. He shrugs then peaks over his shoulder, worried about followers.

JASON
I've been your weed-whacker for two days. Carrying all your stuff while you sit on a horse like the King of England. When do you start teaching me Kung-Fu?

Lu dismounts, approaches him. He takes the bamboo rod away.

*

LU
You want to learn *gongfu*?

*

*

And he WHACKS him on the backside with the stick, startles him.

*

*

LU
That is called a *strike*.
(returning to his horse)
Tomorrow I teach you *block*.

*

*

*

*

Lu gets up on his mount.

*

LU
Let's go. Swing soft, cut hard...

*

*

Golden Sparrow covers tries not to giggle.

*

CAMERA BOOMS UP revealing miles of tall grass ahead.

HAUNTING LUTE MUSIC INTO--

LU (V.O.)
Kung-Fu...

Golden Sparrow's fingers deftly strum the small four-stringed lute, playing an ancient melody.

(CONTINUED)

The three sit around a tiny fire, cooking tea. Hidden by rising steps on each side, they are concealed in a deep gully.

*
*
*

JASON
(sipping tea)
Do you think you'll teach me the No
Shadow Kick? Oh, and Buddha Palm.

*
*
*
*

Lu starts pouring Jason more tea.

*

JASON
In VirtuaFighter Two, there's this
Leopard Style guy who--thanks, Lu,
that's good--he does the Buddha
Palm technique and--what are you
doing??

*
*
*
*
*
*

(CONTINUED)

Because Lu keeps pouring tea into the disciple's cup, even after the cup is full, tea spilling everywhere-- *

JASON
The cup's full...
(tea spilling)
Lu...stop...it's full...

LU
Exactly. How can you fill your cup if it is already full? How can you learn gongfu if you already know so much?

(mimicking)
No Shadow Kick... Buddha Palm...

Jason sits there, balancing the liquid in the cup.

LU
Empty your cup.

Jason ponders for just a second then flips the cup, empties the tea. Lu reacts, exasperated. *

LU
Hopeless...it is hopeless...

As Lu walks off to take his nap, Jason studies the empty tea cup and ruminates on the lesson. Nearby, Golden Sparrow plays a hauntingly beautiful pattern on the lute. When she ends the piece, she finds him watching. *

GOLDEN SPARROW
Very old song called "Crows In The Winter." It belonged to her mother. It is said that music is a bridge between earth and heaven...

She gently offers the child-sized lute to Jason.

After an awkward silence, he begins to strum in open tuning and then begins to scrape the strings. He starts doing the popular "scrape" from back home. A three-chord grunge grind. *

(CONTINUED)

40

CONTINUED: (3)

40

Golden Sparrow cants her head like when a dog hears a high frequency sound that hurts. He gives a shy smile.

JASON

Very old song called "Smoke on the Water."

She looks at him quizzically as he begins scraping out some other 3-chord rocker. She grabs her instrument back--

*
*

GOLDEN SPARROW

Don't break my pipa.

*
*

A40

EXT. BAMBOO CAMP - NIGHT - VSFX.

A40

Gathering CLOUDS...

B40

EXT. FIVE ELEMENTS MOUNTAIN - NIGHT - VSFX.

B40

Gathering...

DISSOLVE TO:

41

INT. JADE WARLORD'S FOUNTAIN ROOM - NIGHT - BACKLOT

41

STRANGE GREEN MIST -- DREAMLIKE

WE MOVE OMINOUSLY TOWARD THE STONE MONKEY KING, drawing closer and closer to its terrifying expression. Flashes of lightning illuminate it's anguished face. Suddenly, the eyes burst open and the Monkey King's face becomes...

42

EXT. PINE FOREST - DAWN - XJ.

42

...JASON'S.

HE awakes from the dream with a start! Alone and confused, he staggers to his feet, disoriented. With staff in hand, he spins at a sound.

*

JASON

Lu--?

And that's when he sees it:

A PHANTOM FIGURE ON A WHITE HORSE. Head shaven, the stranger stares with eyes that burn into the soul. He is THE SILENT MONK.

(CONTINUED)

42

CONTINUED:

42

Jason maintains his composure for an eighth of a second. Then runs like hell--

43

EXT. PINE FOREST HILLSIDE - DAY - XJ.

43

THROUGH A GROVE OF TREES

With HOOFBEATS GALLOPING BEHIND HIM; to the other side now.

IN THE TREES, strobing light catches the white horse, the stranger leaning forward in saddle. With a thundering descent on Jason, he knocks him over and is gone.

So is the staff.

44

EXT. GULLY - DAY - XJ.

44

INTO THE GULLY

Jason stumbles, falls, rolls the rest of the way. Catching his breath, he sees Lu up ahead with Golden Sparrow, putting their saddles on their horses.

JASON
(breathless)

Lu!

LU
Finish cutting trail?

*

JASON
--He took it! The staff!

LU
Who?

JASON
Some scary-looking guy on a horse!

*

*

GOLDEN SPARROW
Jade War Lord has sent a bounty hunter.

LU
We're doomed.

JASON
I can't get stuck here. We've got to catch him.

Golden Sparrow looks to where RAVENS FLUTTER UP.

45 EXT. ANCIENT TEMPLE - DAY - FY.

45

The stranger's white horse stands hitched outside the temple.

46 OMITTED 46 *

47 INT. ANCIENT TEMPLE - DAY - STAGE 2 47 *

The Silent Monk kneels before burning incense and a statue of a sleeping Buddha. The staff rests on a blanket as if the recipient of a blessing.

The ruined temple walls are lined with man-sized statues of martial guardians, protectors of the sleeping Buddha.

The Monk's HORSE WHINNIES outside as a DISTANT SINGING travels on the wind, a drunken ballad/babble of sorts. But when Lu wends his way inside the ruins, the Monk hardly stirs.

LU
Say, Friend! I seem to have wandered off the Silk Road. Can you tell me which path to the nearest inn?

The Silent Monk does not respond, eyes closed. *

Lu staggers in closer, sits on the shrine steps, facing the monk. *

LU
Ah, good to get off my feet. Long day... *

The Silent Monk ignores him. *

LU
So where you from? Shandong Province? You look like the Shandong Province type. You come here often? *

(off the silence) *

That staff doesn't belong to you... *

The Monk turns his head slowly, squinting steel-eyed at the vagrant. *

LU
You're going to have to give it to me or somebody might get hurt. *

(CONTINUED)

THE SILENT MONK

*

springs to his feet.

*

Lu staggers into his path with Drunken Kung-Fu and throws a deceptive strike then grabs the staff. But the Silent Monk, whoever he is, throws a lightning-fast counter and knocks Lu to the ground.

*

*

As they fight over the staff, Silent Monk attacks, but Lu hooks his leg with his own and takes him down with him. They roll in a dog fight, somersault into a face-off.

*

LU

What kind of monk are you, stealing
from travelers?

*

The stranger says nothing as he slowly circles the Drunken Master. His eyes seem to smile with a hint of menace.

LU

A silent one, I see. Or deaf. I am
speaking to you, Monk.

*

*

*

Lu puts his swerve on, stumbles forward and--FIRES A DEATH STRIKE at the monk. The silent one SNATCHES THE FIST in a lightening-fast claw. They stare into each other's eyes.

*

LU

Praying Mantis. Very good. For
catching bugs. But not...snake.

Angry, Lu fires an open snake hand for the throat, but the Monk side-steps and redirects the strike. The fight is on!

JASON AND SPARROW

*

Are watching from behind a crumbled column.

*

(CONTINUED)

JASON

(awed)

White crane...

LU

Yes, Jay-Son. Observe. One hand
lies...the other hand tells the
truth. The question is...which one?

Lu looks from hand to hand as another tense beat ticks
between them. And the Monk attacks with neither hand. He
fires a spinning back kick!

Lu whirls with sudden velocity but the Monk instinctively
revolves with it, HOOK STRIKES. Lu reels back into one of the
18 TEMPLE SAINTS, a broken figure holding a rusted Kwan Do.
He unsheathes the weapon from the statue's hands...and
charges.

Reacting quickly, the Silent Monk grabs a broadsword from
another statue and whirls into Lu-Yan who presses back with
arcing slashes and stabs, driving the Monk clear across the
room, but the Monk presses back, flowers the sword, and does
battle against the larger blade.

When he knocks the Kwan Do from Lu-Yan's grip, the wandering
master ducks a death strike and borrows another weapon from
another statue saint.

Now, the Monk leaps and spins and brings the blade swinging,
but Lu borrows a trident from a decrepid figure just in the
nick of time and BLOCKS, spinning skillfully and thrusting,
disarming--

The Silent Monk who steals some distance with a violent jump-
kick and lands panther-pawed beside a statue. He grabs a
spear and wields it with killer grace.

Lu dives, rolls and finds himself cornered near a forgotten
statue and so he grabs for another weapon. To his dismay, he
comes up with a broken statue arm and desperately hurls it at
the Monk. Then he takes up a rusty horse-cutter and meets the
attack.

Jason stands, awed. Mind-blown as he watches two supreme
masters battle to the death with the weapons of China:
spears, swords, halberds, hooks, and double battle axes;
tiger forks, maces, talons, and spades. They fight at a
distance; they fight in close.

(CONTINUED)

Jason stands, awed. Mind-blown as he watches two supreme masters battle to the death with the weapons of China: spears, swords, halberds, hooks, and double battle axes; tiger forks, maces, talons, and spades. They fight at a distance; they fight in close.

Sparrow is looking for an opening to throw a dart, she starts into the fight. Jason stops her with a hand. *

LU

(breathing hard, sweating)

If you are a monk as you
appear...you would rather die than
kill. *

The Monk explodes at Lu, knocks him through more statues. Lu comes away with a dragon pole. He gives his stance a little drunken flourish...and knocks the Monk on his ass.

But the Monk never lands. He soars and snatches THE STAFF AGAIN. He starts forward, his body apparently going boneless. Like a shaman channeling an animal spirit, he executes Monkey Style as he wends his crafty, unpredictable way toward Lu. *

GOLDEN SPARROW

Drunken Monkey... *

LU

Where are you *from*, Priest?

They collide at each other and now fight over the stick, double-flowering at impossible speed... *

LU

(struggling)

You try to steal the cudgel...for
the Warlord...

With this, the Monkey King Staff twirls out of control of either fighter and SOARS UPWARD...coming down...into the clutching hands of-- *

JASON. He catches the cudgel and holds it, awkwardly for a moment, like he's caught the proverbial hot potato. *

(CONTINUED)

SILENT MONK

No, Fool.

Everyone stops, stunned.

SILENT MONK

I am on a mission. To find the
Seeker of the staff.

LU

You found him.

Lu shifts his eyes toward Jason.

The Monk stares, incredulous. His eyes move to Golden
Sparrow. She surrenders a shrug.

The Silent Monk doesn't buy it and Jason squirms under his
intense gaze. The Monk starts toward him when...that
sound...that SOFT SINGING OF STEEL sound. Just as quickly it
fades.

Jason feels eyes on him.

The Monk stops, just stares. He seems to be marveling over
the cruel sense of humor of the gods.

The Silent Monk walks a few steps away with Lu and Sparrow.
They SPEAK MANDARIN, SUBTITLED:

SILENT MONK

[He's not even Chinese.]

GOLDEN SPARROW

[Obviously.]

