

MIDDLE KINGDOM
by Michael Sonnenschein

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SHANGHAI, 1860

After the first Opium War, China was forced to open Shanghai to international trade. Britain, France, and the United States each controlled territory within its walls. An ancient civilization grappled with modernity and change as fortune-seekers rushed in from around the globe.

Italicized dialogue is in Cantonese.

FADE IN ON:

A CORPSE. A Chinese Man in his twenties, sprawled on the grass next to a tall tin-roofed warehouse. We can just make out his face in the light of dusk as we WIDEN TO

EXT. WAREHOUSE - DUSK

A GUARD stands next to the body, occasionally shooting it a nervous glance as A HORSE AND RIDER emerge from the tree-line. The rider dismounts. This is SAMUEL PARKHURST, early thirties, gaunt and serious-looking.

The guard is relieved to see him.

GUARD

Found him here on my rounds.
(points to window)
Wager he tried to climb up, get in
through that window, lost his
footing.

Samuel kneels. Peers at the corpse's face.

GUARD (CONT'D)

One of ours?

SAMUEL

Works the warehouse. Suppose he
wanted a taste.

GUARD

Hell of a price for a bit of
pleasure.
(then)
The morgue will send over a wagon
first thing. Know where to find his
family?

SAMUEL

We aren't telling the morgue.

GUARD

Sir?

SAMUEL

Or his family.

GUARD

Sir, I do not understand.

SAMUEL

A dead worker at a company
warehouse?

(MORE)

SAMUEL (CONT'D)

That's thousands of dollars.
Insurance. Paying the family.
Bribes to the magistrate. We'll
lose our workers, too. They'll
think his ghost remains to seek
revenge.

GUARD

Are we to bury him ourselves? With
Christian rites?

SAMUEL

Not quite.
(re: corpse)
Help me lift him.

EXT. SHORE - DUSK

Samuel and the Guard lead the horse to the shoreline, the
corpse now sprawled sideways in the saddle. The vast Yellow
Sea spreads beyond.

Samuel starts gathering rocks. Shoves them inside the dead
man's rough work garb.

SAMUEL

Should do it.

He and the Guard lift the corpse off the horse, and wade out
into sea, dragging the body along.

SAMUEL (CONT'D)

We need to go out far enough to
catch the current. Or he'll wash
right back up.

They wade farther into the ocean. Then:

SAMUEL (CONT'D)

Here.

The Guard looks down at the body, now soaked in water.
Hesitates.

SAMUEL (CONT'D)

He was stealing from us. You
understand that, yes? What do we
owe him?

The guard nods, still shaken. They let go.

The body bobs gently as the ocean carries it away, then starts to sink. As the head goes under, his eyes stare out, blank and accusing, as we...

CUT TO:

EXT. SHANGHAI HARBOR - DAY

A crowded maze of ships. Chinese junks and sampans (small craft) jostle with Western shipping frigates and tall-masted Persian dhao as their CREWS hustle around, loading and unloading endless streams of cargo chests.

We find the Frolic, a massive steamship. American flag waving off the bow. The crew lowers shipping crates from the deck via pulleys onto low-hulled barges as a weathered CARGOMASTER shouts orders.

CARGOMASTER
... and THREE! Load 'er down.

PASSENGERS-- mostly well-heeled Western merchants and their families, but a few Asian faces as well-- climb down a rope ladder onto a sampan.

Another sampan approaches the Frolic, carrying LU TIEN, 35, robed in the elegant garb of a high-ranking Mandarin. With him, half a dozen CHINESE GUARDSMEN. Lu, alert and watchful, scans the deck of the Frolic.

CARGOMASTER (CONT'D)
(to crew)
Customs. Let 'em on.

A Guardsman tosses a bow-line to a pair of SAILORS on the Frolic deck, and they pull in the sampan. As Lu and his party climb onboard, we catch a snippet of conversation as they pass the sailors.

SAILOR #1
Put that right out of mind. There be no Chinese girl set to converse with you, let alone open up her petticoats.