LU

*We are all the same inside, aren't we,
Monk?*

*(looking at Jason and
having second thoughts)*

[Heaven help us...]

Lu needs a drink. Bad. He uncorks his jug, starts to tip it
back, when the Monk snatches it from him.

LU

[What? You find it a sin?]

(CONTINUED)

47

CONTINUED: (6)

47

The Monk considers Jason one more time, and then, as if unable to contain himself, the Monk explodes into crazy laughter.

*

A47

EXT. ANCIENT TEMPLE - DAY - FY.

A47

The LAUGHTER ECHOES THROUGH THE VALLEY...

48-51

OMITTED

48-51

52

INT. TEA HOUSE - DAY - BACKLOT

52

We are back in the opium pit where VAGABONDS crowd around tiny bamboo cages and throw money down on the praying mantis fights. A CHINESE DWARF is performing tricks to the intrigue of PAINTED CONCUBINES. Opium smoke is thick and the MANDARIN CHATTER is deafening.

*

And then all goes silent.

For someone has darkened the doorway. A figure in white silks. Long, silken white hair cascading nearly to the floor. In the lantern light it seems to glow. She is beautiful, delicate, and deadly; an elite killing machine.

FOLLOWING DIALOGUE IN MANDARIN WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES:

INN KEEPER
(frightened reverence)

[Ni-Chang...]

DWARF

[It is her. The White-Haired Devil Woman.]

Behind her stands a heavily-armed dozen of CULT KILLERS, Northern predators who wear fur hats framed by otter tails.

NI CHANG crosses the dark and smoky space like she owns it. Before she even gets to the bar, a lacquered wooden tea cup is set before her. All eyes are on her alabaster-pale face, her frightening beauty.

NI CHANG

[An old man and boy. They took tea here. Yes?]

(CONTINUED)

52 CONTINUED:

Silence lays as heavy as the smoke.

NI CHANG

[A Soldier Monk rides with them. Who else?]

When no one says anything, she gives a wolfen stare.

INN KEEPER

[I do not know who you speak of--]

She unfurls her whip. The braided weapon snakes around the throat of the Inn Keeper, chokes him red in the face.

When THREE LOCAL MEN react, trying to help the respected tea man, Ni Chang explodes with the art of the Forbidden Fist. Without releasing her whip-choke on the man, she destroys the three others. The CROWD WHISPERS in fear, backs away.

NI CHANG

[All men are liars.]

She is about to break his neck when the Dwarf GIVES HER THE SPARROW DART.

She relaxes her whip. The Inn Keeper collapses.

NI CHANG
(examining the dart)

[Sparrow, Sparrow, where do you nest...]

The white-haired bounty hunter smiles like beautiful death, then she stares out the window, her painted eyes stark with vengeance.

53 OMITTED 53

54 OMITTED 54

A54 EXT. PASTURE - DAY - TBC. A54

The Wuxia Wild Bunch rides across pasture...

B54 EXT. PLAIN - DAY - TBC. B54

...across plain...

C54 EXT. TERRACED TEA FIELDS - DAY - TBC. C54

... and tea fields.

D54 EXT. LANDSCAPE - DAY - XJ. D54

For days they ride, crossing changing landscapes...

55 OMITTED 55

56 EXT. HANGING VILLAGE - DAY - XJ. 56

Riding their horses at a walk. Silent Monk feels Lu looking
at him as they ride in silence.

LU

So where did you learn your Monkey
gongfu?

The Silent Monk is silent.

LU

I prefer Drunken Style myself. And
Long Fist. I've been teaching the
boy the Long Fist.

SILENT MONK

--Yes, teach him the Long Fist.
Teach him the one-hundred and eight
Points of Attack; teach him the
Monkey staff and the straight sword
and the kwando--Oh, yes! And in one
moon from now he will lead us
through the Jade Army to free the
Monkey King and the Jade Emperor
will return.

(beat)

Tell me more fairy tales, Immortal
Poet.

LU

For a silent monk you talk too
much.

Leading their horses past destroyed huts, Jason is unnerved
by the chilling silence, the dark smoke of destruction. A
WATER WHEEL CREAKING with ghost town emptiness...

And as they pass through, something else haunts them:
SHADOWS.

(CONTINUED)

Shadows of FIGURES HANGING FROM NOOSES on meat racks, turning slowly on a breeze.

*

SILENT MONK

*

Behold the Warlord's tyranny...

GOLDEN SPARROW

*

He must be stopped. He must be
killed for his crimes and his head
put on a post...

↓

LU

*

He deserves to die a thousand
deaths.

*

*

SILENT MONK

*

But one must not feel hatred toward
him, or he wins.

*

GOLDEN SPARROW

*

If he speaks of compassion for this
devil, he should go back to his
temple--and pray. Our mission is
not one of peace.

SILENT MONK

(studying her)

*

What is it you seek at the faraway
Mountain?

(CONTINUED)

56

CONTINUED: (2)

56

GOLDEN SPARROW
Tea. With the War Lord.

The Silent Monk reads her hardened eyes.

SILENT MONK
Go back to your mother and father.
You are but a child--

*

GOLDEN SPARROW
--they are *dead*!

Jason looks over at her...

GOLDEN SPARROW
And she is not a child. Not any
more...
(staring off)
Her father was a government
official who opposed the
Warlord...so they came in the night
and destroyed the whole village...

A56

EXT. HUTS ON FIRE - FLASHBACK - NIGHT - FY

A56

ONE-HUNDRED JADE SOLDIERS ride roughshod over a village,
burning huts and pillaging--

A VILLAGE WOMAN runs desperately, holding the hand of a
LITTLE GIRL. When they reach a dry well, the Woman lifts the
child, lowers her.

GOLDEN SPARROW (V.O.)
Her mother hid her in the well.

As the Woman runs across the burning fields, the JADE WARLORD
draws back his bowstring from his saddle. Behind him, Ni
Chang, with WHITE HAIR long, is visible. She is torching huts
from her mount.

*

*

Sparrow's mother is struck by the arrow, falls hard.

BB56

INT. WELL - NIGHT - TBC.

BB56

PULL BACK FROM LITTLE GIRL, peering up from the well.

LITTLE GIRL
Ma-ma!

*

*

B56 EXT. HANGING VILLAGE - DAY - XJ

B56

All eyes are on Sparrow as the memory burns inside her.

GOLDEN SPARROW
When she reaches the Warlord's
Palace, she will not offer him
forgiveness, Monk. She will offer
him *this*--

She unpins her hair and it tumbles long and wild and black as
night. In her hand is a sharp emerald pin.

GOLDEN SPARROW
The jade dart that can kill an
immortal. Long has she practiced.

SILENT MONK
Vengeance has a way of rebounding
upon oneself.

*

Jason listens to these words, seems to think deeply on them
for a moment. Seething, Golden Sparrow leads her horse
onward.

*

*

LU
(to Silent Monk)
Ah, master of sensitivity.

*

*

The Monk rides on. Lu watches him resentfully for a moment,
then follows. THUNDER GRUMBLES LOW into--

CC56 EXT. FLAT PLAIN - DAY - TBC.

CC56

*

The four ride abreast, THUNDER aching overhead. Golden
Sparrow finds Jason looking at her as they ride.

GOLDEN SPARROW
They speak to her from the clouds.

*

JASON
What do they say?

GOLDEN SPARROW
They will not rest until their
murders are avenged.

*

JASON
I'm sorry. About your family...

(CONTINUED)

CC56

CONTINUED:

THE FORBIDDEN KINGDOM May 5, 2007 (GREEN)

50A.
CC56

GOLDEN SPARROW

She doesn't seek your charity. She
seeks only the way to the Five
Elements Mountain.

*
*

(CONTINUED)

CC56 THE FORBIDDEN KINGDOM May 5, 2007 (GREEN)
CONTINUED: (2)

51.
CC56

Suddenly, the Silent Monk wheels his horse around. His eyes fix on the horizon where CROWS scatter. The others look at him, nervously. That THUNDER SOUND...is it HOOFBEATS?

GOLDEN SPARROW
Ni-Chang.

C56 EXT. DISTANT PLAIN - POSSE P.O.V. - DAY - TBC. C56

FULL-GALLOPING MOUNTED ASSASSINS appear on the dusty plain, led by Ni Chang. Attached to her saddle are the scalps of men she has hunted.

D56 EXT. FLAT PLAIN - DAY - FY. D56

The four riders kick into FULL-GALLOP...ACROSS THE PLAIN...until they are cut off by--

E56 EXT. NINE BEND STREAM - DAY - FY. E56

IN ROLLING MIST...

They stop there for a second, their horses frothy. HOOF THUNDER rumbles not far behind.

ON THE BANKS, TWO RIVERMEN load bricks of tea onto a skiff. Lu and the Silent Monk exchange looks as they dismount quickly. Jason and Sparrow follow suit.

LU
Hello, Friends. Can you help some pilgrims across the river?

The Silent Monk approaches the Rivermen. He bows his head with humility.

SILENT MONK
By helping a monk cross the river, you will make merit.

LU
Indeed, you will come back in your next lives as rich men.

Riverman #1 spits. Lu and the Silent Monk meet eyes. Enough of the courtesy. Lu drops #1 with a spinning backfist; the Monk makes a move so explosively fast, Jason can't figure out how Riverman #2 has landed unconscious, maybe even dead, in the brambles.

Lu and the Silent Monk begin to commandeer the skiff when-- *

(CONTINUED)

*

*

*

*

*

*

*

*

*

*

F56 EXT. RIVER TRAIL - DAY - FY. F56 *

But when Ni Chang sees that they are RIDERLESS HORSES, she *

reins her horse around... *

G56 EXT. NINE BEND STREAM - DAY - FY. G56

HORSE HOOVES step up to river's edge. Ni Chang stares out. *

POV: nothing but the sleepy current of Nine Bend Stream. *

NI CHANG'S reacts. *

H56 EXT. SKIFF IN MIST - DAY - WYM/STAGE 1 H56 *

Silent Monk and Lu-Yan guide the skiff with the current. *

STRANGE BIRDS make a kind of jungle chatter from the lush *

lands on the opposite shore. No, not birds. HIDDEN MONKEYS. *

JASON *

How long have you been searching *

for the staff? *

SILENT MONK *

As long as I can remember. *

The Monk poles the skiff across in a slow and meditative

rhythm. As he LISTENS TO THE MONKEYS in the lush mountains,

he seems to understand them. He makes a sound back to them,

a flute-like call that ECHOES.

Lu shakes his head, annoyed. But the MONKEYS ANSWER in

whooping and chattering chorus.

JASON

(whisper) *

What's he doing? *

Lu rolls a finger at his ear. *

LU *

(whisper) *

Crazy monk. *

(CONTINUED)

H56

CONTINUED:

SILENT MONK

*Yin is Yang and Yang is Yin...when
Dark becomes Light, the true
journey shall begin.*

*
*

A profound beat. And then:

*

LU

Roses are red, violets are blue.
How in the hell did I get stuck
with you?

*
*
*
*

Silent Monk smiles sardonically.

*

I56

OMITTED [COMBINED WITH H56]

I56

*

J56

INT. JADE WARLORD'S ARMORY - DAY - BACKLOT

J56

STEEL CLASHES AGAINST STEEL as a--

A MARTIAL OPPONENT wields double broadswords with precision.
He is soon driven back by a supernaturally-skilled fighter
with a long-bladed weapon known as a Crescent Moon Dao: 40
pounds of razor on one side, brutal saw teeth on the other.

In his training silks, the Jade Warlord moves like a dragon
swimming. And when he drives his Opponent back, he whirls
into a fluid cat stance. His Opponent sweats as the Warlord
stares him down, smiling. (MANDARIN, SUBTITLED):

JADE WARLORD

*Even the lion knows fear, my friend. It's
essential for survival...*

His Opponent tries not to break eye contact as they circle
each other slowly, weapons poised.

JADE WARLORD

*[I see it in your eyes, and it makes me
remember...what it felt like once.]*

*[The thrill of supreme battle--a fight to
the death--back when death was a
possibility...if my skill was not
superb.]*

(CONTINUED)

J56

CONTINUED:

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54.

J56

With an uncanny move he knocks one of the swords out of his sparring Opponent's hand, drives him back. The guy counters, creates space, but he is sweating like he has fever.

JADE WARLORD

*[Oxygen flooding the brain, fear firing
the senses. You know you're alive because
death is breathing down your neck...]*

*

(CONTINUED)

HERALD (O.S.)

[My Lord...]

Annoyed, the Warlord turns.

HERALD

[The foreigner...]

The Herald clatters forward on armored knees.

JADE WARLORD

[Captured? Where is the weapon?]

HERALD

[Ni Chang sends word, My Lord. The cleric travels with a band of outlaws. They escaped the Wolf Woman at Nine Bend Stream. But she has their scent.]

Jade Warlord considers this for a second as he feels the edge of his dao with his finger.

JADE WARLORD

[Who is this foreigner?]

HERALD

[No one knows, Most High General.]

JADE WARLORD

[Tell Ni-Chang that I have raised the bounty. Bring me the staff--and the head of this emissary--and she can name her desire.]

The Herald clatters out and the handsome Warlord turns back to his martial Opponent. He assumes a soft stance with his crescent blade.

At his signal, the martial Opponent advances, twirling deer hooks with mastery as he fights for his survival.

The Warlord pirouettes off the ground and beheads him.

59

EXT. HIGH WATER CURTAIN - DAY - WYM.

59

Lu-Yan, the Monk, and Golden Sparrow sit on the rocky shoreline, eating dried food from the riverboat sacks.

LU
Deeper, Jay-Son....

Jason is in a horse stance, a great waterfall cascading down the mountains beyond. It is not lost on him that he's training while his allies enjoy a picnic.

LU
Must taste bitter before sweet.
Horse Stance. Grow roots.

*

Lu heads over to instruct.

Alone, The Silent Monk feels himself drawn to something. He is looking at the staff resting on the nearby rocks. Slowly the monk walks toward it.

He...reaches for it...touches it. Savors the feeling of its promise for a moment. And then he lets it go, walks over to--

JASON
Horse stance.

SILENT MONK
Very good...for taking a dump.

LU
Enough from you.

*

The Silent Monk nods in agreement, starts to walk away--then spins and sweeps the kid right on his ass.

JASON
Hey! What are--

Jason springs back up, dusts himself, resumes the stance. The Silent Monk smiles...then sweeps again.

(CONTINUED)

LU

He is my student, not yours! As two
tigers cannot live on the same
mountain, two masters cannot teach
the same student.

(yanking Jason up)

Ma bu.

Lu lunges behind Jason.

SILENT MONK

If he is to learn the real *gongfu*,
he must develop speed, accuracy,
and power.

JASON

(Recognizing the
philosophy)

Hey, I know that. That's the Way of
the Intercepting Fist. Bruce Lee.

The two masters look at each other, the meaning lost on them.

SILENT MONK

I will punch. You block. Ready?

Jason nods, prepares. The Monk strikes. His hand is already a
half inch from Jason's face before he even gets his arm up.

LU

Aht! What did I teach you about the
Snake?

Lu attacks the student and Jason executes a Snake Block, only
to get smacked by a frustrated Lu.

SILENT MONK

He is not right for Snake, perhaps
Eagle--

Silent Monk demonstrates, Jason misses a block, gets "clawed"
at the throat.

and grabs his arms, begins manipulating him like a puppet,
blocking the Monk's attacks--

LU

Crane, Jay-Son, Crane!

And then, flustered by the student's inability to respond
fast enough, he jabs him with a Crane Beak.

(CONTINUED)

And on and on it goes; the two masters smacking Jason about
as they argue over what style should counter another and
which system is best for this hopeless kid. Another SMACK to
the cheek and then-- *

JASON

STOP!

Silence. Golden Sparrow swings a look over from where she is
sharpening her blades on river stones. *

JASON

I've had it! I've had enough of
this! Your silent riddles and your
empty cups and all your-- *

Lu-Yan and Silent Monk each take a leg out from under him,
puts him on his ass. *

LU

First rule: show respect to your
teachers. *

Jason collects himself, tries to get up. Silent Monk keeps
him down with a heel. When Jason tries to salamander out, Lu
plants a foot on him, too. *

SILENT MONK

So... what about the two tigers on
one mountain? *

LU

We can kill each other when it's
over.

The Monk smiles. Lu almost smiles, too.

TRACKING IN ON JASON in horse stance...

LU (V.O.)

Gongfu...

B59 EXT. MISTY HILLSIDE - DAY - WYM. B59

JOURNEY/TRAINING MONTAGE

Rack focus from distant green hills to a beautiful plant in f.g..

--A DROPLET OF WATER, in slow motion...falling...

The water droplet splashes down.

DISSOLVE TO:

60 OMITTED 60

61 OMITTED 61

62 EXT. BIG WATERFALL - DAY - WYM. 62

SLOW MOTION WATERFALL

Speeding up to real time. Raging.

LU (V.O.)
Hard work over time...to accomplish
skill...

Jason stands in Horse Stance under the powerful cascade, trying to maintain balance. He appears scared. Can't concentrate.

Lu-Yan and the Silent Monk watch from above...

LU (V.O.)
A painter can have gong-fu. Or the
butcher who cuts meat every day
with such skill, his knife never
touches bone...

A62 EXT. TBD LANDSCAPE - DAY - TBC. A62 *

A BROADSWORD slowly knifes the air as Jason learns sword form, repeating the same movement over and over... *

63 EXT. ROCKS AT BIG WATERFALL - DAY - WYM. 63

--A LUTE, fingers strumming as we gracefully MOVE AROUND GOLDEN SPARROW sitting on a rock playing. MACRO CLOSE UP ON LUTE STRINGS in rhythmic slow-motion pulse.

(CONTINUED)

63 THE FORBIDDEN KINGDOM May 5, 2007 (GREEN)
CONTINUED:

59A.
63

 LU (V.O.)
The musician can develop *gong-fu*.
Or the poet who can paint pictures
with words and make emperors
weep...

64 OMITTED

64

65 EXT. TRAINING BAMBOO - DAY - FY. 65

--JASON DOES WING CHUN STRIKES at bamboo. Over and over. The repetition is too much, too painful...

LU (V.O.)
Must eat the bitter before tasting
the sweet. Hard work over time...

66 EXT. RIVER ROCKS - DAY - XJ. 66

--WIDE ANGLE ON RIVER: Jason holds a deep Horse Stance on a rock. Slowly, he shifts into Bow Stance...to Cat Stance to Cross Stance...RAIN FALLS ALL AROUND HIM.

67 EXT. BIG TREES - DAY - TBC. 67

--JASON'S LEGS ARE TIED WITH ROPES. Lu-Yan sits tied back to back with him. He tips his jug back as he works the ropes, straining the student's legs into a split. (*Lu adlibs*) *

68 EXT. FLYING WATERFALL - DAY - XJ. 68

--SILENT MONK throws cut lengths of wood at Jason who attempts to snatch them in "eagle claws." He can't grip fast or hard enough. (*Silent Monk adlibs*) *

69 EXT. RIVER ROCKS - DAY - XJ. 69

--WE DRAW CLOSER TO JASON in Horse Stance in the rain. He is blindfolded by the monk's sash, and he has now graduated to Bai Fut Sao breathing, moving his hands slowly in across his eyes on the inhale, slowly pushing them outward on the exhale...breathing...stance deepening...

70 EXT. TRAINING BAMBOO - DAY - FY. 70 *

--SILENT MONK SWINGS A BAMBOO ROD! Jason grimaces from the impact. (*adlibs*) *

AA70 INT. DARK CAVERN - DAY - FY. AA70 *

--DRAWING EVEN CLOSER NOW TO JASON in candle flicker. He *
slowly moves his hands in and out in qigong breathing. *

SILENT MONK (V.O.) *
What do you hear? *

JASON (V.O.) *
Nothing...everything...I don't *
know... *

SILENT MONK (V.O.) *
Stop thinking. Go deeper... *

A70 EXT. RIVER ROCKS - DAY - XJ. A70

Jason in horse stance in misty rain, qigong breathing (now *
applying it to horse stance). *

(CONTINUED)

A70 CONTINUED:

*

As the rain stops the world around Jason becomes white. From behind his head a DRAGONFLY appears. Hearing the BEATING OF its wings, Jason reaches out and grasps the dragonfly.

B70 EXT. TRAINING BAMBOO - DAY - FY. B70

--RETURN TO REAL TIME TRAINING: Jason CRACKS BAMBOO...

C70 EXT. BIG TREES - DAY - TBC. C70

Jason rides the rope-pull into a DEEP STRETCH...

D70 EXT. FLYING WATERFALL - DAY - XJ. D70

Jason KICKS A FLYING STONE...

E70 EXT. TRAINING BAMBOO - DAY - FY. E70

DUCKS a SWINGING BAMBOO ROD...

F70 EXT. STICK FORM BAMBOO - DAY - AJ F70

--JASON, in silhouette, gracefully practices stick form...

SILENT MONK (V.O.)
Learn the form but seek the
formless. Hear the soundless. Learn
it all then forget it all. Learn
The Way...then find your own way...

*
*
*

The bamboo stick BECOMES THE MONKEY KING STAFF as Jason loosens up as if letting the staff guide him...

SILENT MONK (V.O.)
Nameless, the true master dwells
within. Only you can free him.

G70 EXT. SEA OF GRASS - DAY - TBC/STAGE 1 G70

--SILENT MONK does a form out in a sea of grass. The form is free-flowing, guided by self-expression. As he moves, the grass tops move with him...

H70 EXT. POND - DAY - TBC/STAGE 1. H70

--A CALLIGRAPHY BRUSH strokes gently across a rock face as Lu-Yan crafts a poem. Perhaps it's been ages since he's done so.

71 OMITTED 71

72 EXT. AUTUMN LANDSCAPE - DAY - STAGE 1 72

--GOLDEN SPARROW AND JASON PRACTICE Taiji "Push Hands," a slow and beautiful kungfu dance. But as Sparrow spins from his push, she...

...twirls in the falling leaves, whirling in a graceful circle, fall colors around her in surreal beauty. CAMERA CIRCLES HER, moving through the silky strands of flying hair to the back of her head where...

...her delicate fingers unpin the Jade Dart. In a single pirouette she lets it fly.

--A MAGNIFIED DEWDROP loosens from a falling leaf. THE DART SPLITS THE DEWDROP...then hits the tree. Dead eye. *

A72 EXT. DESERT GORGE - DAY - DH A72

A KNIFE BLADE HACKS DEEP INTO THE EARTH. PULL BACK TO REVEAL:

A wild-looking MANCHU TRACKER with otter-tailed fur hat, a knee-length del, and boots made from tiger. He puts his ear to the dragon-bone handle of the knife and listens for vibration.