SAILOR #2
Ain't been to a port I haven't pulled. Chinese ladies got quim, right?

They guffaw as Lu gazes across the Frolic deck, perplexed.

LU
Where are the sails?

The sailors turn. Didn't expect to hear English from him.

SAILOR #1

Excuse me?

LU

I see no sails on this vessel. Or masts. This boat, how does it propel through the ocean?

The sailors avoid eye contact, a little embarrassed.

SAILOR #2

(points)

There's a steam engine.

LU

'Steam engine'?

SAILOR #1

The, uh, water is heated by coal, and that pushes the turbine.

LU

Because the gas produced from the heated water expands the volume?

SAILOR #1

Yes, sir. I believe so.

LU

'Steam engine.' Very interesting.

He proceeds down the deck to the Cargomaster, guards following. The sailors watch him go, bewildered.

SAILOR #2

Do they all talk English?

EXT. PORT OF SHANGHAI - DOCKS - CONTINUOUS

The chaos of the harbor spills onto the docks, which teem with WORKERS shouting in different languages, TRADERS examining goods, CHINESE ERRAND BOYS darting around delivering messages and selling roast chickens and dried fish.

A cluster of WESTERN WOMEN-- and a few men-- watch excitedly as a SALESCLERK pries open a crate, revealing...

SALESCLERK

Four shillings per!

... stacks of magazines-- 'All The Year Round, December 1860'. Emblazoned on the cover:

'Great Expectations by Mr. Charles Dickens. Chapter 3'

As the customers reach for the magazines...

SALESCLERK (CONT'D)

Order, please! Ladies, form a queue!

Meanwhile, the sampan carrying passengers from the Frolic arrives at the dock. Passengers disembark. Some are greeted warmly by their families, others pile into waiting horse-drawn coaches. Only one remains alone: FREDERICK WARD, 30. Scruffy and strong in a suit that doesn't quite fit, with a duffel slung over his shoulder.

Ward looks around, taking it all in-- the signs in English and Cantonese, the Chinese in traditional dress swarming the streets. Shopkeepers making burnt offerings of fake paper money.

He turns to a CHINESE LABORER taking a smoking break.

WARD

Boarding house? Sleep?

He lays his head on his hands, mimicking sleep. The laborer points down a street.

Ward heads on his way. As he turns, we notice the three rifle butts jutting out of his duffel.

EXT. FROLIC - DECK - CONTINUOUS

Lu and the Cargomaster look on as a sailor pries open a cargo chest revealing...

Stacks of golf-ball sized wads of a brown waxy substance. This is the source of all the enterprise we see around us: opium, raw and unadulterated.

CARGOMASTER

Three-quarter ton, originated in Calcutta. Consignment to Jardine And Sons.

He holds out a sheaf of documents. But Lu doesn't take them.

CARGOMASTER (CONT'D)

Everything's in order.

LU
I'm afraid you cannot unload.

The Cargomaster sighs. Used to shakedown.

CARGOMASTER
As it so happens, I've some Spanish silver in my stateroom. Going rate's what, thirty tael?

LU
You misunderstand, sir. It is not under my authority to allow.

CARGOMASTER
You are the customs chief?

LU
I am, sir.

CARGOMASTER
Then damn right I don't understand.

In the background we see a small vessel make its way through the harbor towards the Frolic, aft side...

LU
You will in a moment.

... and, astride its bow stands HOWARD LAMBERTH, mid-forties, sporting the plumage of a British naval officer and screaming at the top of his lungs.

LAMBERTH
STOP UNLOADING! STOP AT ONCE!

As the British boat gets closer, we see that it is armed with several cannons and carrying a dozen BRITISH SOLDIERS, bayonets gleaming on the tips of their rifles.

CARGOMASTER
What in damnation is this?
(to a sailor)
To the Armory. Now.

The British gunship reaches the Frolic, and soldiers ready a boarding ladder.

LAMBERTH
Under the authority of Her Majesty Queen Victoria, I claim boarding rights to your vessel.

The Cargomaster points at the American flag waving a little plaintively from the bow.