Now he reads tracks on the ground, touching them.

TRACKER

[It is them. They're headed toward the Desert.]

With this, he looks up at--

Ni Chang sitting tall and regal on her horse. Behind her, 7 Cult Killers, mounted and armed to the teeth.

(CONTINUED)

NI CHANG

[They are between me and the River of Sand.]

(smiling)

[Isn't it just like King Monkey?
Summoning a boy to do a man's job?]

The White Haired Devil Woman smiles like she can smell sweet death on the wind. She CRACKS HER MARTIAL WHIP, and urges her horse around the valley, cult warriors following.

73-B79 OMITTED

73-B79

C79 EXT. DRY LANDS - GATEWAY TO DESERT - DAY - DH.

C79

The posse crosses parched land, sun-cooked and tired. Jason drops Lu's pack and bends, hands on his knees, to draw more air.

JASON

Damn...this desert is hot.

SILENT MONK

SILENT MONK
 This is not the desert.

Jason looks over at him. The Monk points out to the horizon.

SILENT MONK

That is,

D79 EXT. THE DUNES - POSSE P.O.V. - DAY - DH.

D79

Hell awaits them. A vast expanse of dunes.

DISSOLVE TO:

E79 EXT. THE DUNES - DAY - DH.

E79

FOOTPRINTS IN THE SAND, leading to...

The posse as they struggle up the side of a mountainous dune. Starting down the other side, Jason loses his footing, begins to skid downward, fights for his balance.

Someone goes after him. Sparrow. Her hair blows wild as she attempts to catch him. When she feels the back of her head, she realizes she has lost something in the vast sands.

(CONTINUED)

E79

CONTINUED:

E79

Dread registers in her eyes for a moment, but Jason goes down, sifts. And he comes up with the jade dart. He hands it back to her with a portentous look.

As she pins it back in her hair, Jason picks up Lu's pack, slings it, and keeps going. Leading, his boot loosens some sand...

*
*
*

F79

EXT. ROLLING SANDS - DAY - DH.

F79

GRAINS OF SAND ROLL DOWN A DUNE...rolling and making the sound that Chinese desert dwellers have called the SIGHING SANDS. A LOW, FORBODING HUSH IN AN ANCIENT TONGUE...growing LOUDER...and LOUDER. GROANING into--

A FULL-OUT KILLER SANDSTORM that drives our travelers into--

80

EXT. ROCK CAVE - DAY - FY.

80

Huddled under a rock ledge, they wait out the HOWLING STORM OF SAND that seems to have swallowed the sun.

Golden Sparrow draws her cloak over her head and hides from the nightmare.

Lu sits by a fire with Jason, cooking tea. Jason lifts the tiny pot and fills a cup for his master.

GOLDEN SPARROW

She is hungry.

*
*

LU

A monk on a mission...and where does he lead us? Across the desert...to nowhere.

*
*
*
*

Lu checks his jug. It is getting dangerously low.

*

LU

I never should have done this...

*
*

A few yards away, the Monk sits in solitude. Jason crawls over to offer him tea. He refuses, preferring instead to contemplate the power of the storm.

*
*
*

JASON

We're not going to make it, are we?

*
*

(CONTINUED)

Silent Monk says nothing. Jason tries to sit with composure like the monk, but his breathing is quick and shallow, and he looks terrified. Because the storm is burying them alive. *

JASON *

And even if we do we still have to face the Jade Army. There are four of us and hundreds of them. What if I can't handle it? What if I freeze? What am I supposed to do? *

Finally, the Silent Monk looks at him. *

SILENT MONK

Don't forget to breathe.

(CONTINUED)

80 CONTINUED: (2)

80

And as the sand storm grows more fierce, the Silent Monk peers back out into it as it HOWLS TO A DEAFENING LEVEL, blots the sun.

81 OMITTED

81

82 OMITTED

82

83 EXT. THE RIVER OF SAND - DAY - DH.

83

A surreal expanse of otherworldly spires, a cruel Zen Garden of death. Indeed it is a river, a current made of sand, and through MIRAGE FIGURES, the Posse staggers.

GOLDEN SPARROW
Thirsty. She must drink.

*

JASON
We're out.

LU
(near delirium)
Out of water. Out of wine. Out of time.

*

SILENT MONK
Time: merely an idea made up by men.

*

*

*

Lu would roll his eyes if he wasn't so exhausted. Spent...

*

We know it's bad when the Silent Monk stops for a moment to collect himself in the face of the brutal heat. When he sees Jason looking at him, he shrugs it off and keeps on...

THE BLAZING SUN

*

hovers like a ball of flame into--

*

A83 EXT. RIVER OF SAND - LATER - DAY - DH.

A83

LU
If we don't find water soon we will perish.

*

*

*

SILENT MONK
Perhaps the Taoist immortal can make rain.

*

*

JASON
Can you, Lu?

(CONTINUED)

A83

CONTINUED:

THE FORBIDDEN KINGDOM May 5, 2007 (GREEN)

66A.

A83

SILENT MONK

If he truly *is* a Taoist immortal.

*
*

Lu feels on the spot. He stands there, looking out at the river of sand, hurting. Slowly, he removes a slip of rice paper and some flint from his pack and walks out a few yards. *

Jason looks to the others, curious, but they just observe the ritual.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Lu draws a brush and writes some Taoist symbols on the rice paper. He uses the flint to create heat...and flame. *

Nothing is happening. The Silent Monk walks away.

Lu holds the burning paper skyward until it burns his fingers and he lets it fall away. He looks up to the sky. Nothing.

And then it happens. A drop of rain. It pelts the sand beside him. Another...

LU
A miracle...!

*

He can't even believe it himself as rain pelts the area, pelts the burning paper, pelts the sand. And then, the sound of LAUGHTER from up on the rocky ledge where--

The Silent Monk hitches his robes back down. Having relieved himself, he feels much better. When Lu and the others shield their eyes from the sun and peer up at him, he breaks into a prankster dance on the ledge.

LU
How dare you?! You are an insult
to the name of Buddha! It is an
outrage!

*
*
*

SILENT MONK
No. The North River! Out there....!

He is pointing toward the horizon like an elated child. He leaps down and runs, followed by the others.

P.O.V. PAST SILENT MONK: a distant RIVER beckons. They run toward it, Jason leading the celebration.

EXT. GREEN FOOTHILLS - LATER - DAY - XJ.

Lu-Yan and the Silent Monk drink fresh water from their goatskins in a green hollow as the celebration continues. If the verdant landscape isn't cause enough for celebration, what lies beyond enchants them.

POV: a distant view of mountains so high, they pierce clouds. Five distinct peaks. Like a GIANT HAND MADE OF ANCIENT ROCK.

THE POSSE stands there, breathing hard, awed by the sight.

SILENT MONK
The five fingers of Buddha. The
mountain of legend...

(CONTINUED)

84

CONTINUED:

84

While the Silent Monk and Lu-Yan prepare a cooking fire and dug turnips, Jason looks off toward some plum blossom trees where Golden Sparrow sits alone, strumming her lute.

*

85

OMITTED

85

A85

EXT. PLUM BLOSSOMS - DAY - FY.

A85

Golden Sparrow strums her lute, deep in the moment.

JASON

Beautiful...

She stops. Looks up. He comes over, sits near, places the staff with care on the knoll. He picks a blossom and holds it peacefully.

GOLDEN SPARROW

Can you see them, Jason?

Jason searches the clouds.

JASON

*

Your ancestors?

*

GOLDEN SPARROW

No, a two-headed lion. Right there. See?

*

*

JASON

Where? Yeah, okay--yeah. I see it.
(gazing skyward)

*

*

See that one, coming up behind it,
like a wave. Looks like the Green
Monster.

*

*

*

GOLDEN SPARROW

Green Monster. You mean dragon.

JASON

No. I mean Fenway Park. They call
the left field fence the Green
Monster because...

(off her look)

Baseball. It's...it's a game. Nine
guys on each team. It's...

(watching that same cloud)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

A85 CONTINUED:

JASON (cont'd)
But it does kinda look like a
dragon, doesn't it?

GOLDEN SPARROW
Have you family back in this land
you come from?

She is no longer watching the clouds. Inches from him, she
studies his profile.

JASON
My mother.

GOLDEN SPARROW
Father?

A longer pause now.

JASON
I never knew him.

GOLDEN SPARROW
Do you ever long for him? Wonder
who he was?

Jason does a take. No one's ever asked him this and he's
uncomfortable.

JASON
Maybe the only thing I've ever been
good at...is pretending that I
don't.

Golden Sparrow just stares at him.

GOLDEN SPARROW
She is sorry.

She says the words in a foreign, detached way, but she liked
what they did for her when Jason offered them a few moons
back. Compassion.

Jason looks at her closely. The wind moves her hair off her
cheek, and then--

NI CHANG (O.S.)
How romantic...

B85 OMITTED

B85

C85 OMITTED

C85

86

EXT. PLUM BLOSSOMS - SAME TIME - DAY - FY.

86

All turn to see her pale deadliness. She sits a tall steed, her white hair cascading down its flanks. Behind her, 7 CULT KILLERS and her Manchu tracker.

NI CHANG

Men will tell you what you want to hear, Sparrow. But in the end they will leave you with nothing.

Ni Chang turns a canine look onto Jason who holds the Monkey King Staff. She then nods. At her nod, her 7 Killers dismount and move forward, armed with halberds.

NI CHANG

You survived the River of Sand. Impressive. And *you*, Cleric...so far from home. I can ensure your safe return. Just bring the weapon forward.

All eyes fix on Jason.

JASON

I don't think so.

Ni Chang's ruthless eyes skewer the young traveler. Jason tries to stare her down. He swallows, but holds his gaze steady.

NI CHANG

That weapon is of a value beyond your understanding. In the hands of the unenlightened it is a threat to the order of this land.

GOLDEN SPARROW

What order? We are in times of Chaos.

Ni Chang condescends to shift her gaze the girl's way. She smiles.

NI CHANG

If a lowly orphan is permitted to speak when unspoken to, then yes, I agree. Chaos.

(to Jason)

Has she told you that she can speak to the clouds? Have you seen her converse with the thunder? Quite mad. And the old man. One of the Eight Immortals? Drunken storyteller.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

NI CHANG (cont'd)

And What have they told you about the great Monkey King? Have they told you of his vile acts? How he urinated on shrines? Made a mockery of the Peach Banquet?

SILENT MONK

The contrarian has served his time. Does he not deserve a second chance?

NI CHANG

Second best *never* gets a second chance, Monk.

SILENT MONK

What do you wish with the sage's staff?

NI CHANG

When I deliver the lost weapon to the Jade Warlord, he shall grant me the Elixir of Immortality.

*

Golden Sparrow stares hatefully at her. Her eyes fix there as she slowly inhales, then releases. She is putting herself in dart mode.

NI CHANG

An orphan girl. An old drunk. A lost traveler. And a monk who has failed at the same task for half his life. Misfits following a misfit in hopes of rescuing...a misfit. Now *that's* chaos.

*

A STARE DOWN. Ni Chang and her 7 facing off with the four travelers. The surrounding hills seem to hold their breath. And she CRACKS HER BULLWHIP--

THE FIGHT EXPLODES.

NI CHANG

Kill them.

The Silent Monk vaults in the air to engage in a brutal spear-to-spear duel with a pair of assassins while Sparrow tunes a discordant sound from her lute, twisting a tuner and pulling it away to hurl a dart at the Devil Woman.

Ni Chang is a master with few equals. Without leaving her saddle, she does as water, flowing around and to the side of the darts. She cannot be hit. It's both beautiful to watch and scary as hell.

Jason gets caught in the fray, looks scared shitless. But he ducks a slash of a sword, stays alive.

(CONTINUED)

For a second any way. Because the Manchu Tracker blocks his path, readies that nasty blade.

LU

Pardon me...

Lu staggers in with drunken kung-fu...and he DECKS the guy. Now he unleashes a spinning BACK KICK that pulverizes a nunchanku-wielding hit man. The Silent Monk kills two more.

Just like that they have leveled the playing field.

But when Jason sees an Assassin heft twin butterfly knives at Lu's back, he runs past and uppercuts the staff, KNOCKS THE KILLER OFF-BALANCE.

The Killer comes back at Jason, enraged. Jason stands, paralyzed. The guy is going to kill him when--WHAM!--Golden Sparrow takes out the attacker with a tornado kick.

Jason looks at her with gratitude then spins away, sees the Silent Monk on the ground being overcome. They exchange eye signals and Jason flips the staff to him. End-over-end into the air while the Monk jumps and whirls to make an aerial catch...

THE MONKEY KING STAFF

Soars upward, seems to float. We wait for it to come down again and be caught by the Monk. But something grabs the staff in midair. THE LONG WHITE LOCKS OF NI CHANG HAVE SNAKED INTO THE AIR LIKE THE ROOTS OF AN EXTRATERRESTRIAL PLANT and they secure the weapon.

Ni Chang, her cultivated *qi* extending ten feet out and upward, reels in the staff--at speed--and now she holds the prize.

That's when the Silent Monk spins, his robes opening, and a chain dart ZINGS through the air, wraps around the staff, yanking it from her grip. *

And now, FROM OVER THE RIDGE comes close to 100 JADE SOLDIERS; a tsunami of men coming with spears. The MARTIAL ROAR they make chills the blood.

JASON (O.S.)

Lu!

Lu spins, sees Jason on a horse, leading two others. The Posse races for the stolen mounts. *

(CONTINUED)

As Sparrow runs, she throws herself into a shoulder roll,
coming to a knee at the edge of the cooking fire. She stabs
her short blade deep into the red hot embers and flips them
into dry weeds.

*
*
*
*

FLAMES IGNITE.

*

Sparrow races the SPREADING BRUSH FIRE and leaps onto the
back of Jason's horse, riding shotgun as they make their
escape.

*
*
*

87 OMITTED

87 * *

88 EXT. PLUM BLOSSOM FIELD - DAY - FY.

88 * *

THE SOLDIERS are cut off by a WALL OF FIRE.

*

Ni Chang remains composed on her horse. She draws back a bow string and aims a black arrow skyward to get her aim. Now she lowers it, calculates their distance.

NI CHANG

[They have nowhere to run.]

She FIRES THE ARROW, clearing the wall of flames, IT SOARS OVER THE SMOKE INTO THE BLUE...

* *

89 EXT. FERRY BRIDGE STREAM - DAY - XJ.

89

Jason and the group pull up to catch their wind and recover. Their horses are breathless and frothing. They can HEAR NI CHANG AND HER CULT KILLERS, dog-like yowls and horses whinnying. They will not quit the pursuit.

SILENT MONK

We must keep moving...

Jason rides over to check on Lu...

JASON

You okay?

LU

Just thirsty...

But something seems wrong. The master's breath is strained...and then he topples from saddle into the stream.

JASON

Lu...!

Jason leaps down, kneels at the master's side. In his back is a black arrow fletched with white owl feathers.

JASON

Lu...

(CONTINUED)

Lu is staring up at Jason with bleary eyes. When the Silent Monk checks the wound, his eyes betray concern.

JASON

It's okay. He's immortal...

(off silent looks)

I mean...he *is*, right?

GOLDEN SPARROW

Wine! He needs his wine...

The Silent Monk gets up and walks off a few yards. Jason watches him, then approaches, looking for answers.

SILENT MONK

There is nothing we can do.

JASON

What are you saying?

The Silent Monk lets silence tell it best as he listens to the distant sound of CULT KILLERS yowling like wolves as they track.

JASON

We can't just leave him.

The Silent Monk is looking up at a stone bridge the sound of GOATS, a tinny HERD BELL. Jason takes his view of:

A few scrawny GOATS being herded up a slope by a Buddhist MONK. The Monk sees them and stops, studies them from the bridge.

SILENT MONK

Help me get him on a horse...

Jason hurries to Lu with the Silent Monk.

A peaceful sanctuary carved into the mountainside.

*

94

INT. MONK CHAMBERS - NIGHT - BACKLOT

94

An elderly ABBOT, Jason, and a MEDICINE MONK hover over Lu as he lies in a Spartan bed, barely conscious.

The silent adept and Sparrow sit on the stone floor, backs to the wall, hungrily eating soup.

ABBOT

I'm afraid the wound is too deep.
He will not survive it.

Jason looks to the Silent Monk in desperation. The adept, too, has grown attached to the master and it shows.

JASON

He needs wine.

The Monks give an uncomfortable look.

JASON

He's one of the Eight Immortals.
Wine is his elixir. Please...

ABBOT

We will send a walking monk.

LU

Don't you have a *running* monk?

Jason hands the Monkey King Staff to the Abbot who hesitates before taking it like fragile glass. He wraps it carefully in a blanket and sets it at the shrine.

95

INT. JADE WARLORD'S FOUNTAIN ROOM - NIGHT - BACKLOT

95

The CANDLE FLAMES crackle an inch higher as the Warlord turns slowly to drill his dark eyes into THREE CIVIL OFFICERS AND THE HERALD. (MANDARIN, SUBTITLED):

JADE WARLORD

[Escaped? From Ni-Chang and Mounted
Troops?]

HERALD

[They are pressing these brigands toward
My Lord's domain.]

This pronouncement seems to please the Warlord. Now, he strolls toward his grand fountain, reflecting on the state of Heaven and Earth.

(CONTINUED)

95 CONTINUED:

JADE WARLORD

*[I protected a Kingdom by turning a
renegade into stone...]*

He gazes toward a fountain of greenish mist where a statue
adorns the center: the stone Monkey King, an ancient patina
on him now.

JADE WARLORD

*[But what does the Kingdom turn him into?
A folk hero...a legend...a false prophecy
about lost scriptures...]*

He walks to a black hole in the far wall. Eight symbols on
tiles encircle the void. He stares into it as if divining the
future.

JADE WAR LORD

*[One tiger in the valley, and 10,000 deer
cannot pass through. Let the traveler
come.]*

He approaches a massive rope hanging from on high. He grips
it in one of his powerful chain mail gloves.

JADE WARLORD

*[The Eight Trigram Furnace will be
lit and waiting...]*

He pulls the rope and THE FOUNTAIN DRAINS into a dark abyss,
swirling into liquid fire and debris. It ROARS WITH AN
OTHERWORLDLY HEAT.

96 OMITTED 96

97 INT. MONK CHAMBERS - NIGHT - BACKLOT 97

In the dim flicker of candles, Jason kneels by Lu's bed.

JASON

Lu, you've got to hold on.

LU

It's too late.

JASON

No, it's not--

LU

--Jay-Son...

(CONTINUED)

A long beat as he struggles to speak.

LU

--when I was your age, I was a scholar-warrior in training. My arrow was good. So, too, my *gong-fu*. But it was my poetry recognized by the emperor, so I was chosen to take the civil examinations. To pass would place me in the very short line of scholar immortals.

(beat)

I failed.

JASON

You're not an immortal...

Jason fights against tears as Lu tries to breathe.

LU

If one does not attach himself to people and desires, never shall his heart be broken...But then...does he ever truly live? I would rather die a mortal who has cared about someone...than a man free from his own death.

JASON

Lu-Yan, I can't let--

LU

--forget about me. If you do not finish your journey, you'll be found dead. On the other side...

JASON

I don't want to lose you.

Lu squints an incredulous eye at the young man.

LU

Virtue. Compassion. Loyalty. Who has been teaching you such notions?

JASON

Some foolish poet I met along the road.

LU

Indeed.

(CONTINUED)

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CONTINUED: (2)

77A.
97

JASON
You're the man, Lu...

*
*

He touches Lu's arm and gets up to go. He stops at the door,
looks back.

(CONTINUED)

Jason takes a last look at the dying master...then leaves the room.

A97

EXT. MONASTERY COURTYARD - DAY - BACKLOT.

A97

In the courtyard, 13 MONKS engage in martial arts practice. In perfect formation, they do bo staff moves across the courtyard. Two of the monks are round-faced children of 7, but they are remarkable.

Jason stands with the Abbot...

ABBOT

There is only one Elixir of immortality. The Emperor's mix of jade, cinnabar, and salts of mercury. It is forever stored in the realm of the Jade Palace.

Jason reacts.

*

ABBOT

High in the Jade Firmament rarely touched by mortals. To reach it, one must take the north road and cross the border of Heaven and Earth...only to face the Jade Army...

Jason appears disheartened.

ABBOT

I am sorry. There *is* no other way.

SILENT MONK (O.S.)

Yes there is.

All eyes go to the mysterious adept as he grabs two fighting staves, throws one to Jason.

SILENT MONK

In two nights there shall be no moon. We can take the south side of the fourth peak under cover of darkness.

Jason wrestles with this for a moment, then follows the Silent Monk at an urgent step across the courtyard.

JASON

We have to go now.

(CONTINUED)

A97

CONTINUED:

A97

The Silent Monk swings the stick at Jason. Jason blocks the attack.

SILENT MONK

No.

They trade blows: striking, blocking (through the following):

JASON

He's going to die.

SILENT MONK

We go now we *all* die. There is more at stake. An entire kingdom.

(blocking a strike)

Your passage home.

With the staff knocked from his grip by the more skillful artist, Jason considers the words, torn.

SILENT MONK

We will advance in two nights when the moon has ceased. So be it.

Jason watches him walk away.

98

INT. MONASTERY UPPER ROOM - NIGHT - BACKLOT.

98

A cloaked figure sits gazing up at the cloud-shrouded moon. Perhaps Sparrow knows that Jason is behind her.

*

JASON

You okay?

GOLDEN SPARROW

When she met you...long ago, in a tea house...you were a lost boy and frightened. Not the kind she would stand and fight with.

She turns now and looks at the young warrior in the moon glow. THUNDER ACHES in the sky.

JASON

Goodnight.

GOLDEN SPARROW

Please...

She lets her hood fall away so she can better see the sky.

*

Jason stares at her for a long moment, and she senses this. The look in her eye says she knows. She knows this might be the last time they see each other.

*

*

*

(CONTINUED)

98

CONTINUED:

98

The kiss is simple and innocent.

*

GOLDEN SPARROW
Good night.

And she is gone.

*

99

. INT. MONK CHAMBERS - DAWN - BACKLOT

99

The Silent Monk enters, searching for someone. But the shrine is an empty space, flickering in candle glow. He begins to leave...then turns, troubled.

He goes to the shrine and stares down at the blanket that conceals the staff. He pulls it away. The staff is gone.

100

EXT. MOUNTAIN PASS TO 5 ELEMENTS MTN. - DAWN - WYM.

100

Jason Tripitikas is galloping hellbent through a foggy chasm. Like Paul Revere he rides, only instead of a lantern in his left hand, he wields the gold-banded staff.

His breath congeals as he looks up to see the Hall of War holding vigil with an air of imperial seclusion.

Clouds drift and mix with fog, revealing FIVE PEAKS jutting higher than the palace, capped in ice.

101

OMITTED [COMBINED WITH SCENE 100]

101

102

EXT. GATEWAY TO FIVE ELEMENTS MOUNTAIN - DAY - TBC.

102

A SILHOUETTE appears in the FOG BANK. Jason rides up to find himself surrounded by--

100 JADE-CLAD SOLDIERS guarding the pass. When he raises the staff, they part like the Red Sea. But not to let the rider through. Instead, they have formed a seam to reveal Ni Chang. She sits her horse, glaring with blood lust at the kid.

NI CHANG
You have made a most excellent
judgment.

She studies him a beat longer, then turns her horse and leads him deeper into the mist. Soldiers flank and follow as they escort the foreigner toward--

(CONTINUED)

102 CONTINUED:

102

The imposing gate looms in the fog and opens.

A102 OMITTED

A102

B102 INT. ENTRANCE CAVE - DUSK - BACKLOT

B102

Ni Chang and the soldiers march Jason through the passage into the Warlord's palace.

*

103 INT. JADE WARLORD'S THRONE ROOM - DUSK - BACKLOT

103

*

Jade War Lord sits on his throne, staring dead ahead.
FOOTSTEPS ECHO out of the dark.

Ni Chang enters, ghostly and beautiful. She bows...then steps aside to reveal--

SOLDIERS with spears flanking Jason as he comes forward. At the Warlord's gesture, they fall back. Jason stands there clutching the staff.

JADE WARLORD

It is said that the good militarist avoids confrontation with orderly ranks and does not attack great formations. Behold then, a fine militarist. Behold...a knight-errant...

Jason tries his best to stand tall as the Warlord studies him from on high.

JADE WARLORD (cont'd)

...The seeker from the prophecy.
Not quite what I expected.

JASON

A man is dying...back on Song Mountain. I need the Elixir.

An altar-like table at the near wall displays a crystalline vessel filled with the glowing elixir.

JADE WARLORD

And why should I give it to you?

JASON

Because I brought you the staff...

*

JADE WARLORD

The life of your friend for the power to rule a kingdom? A most reasonable offer.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

103

CONTINUED:

JADE WARLORD (cont'd)

(beat)

This man...a good friend?

JASON

And a good teacher.

The Warlord studies Jason as he ruminates on this for a time. Slowly, he rises off his throne and starts toward the unnerved Jason.

*
*
*

JADE WARLORD

It is said he who honors his teacher honors himself. However...there's a bit of a problem with your request. You see, I've promised the elixir to someone else...

*
*
*
*

The Warlord gestures toward Ni Chang.

JASON

But, she didn't bring the staff. I did.

JADE WARLORD

The boy has a point.

NI CHANG

My Liege...you made a promise...

JADE WARLORD

There is but one way to resolve such matters.

(beat)

A martial challenge. To the death.

*

NI CHANG

With pleasure.

Ni Chang fixes her eyes on the young man and something inside her smiles the way a she-wolf smiles on seeing a hapless creature in the way of a meal.

104

EXT. MOUNTAIN PASS TO 5 ELEMENTS MTN. - DUSK - WYM.

104

*

Two riders are going FULL GALLOP through the misty chasm. The Silent Monk and Golden Sparrow, desperation in their faces...

A104

INT. JADE WARLORD'S ARMORY - DUSK - BACKLOT

A104

The MARTIAL DRUMMERS announce the impending duel. The Warlord offers Jason his choice of weapon. But Jason declines. He'd rather use the cudgel of legend. The Bride prepares her whip and butterfly blade.

(CONTINUED)

A104

CONTINUED:

A104

JADE WARLORD
(to Jason)
This friendship must be very
strong.

JASON
It is.

JADE WARLORD
Strong enough to worth risking your
own life?

Jason nods, trying to remember to keep breathing.

Ni Chang walks out into the open with graceful hauteur. She
makes the martial salute, fist to palm. Jason makes the
reply.

The Jade Warlord calmly lifts the bottle of elixir to his
nose and scents the fragrance.

*
*

JADE WARLORD (cont'd)
So be it.

An ENORMOUS GONG is struck by an attendant, announcing the
beginning of the competition.

105

OMITTED

105

106

EXT. GATEWAY TO FIVE ELEMENTS MOUNTAIN - DUSK - TBC.

106

MOVING OVER THE GATE AND THE BRIDGE...we find The Monk and
Sparrow scaling the rock face, clutching at vines. A vine
breaks in Sparrow's hand and she drops. The Monk reaches and
she grabs his wrist. But Sparrow loses her lute down the side
of the mountain.

They keep climbing...

107

INT. JADE WARLORD'S ARMORY - DUSK - BACKLOT

107

Ni Chang whirls at Jason! With unearthly speed and force, she
STRIKES, sends the young man airborne, into a column. When
Jason recovers his wind, Ni Chang is there in Dragon Stance,
circling. Jason is terrified.

Jason lunges desperately, swings the staff--and Ni Chang
swallows the attack, sends Jason to the floor, hurting.

But when the devil woman fires a coup de grace kick, Jason
blocks it. Not bad.

(CONTINUED)

107

CONTINUED:

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107

JADE WARLORD
Ah, you understand. Martial art is
based on deception. One hand lies-

(CONTINUED)

107 CONTINUED: (2)

Ni Chang assumes a beautiful and deadly Crane Stance.

JASON

-- and the other hand tells the truth.

Jason blocks her deceptive attack with the staff and lands a convincing counter-strike, impressing the Warlord. But this only angers Ni Chang who does a 180 spin and knocks the spot from Jason with a spinning ax kick. Jason tries to catch his breath...

Ni Chang blasts forward knocking Jason to the ground again. He loses the staff and is down and in trouble...

108 EXT. STONE STAIRWAYS - DUSK - WYM.

108

The Silent Monk and Sparrow ascend the narrow passageways of Five Elements Mountain. They flatten themselves against a boulder as a LINE OF MARCHING GUARDS comes past.

They continue to climb.

A108 INT. JADE WARLORD'S ARMORY - DUSK - BACKLOT

A108

Jason rolls to his feet and assumes a Snake Style stance. Ni Chang circles him, amused, cutting him off from a clear path to the staff. Like a cat letting a mouse live a bit longer just for entertainment.

Ni Chang reaches behind herself and removes her brutal whip from her sash.

Jason wants to run but there is no where to go.

JADE WARLORD

I see it in your eyes, Traveler. I
can smell it in your sweat. The
fear of death, firing the senses...

Ni Chang flicks her deadly whip, carefully cutting Jason's cheek. Her accuracy is artful.

JADE WARLORD (cont'd)

There is no feeling quite like it.
The heart is going to pound right
out of the chest.

Jason tries to run left but the crack of her whip sends him in the other direction. Another whip crack and he stops short.

(CONTINUED)

A108 CONTINUED:

JADE WARLORD (cont'd)
Vision grows sharp. We are only
truly alive when we know...we're
about to die.

Ni Chang sends her whip flying around Jason's neck. Jason's
face turns red as he struggles against her grasp, reaching
desperately for the staff, just out of reach. *

JADE WARLORD (cont'd)
And you are, my friend.

Ni Chang reels Jason in.

B108 EXT. STONE STAIRWAYS - DUSK - WYM.

B108

The Silent Monk and Sparrow sneak past a GUARD. Then the
Guard turns, spotting them. Sparrow quickly throws a dart,
taking out the soldier.

C108 INT. JADE WARLORD'S ARMORY - DUSK

C108

Jason gasps for air. He stretches his arm out as far as he
can for the staff, but he's finished. His ears are ringing.
Or is something else? *

THE STAFF --

begins to make that high-pitched ring of steel sound as it
vibrates slightly. Slowly, it begins to roll. Just an inch or
two down the uneven stone floor. Jason reaches...grasps... *

Rolling, Jason strikes Ni Chang with a stick blow and
unravels himself from the choke of the whip. *

This infuriates Ni Chang, who turns a bloodthirsty gaze
toward Jason.

The Warlord is enthralled with the dream of this brutal
spectacle.

D108 INT. ENTRANCE CAVE - DUSK

D108

Silent Monk and Sparrow find FOUR GATE GUARDS blocking the
route. Sparrow makes a fluid move and one of the Guards
crumples. But before she can throw another, the remaining
three Guards charge with sabres.

The Silent Monk throws himself into the charge, cuts down
two. Sparrow doubles the third with a kidney strike then
crescent kicks to his helmet. Four Guards are down.

109

INT. JADE WARLORD'S ARMORY - DUSK - BACKLOT

109

Ni Chang lets it fly. She is a screaming banshee coming at Jason from all sides.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Ni Chang crescent kicks Jason, knocking the staff from his grasp. It goes skidding across the floor and rolls the length of the room.

JADE WARLORD

Enough:

*
*

The Warlord picks up the staff, savors it for a moment, then hands it to an Armed Attendant. He now starts toward Jason...

*
*

Jason sees daylight at the open armory doors, he tries to scramble that way.

Not so fast. TWO JADE GUARDS step in to intercept him, lances at his neck. Jason turns and faces--

The Warlord steps closer, savoring the scent of utter terror. TWO ATTENDANTS help remove his military tunic and reveal his flowing training silks. And then his signature weapon is brought to him. His 40-pound crescent moon DAO.

JADE WARLORD

The Seeker from the Prophecy. I find that quite amusing. Did you really think, even for a minute, that you stood a chance?

*

(beat)

I didn't think so.

He hefts the massive dao.

JADE WARLORD (cont'd)

You've got nowhere to hide.

He brings the blade down with all his power...but one of the Guards pinning Jason brings up his weapon and blocks the strike!

Ni Chang wheels--!

The Jade Warlord looks stunned by the act. Then the other Guard thrusts at him, forcing him back a step.

The Lance Guards throw off their helmets, let their cloaks fall away. It is the Silent Monk and Golden Sparrow.

*

The Warlord goes primal, driving the Monk to the wall, knocking the lance from his grip and slicing for his head...just before he ducks and rolls. The fight is on!

*

Sparrow goes vertical and BREAKS the jaws of two Guards with a single outside crescent kick.

Ni Chang whirls away, hurrying for the elixir. Sparrow goes after her.

*
*

(CONTINUED)

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CONTINUED: (2)

86A.
109

Ni Chang feels the shadow and spins with her whip. Sparrow
rolls under the attack, comes up in a kneeling stance with
her twin-short swords, drawn.

*

GOLDEN SPARROW
She will kill you, witch.

(CONTINUED)

109 CONTINUED: (3)

109

NI CHANG

Not if I kill you first. You
orphaned *bitch*...

Ni Chang attacks but Sparrow shoulder-rolls clear. Jason
makes a dash for the elixir, but Ni Chang sweeps him. He goes
down hard. *

THE SILENT MONK attacks the Jade War Lord, avoids deadly
swings of the dao. But the Warlord whirls with frightening
grace and sends the Monk flying. He grabs the Monkey King
Staff from Attendant... *

110 EXT. ENTRANCE CAVE - DUSK - BACKLOT 110

JACK BOOTS making a terrifying mass march as a mixed dozen of
JADE SOLDIERS respond to the commotion.

A110 OMITTED A110

111 INT. JADE WARLORD'S ARMORY - DUSK - BACKLOT 111

While Ni Chang and Sparrow go at it in a wild cat fight,
Jason swings a look toward the entrance, sees the horde of
Jade Soldiers swarming in. *

The soldiers push the Silent Monk back, freeing the Warlord.

THE WARLORD knows what he has to do. He moves through the
battle zone, gets the furnace in his view...sets up like an
Olympic javelin hurler. He drills the staff toward... *

112 OMITTED 112

113 INT. JADE WARLORD'S FOUNTAIN ROOM - DUSK - BACKLOT 113

TOWARD THE FURNACE MOUTH...an inch away...

Someone snags it!

THE SILENT MONK leaps over the burning maw and makes a
gravity-defying save. Seething, the Warlord comes FLYING at
him in a violent spiral. When he connects, he sends the Monk
nearly into the furnace *with* the staff...

SOLDIERS STORM HIM, blades chopping. But the Monk fights them
off like a one-man platoon. It has all come down to this
moment for him. *

114 INT. JADE WARLORD'S ARMORY - DUSK - BACKLOT 114

Jason grabs a spear from the weapons racks and tries to breathe as he faces a charge from a half-dozen SOLDIERS. *

SPARROW wheels and gut kicks the Bride, knocking her down. She runs to help Silent Monk when something gets her by the throat, yanks her short. The silken death locks of Ni Chang have her in a choke-hold. Sparrow probes for her scabbard. Can't get to it. Being strangled in the noose of hair, she suddenly launches into a pirouette and UNSPOOLS from the grip...and she spins free, she keeps the tornado move going and SPIN KICKS the white haired witch. *

Jason uses the spear to fend off sword blows as best he can. He executes stick blocks, high and low, the way Silent Monk schooled him. He ducks out of the path of swinging maces. It is too much for his level. He is about to be overcome when-- *

SPARROW bullets in with her two swords going and cuts a breathing space-- *

GOLDEN SPARROW *

Run! *

115 INT. JADE WARLORD'S FOUNTAIN ROOM - DUSK - BACKLOT 115

Silent Monk battles the Warlord, trying to get to the fountain center and the Stone Monkey King. *

116 INT. JADE WARLORD'S ARMORY - DUSK - BACKLOT 116

Jason and Sparrow do their best to stay alive against Ni-Chang and Soldiers. When it appears to be a lost effort-- Someone else spills in through the palace doors: *

The 13 TEMPLE MONKS. Armed with staffs, they move in "the turning wheel."

When Ni Chang assesses this charge, Jason ducks away. He snatches the terra-cotta vessel and lobs it. *

THE VESSEL OF ELIXIR - FLOATS OVER THE SHAVED HEADS *

Of the Monks. One Monk tries to make a daring catch, but misses. The Vessel spirals toward the tile floor, certain to shatter... *

But a 7 year-old BOY MONK makes a running, sliding catch on his robed knees, and from full-slide he laterals THE VESSEL to an OLDER BROTHER MONK who wheels and tips the elixir back for someone on a stretcher. *

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Slowly, the circle opens now...like a great plum flower
blossom...to reveal:

*
*

Lu-Yan, tipping back the elixir. And as he does, he swerves
and loosens into his classic and lethal Drunken Style, vessel
in hand.

*
*
*

LU

*Ganbei!**
*

LU AX KICKS A SOLDIER and caves his armor, triggering--

The SOUNDS OF BRUTAL IMPACT, echoing in the hollow: horse-
cutters deflecting off staffs, KICKS meeting KICKS.

(CONTINUED)

116

CONTINUED: (2)

116

The twin 7 year-old monks launch from the shoulders of older brothers and No Shadow Kick Jade Guards in the face.

SOLDIERS swarm in, but Golden Sparrow methodically takes them out with darts from below. Some Temple Monks, led by the Abbot, stem the tide by hefting a beam and SLIDING THE LOCK ACROSS THE DOORS, keeping out the larger troops. THE DOORS BOOM from outside force.

In the heat of battle, Jason now finds himself back-to-back with the revived Lu.

LU (CONT'D) (cont'd)

Fight Snake with *Crane*, Jay-Son.

Hands open the gate, feet win the fight--

*

Ni Chang attacks Lu. He engages the blitz with Drunken Fist. But hell has no fury like a white-haired demonness who has just had immortal beauty snatched from her.

*

*

*

She knocks the spittle from him, flattens him.

*

A116

INT. JADE WARLORD'S FOUNTAIN ROOM - DUSK - BACKLOT

A116

The Warlord whirls into a cyclone attack and palm-strikes the Monk so brutally, he is sent flying across the room.

*

*

The staff has been knocked from his grip and it lands on the floor, several feet away.

*

*

The Warlord hurries for --

*

THE STAFF on the floor. But a foot steps in front of it. Golden Sparrow blocks his path...

*

*

GOLDEN SPARROW

My Lord...

JADE WARLORD

Who are you, Concubine?

Golden Sparrow stares at him with vengeance burning in her black eyes. Slowly she reaches her hands up to her bun. Slowly, almost seductively...

She undoes the pin and lets her hair drop long.

GOLDEN SPARROW

I am the youngest daughter of a family you murdered...

The jade dart appears in her fingers.

(CONTINUED)

A116

CONTINUED:

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A116

GOLDEN SPARROW(cont'd)
Come drink with me...

She cocks her arm back...throws the dart with deadly accuracy. The Warlord raises a hand, palm out, and projects a HEAT WAVE OF QI, redirecting the flying dart and blasting Sparrow backward. *

She hurtles into the wall. The dart lands beside her. *

(CONTINUED)

JASON
No!!!!

Jason races to her.

Lu goes against the Warlord, Drunken Kung-Fu versus Forbidden Fist. The crafty master snags the staff and just as he is laid out by the Warlord's brutal kick, he passes it off to the Silent Monk.

The determined Monk, staff in hand, charges for the Stone Monkey King.

B116 INT. JADE WARLORD'S ARMORY - DUSK - BACKLOT

B116

Ni Chang descends on the fallen Lu, cocks back her whip, but the Drunken Master catches it with a spear and flings her INTO THE BANK OF CANDLES, GLASS SMASHING.

117 INT. JADE WARLORD'S FOUNTAIN ROOM - DUSK - BACKLOT

117

Meanwhile, Silent Monk takes out anyone in his way with the stick, fighting with animal ferocity. He is nearly there, pulse pounding. He's going to make it...but--

A spear sizzles through the air and impales him, stopping him short of his mission. All look to see who hurled it. It is His August Military Master: the Jade Warlord.

The Silent Monk takes a few last fighting steps, clutching the staff.

IN SLOW MOTION, he falls dying, into the green mist of the fountain. Falling...he cocks the staff back like a 9 iron. With his last breath--

THE SILENT MONK SWINGS THE STAFF

And DEMOLISHES THE STONE MONKEY KING. It shatters into a thousand pieces. The trapped energy BLASTING OUT in a ring of UNDULATING QI. Like a raging tornado, its force envelopes anything and everything. The Silent Monk holds on for dear life. Jason realizes what is happening...

*
*
*
*

JASON
Yin is Yang...Yang is yin...

(CONTINUED)

117 CONTINUED:

Jason watches as Silent Monk shape-shifts shamanically into
THE MONKEY KING. *

JASON (CONT'D)
...when dark becomes light...

THE STAFF MAKES THE RINGING STEEL NOISE, but more resonant
than ever. It is, finally, in the hands of its rightful
owner. *

MONKEY KING
...let the journey begin.

Jade Warlord SOARS at the Monkey King with his crescent moon
dao...but the Monkey Master, ducks, dodges, and goes stick to
sword against the Martial Lord.

What happens here leaves even the 13 Fighting Monks in awe:

118 INT. JADE WARLORD'S FOUNTAIN ROOM - DUSK - BACKLOT 118

A MARTIAL CLASH OF IMMORTALS

As the Warlord whirls dragon-like with his Crescent Moon Dao,
the rebel puts on a display of Monkey Style stick fighting.
He coos and taunts like Bruce Lee; he rope-a-dopes like
Muhammad Ali.

The Warlord makes a move so fast and brutal that he gets the
draw on the Monkey King, sends him flying.

But Monkey King uses the stick to pogo upward, kick himself
off the wall, and land in a deadly stance. He's waited 500
years for this rematch. *

119 . EXT. BATTLEMENTS - DUSK - BACKLOT 119

LU KICKS NI CHANG out the door onto the balcony. *

She counters his strike and knocks him backward. He looks
terrified as she charges...swords clash...she knocks Lu's
away. She's just too damned efficient.

120 INT. JADE WARLORD'S THRONE ROOM - DUSK - BACKLOT 120

The Monkey King LANDS A BRUTAL STICK blow that doubles the
Warlord over. But the Warlord counters with a powerful force
of his own. Monkey goes down... *

121 EXT. BATTLEMENTS - DUSK - BACKLOT

121

As Ni Chang lunges for the kill, Lu topples backward and meets her charge with his feet, flips her up and OFF THE BATTLEMENTS. But her hair snakes out, grabs his leg. She uses her hair to pull herself up. Lu is pulled to the edge, and will be yanked off to his death...but he flips his sword horizontal and uses it to cross-hatch himself in the gap. *

Ni Chang is pulling herself upward, walking the wall, ninja-style. Just as she is about reach the top... Lu makes a high-risk decision. He inverts the sword, is nearly yanked off the edge, and he HACKS DOWNWARD... *

NI CHANG falls... *

Lu catches his wind, readies the sword, and hurries inside. *

A121 INT. JADE WARLORD'S FOUNTAIN ROOM - DUSK - BACKLOT

A121

AT THE WALL

Sparrow's life is draining away.

JASON
Come on, Sparrow. You can make it...

But she's beginning to fade. With trembling fingers she slips something into Jason's hand.

It is the Jade Dart...

B121 INT. JADE WARLORD'S THRONE ROOM - DUSK - BACKLOT

B121

THE WARLORD, now with enough distance between himself and the Monkey King, sinks into his Stone Qigong Stance and begins to cultivate the energy...BREATHING LIKE ONE-THOUSAND SNAKES...he turns his palms out...projects the qi that can transform the Monkey King back to stone...

MONKEY REJECTS IT WITH THE POWER OF HIS STAFF. This forces the Warlord back a step. *

Seething, the Warlord charges and swings his blade for the Monkey King's head. Bull's eye. But King Monkey is not there. The crescent moon blade HEWS into the wall and now King Monkey puts his all into the stick and swings a killer blow. *

THE STAFF PULVERIZES the Warlord and sends him FLYING FOR THE FURNACE... *

C121 OMITTED

C121 *

122 INT. JADE WARLORD'S FOUNTAIN ROOM - DUSK - BACKLOT

122

...but he uses his *qi* to clear the maw and soar to the other side where he-- *

LANDS ON JASON, standing at the edge. He uses Jason to break his fall. He bear hugs the kid, swallows him in his massive arms. *

But the look in the Warlord's eyes says something is wrong. A look of bewilderment. *

Monkey King watches from the other side; Lu comes in to see the moment. *

The Jade Warlord releases his grip on Jason. He takes a step forward, a heavy step to the side. He looks down at his chest to see the jade dart buried deep. *

(CONTINUED)

122 CONTINUED:

The Warlord stumbles forward, his immortal life draining. *

JADE WARLORD
I am deceived... *

As he falls face-first-- *

INTO THE EIGHT TRIGRAM FURNACE *

Where his now mortal flesh is incinerated. *

MONKEY KING
So be it... *

A122 OMITTED A122 *

123 INT. JADE WARLORD'S ARMORY - DUSK - BACKLOT 123

THE PALACE DOORS BOOM OPEN -- THE JADE ARMY

Charges. But when they see that the Warlord has been
vanquished, they stand down. They see...

124 INT. JADE WARLORD'S FOUNTAIN ROOM - DUSK - BACKLOT 124

The legendary Monkey King, standing with his renowned weapon.

The Monkey King looks gratefully at Jason. The young man is
elated for a moment, but...

JASON
Sparrow. Where is she...

LU
Jay-Son...

Because Lu sees her first. On the floor, face down. Jason
stands frozen for a moment then races to her, goes to his
knees.

JASON
Sparrow.... *
(beat) *
Lu, help... *

(CONTINUED)

GOLDEN SPARROW
Jade...Jade Warlord...

JASON
He's dead.

With this, she seems to relax her body in his arms.

GOLDEN SPARROW
I...

JASON
Sparrow...don't...

GOLDEN SPARROW
I thank you...

Golden Sparrow smiles as her bleary eyes fix on his. And then she tightens in his arms and stops breathing.

No immortal, she is gone forever. And now the sky RUMBLES WITH THUNDER. Her family perhaps, calling her home...

IMMORTAL DRUMMERS beat a royal tattoo. SOLDIERS begin to kowtow. One by one, all fall to their knees.

The JADE EMPEROR appears in a misty GATEWAY...

He surveys the battle aftermath, considers the small band of disciples that stand victorious.

Jason rises, facing the Sublime One. He gestures to Sparrow's lifeless form.

JASON
Please...can you do something?

Jade Emperor looks down at the orphan, beautiful even in death.

JADE EMPEROR
Her destiny was written by her own hand, Son. I am sorry.

The Monkey King lowers his head and mourns her as do the others.

A126 OMITTED

A126

127 EXT. PEACH BANQUET - DAY - STAGE 1

127 *

A tiny orchard sparrow flies across A BEAUTIFUL CLOUDSCAPE and alights in the large tree.

Jason watches the sparrow fly, remembering.

His Supremely High Holder of Talismans now turns his eyes to the Monkey King. *

JADE EMPEROR *

Go do some good on earth, Great Sage. Lead the journey to find the scriptures of illumination. Bring light back to the Kingdom. *

King Monkey twirls his cudgel into a martial position. *

JADE EMPEROR *

And you... *

Lu looks sheepish, like he's been caught posing as something he never was. *

JADE EMPEROR *

If only we were all as foolish as you. On this day I make a place for an Eighth Immortal. You have much to offer this world, my friend. *

Lu feels his eyes welling with emotion. Jason is happy for him. The Jade Emperor's eyes now move his way... *

JADE EMPEROR *

Traveler. You have come far through the Gate of No Gate to fulfill the prophecy of the mortals. What do you desire? Please... *

Jason is too saddened over the loss of Golden Sparrow to think about himself in this moment. *

LU *

All he has wished has been to go home. *

JADE EMPEROR *

Very well. *

(CONTINUED)

Lu and Jason walk to the brink to look down over the sea.

JASON

The Eighth Immortal. Poet and
Sage...and master of Drunken Kung-
Fu...

LU

Whatever.

Jason looks at him for one last time.

LU

It is said master and student walk
the path side by side. They share
their destinies...until their paths
go separate ways. Hey, you know
what they say about two tigers on
the same mountain.

(beat)

It is time, Jay-Son.

JASON

I'll never forget you.

LU

I guess that's what being immortal
truly means, yes?

The Monkey King approaches Jason as he stands at the brink of
Five Elements Mountain. He looks into the young man's eyes.

MONKEY KING

You freed me, Traveler...

The Monkey King inverts his staff and aims it at Jason.

MONKEY KING

Now...go free yourself.

He channels his powerful *qi* energy into the staff and jabs it
toward him. Jason goes off the edge. Into the MIST...

Jason lies in the vent smoke, face down in cast-off boxes and
other trash near an overflowing dumpster. The sound of a
TAXI down a side street makes his hand flinch.

Slowly, he opens his eyes. He has some bruises, but he's
alive. Looking upward to where he fell from, he tries to get
his bearings. Carefully, he pulls himself to his feet.

(CONTINUED)

Jason looks around the area, groping for the staff. But he lost it in the fall.

VOICE (O.S.)
There he is...

Jason turns on his heel, woozy.

Lupo leaps from the last few steps of a fire escape and lands on the street. TWO BOYOS appear in the mouth of the alley. From the opposite side FOUR OTHER CREW MEMBERS close in.

LUPO
You fell right where you belong,
Loser. In the trash.

The gang hems in.

JASON
(recalling now)
Hop...I've gotta go help him...

But as Jason tries to go down the alley, he is shoved hard in the chest by one of the Posse.

SOUTHIE #1
Ain't goin' nowhere.

*

JASON
No, really, I have to get to--

Lupo sucker punches Jason in the belly, double him.

The Boyos crowd in like hyenas on a carcass. Lupo throws a kick, hits Jason in the side.

But Lupo isn't letting it go. He grabs Jason by the arm and flings him into the brick wall. He stumbles back. Staggers.

JASON
I...I don't want to fight.

He staggers and weaves right into a Boyo who pushes him to Lupo who pushes him against the dumpster. The young men laugh as they enjoy the torment.

LUPO
Oh, we know you don't want to
fight, Trips.

Lupo back-kicks him in the ribs. Jason falls back against the other wall. It was all a dream.

Jason stumbles a few steps and bumps woozy into Lupo who is laughing as he prepares to throw a fist.

(CONTINUED)

But somehow the punch misses and a hand touches him up under his left arm while a foot sweeps him onto his backside.

Lupo springs up, lunges quickly at Jason. Jason ducks a blow, shuffles and stumbles in Drunken Style Kung-Fu and whirls, sending the muscular thug flying into the trash.

Jason assumes a fighting stance and turns toward Lupo. His eyes are calm, confident. Lupo appears stunned for a moment.

JASON

We don't have to do this.

Lupo comes surging and throws a no-holds barred FLURRY OF PRISON YARD PUNCHES.

Jason casually, effortlessly, BLOCKS EVERY SINGLE STRIKE, and then sends Lupo back against the wall. Lupo is sweating. He spins athletically with a back kick. Jason side steps the assault and sends the gangbanger's energy in a harmless direction. Like water, he can't be grasped.

Lupo is enraged. He charges with fury, going for the kill. Jason deflects the first punch, mantis-traps the second, twisting Lupo over then defending himself with a round house kick that huffs the wind from him. But now six posse members are charging-one has drawn a blade.

Jason whirls in a deep Cross Stance, cuts down two. The four others dance backward, unnerved, hands held up in truce.

Jason faces Lupo who has backed up a few steps. He grabs for his rear waistband and pulls out that handgun.

He aims it at Jason.

LUPU

I'll blow you away like I did the
old fool! I'll kill you!

Jason stills himself. ALL SOUND FADES. All but the STEADY PULSE OF A HEART BEAT, or it might be an ancient Chinese kettle drum. But it is the only sound.

LUPU stares with hard eyes. Hard, but holding no stillness. Lost and angry eyes.

Jason looks at Lupo with eyes that turn his own stare back on him. Fearless. Centered. Compassionate.

That might be the aspect that freezes Lupo long enough for Jason to RUN UP THE WALL and launch, Monkey Style...

(CONTINUED)

HE KICKS the gun from Lupo's hand, BREAKS HIS ARM. The handgun lands in the trash as Lupo goes down in LIVE SPEED. Jason stands over him in a stance. He can finish him if he wants. But that's not the way.

The South End gang runs north.

Lupo looks up with terror in his eyes. He stares up at Jason, mind-blown and scared for his life.

Jason looks at him for a moment then starts down the alley. A few lingering crew members see him coming and they trip over each other trying to run.

And now SIRENS are heard over--

129

EXT. LU YAN'S PAWN SHOP - NIGHT - STAGE 3

129 *

A commotion on the sidewalk in front of the little junk shop.
CHINATOWN RESIDENTS and a FEW TOURISTS crowd in.

Jason pushes his way through urgently to see Hop. The old man sits on the walk with his back to the wall, holding his stomach.

JASON

Hop . . .

Jason kneels beside him, checks on him, distraught.

GIRL'S VOICE

Let me through...

*

A Chinatown Girl in jeans and casual top, her hair in a high bun gets through the crowd and takes a knee.

CHINATOWN GIRL

What happened?

JASON

He was shot...

The girl opens Hop's jacket and examines. An OLD WOMAN behind her hands down a silk scarf and the girl quickly stanches the wound.

JASON

Is he gonna be okay?

The girl needs to secure the bandage so she removes a pin from the bun in her hair, puts it in her teeth for a second. As she looks up at Jason with her hair tumbling long, she appears familiar. Very familiar. And beautiful...

*

*

*

*

(CONTINUED)

129

THE FORBIDDEN KINGDOM May 5, 2007 (GREEN)
CONTINUED:

99A.
129

Jason meets her eyes. And now PARAMEDICS part the crowd, tend *
to Old Hop. *

PARAMEDIC #1 *
Looks like just a graze. He'll
live...

(CONTINUED)

HOP
Of course I'll live. I'm immortal.

The CROWD laughs at the tough old salt. And as the
paramedics get him on a stretcher and toward the waiting
ambulance...

*
*
*

Jason moves alongside him, touching his shoulder.

JASON
Hop, I'm...

HOP
--I know, Jay-Son.

The ambulance doors are opened and he is loaded in...

HOP
Did you return the staff to its
rightful owner?

JASON
I did.

Old Hops smiles.

HOP
You're the man.

Now Jason smiles as he watches the doors close and the
ambulance pull away.

*
*

B129 EXT. LU YAN'S PAWN SHOP - NIGHT - STAGE 3 B129 *

With the crowd clearing, Jason lingers...then starts down the walk. He watches the Chinatown girl cross the street. She looks back at him before entering THE GOLDEN SPARROW, a gift shop. *

As Jason walks on, A FEW YOUNG GUYS who have witnessed the fight, give him a wide berth. *

130 EXT. JASON'S APARTMENT ROOF TOP - DAWN - TBC. 130

A magical SUNRISE OVER BOSTON HARBOR, blue water beyond. Pigeons flutter from rooftops...

Up there, on the roof, Jason does a stick form with skill and self-expression. Like the Monkey King in the opening image, he captures stillness in movement. The balance of Yin and Yang.

LU YAN (V.O.)
(Immortal Storyteller)
And so the legend is told that the Monkey King began his journey West in search of truth. While a traveler returned to his world to walk the path of the warrior--and find his own truth.

(beat)
As one tale ends, so another begins...

Jason flips the staff INTO THE SKY. In SLOW MOTION it turns end over end...into a vast sky open to hope and dreams...

FADE OUT.