CARGOMASTER

See this, ass-muncher? Move off.

Lamberth laughs.

LAMBERTH

Tell me, good chap. When did you collect your last post delivery?

CARGOMASTER

Two months ago. At Moulmein.

LAMBERTH

Then you've missed a spot of news. Britain and the Manchu emperor have made peace. The terms of the treaty grant the crown the right to trade opium in every port in China. To the exclusion of all other nations, including your 'united' states.

The Cargomaster takes this in. Glances at Lu, who nods. As Lamberth clambers aboard, followed by the British troops:

LAMBERTH (CONT'D)

In other words, we have the right to inspect this ship and seize all opium on board.

He thrusts a document into the Cargomaster's hand.

CARGOMASTER

America will not allow this.

LAMBERTH

Is that so? You had best tell the American Army.

He points towards shore-- specifically the American military outpost. Soldiers milling around a few small boats, easily in sight of the Frolic.

LAMBERTH (CONT'D)

In fact, your Governor Roebling will countersign the treaty this very afternoon.

(then)

May we, sir?

On the Cargomaster, realizing he's defeated, as the soldiers start prying open the chests of opium...

EXT. AMERICAN CONCESSION - STREET / CLAVERLY FLOOR - MORNING

Morning business bustle. Samuel enters the storefront offices of Claverly Trading. He passes through the office floor where men work at their desks, filing paperwork and preparing ledgers.

INT. HALLWAY / CLAVERLY'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Samuel knocks at the door. GEORGE CLAVERLY answers. Mid-fifties, gentle, wealthy enough to never take anything too seriously.

SAMUEL

Mr. Claverly, sir. At the harbor this morning--

CLAVERLY

I heard, I heard. Come in.

He beckons him inside. As they sit, Claverly pours himself some whiskey.

CLAVERLY (CONT'D)

Orders from Washington, as I understand. A matter of diplomacy. Lincoln fears antagonizing England should there be a war with the South. Can't have the British Navy in the Chesapeake again.

SAMUEL

Sir, The Jeremiah is due in port within the week. With our cargo.

CLAVERLY

Mostly steel, no? For the French settlement up north. The British have no right to our steel.

SAMUEL

There's some opium as well.

CLAVERLY

Is there?

He puts on his reading glasses, finds some paperwork on his desk.

CLAVERLY (CONT'D)

Ah, yes. Four score chests to be acquired in Calcutta. Well, what with the bath Jardine just took, by my measure that's pretty light.

Samuel hesitates. Judging the moment.

SAMUEL

Mr. Claverly. I've devised a method by which we could save that cargo.

CLAVERLY

Go on.

SAMUEL

We still have two hundred coach wheels in our warehouse.

CLAVERLY

Worry not. We'll sell 'em.

SAMUEL

But we haven't yet. The tires are made of pneumatic rubber. They're hollow.

CLAVERLY

Samuel, I'm sorry, I don't...

SAMUEL

(really trying to sell it)
We bring wheels onto the Jeremiah in the guise of a provision ship before it reaches the harbor. And we fill the opium within the tires. Then we create a new invoice for the wheels.

Claverly smiles, amused at Samuel's exuberance.

CLAVERLY

Samuel--

SAMUEL

(whipping out a pad of paper)
I've made the calculations.

He hands the paper to Claverly, who adds it to the clutter on his desk with a perfunctory glance.

CLAVERLY

Sam, you are very valuable to this firm. Smart. Resourceful. A bit cunning.

SAMUEL

I have been grateful for your family's trust in me.

CLAVERLY

If indeed we can no longer rely on opium we will need that cunning even more. Harder to squeeze profit from silk and porcelain. Fickle tastes of the public and all that. And Ezra is becoming a fine trader, but I fear I have not been successful in bestowing on him my...

Searching for a tactful phrase, he trails off. Drinks.

CLAVERLY (CONT'D)

I'm going to raise your salary, Samuel. Shall we say an additional... eight dollars per month?

SAMUEL

Eight. Thank you, sir. That is generous.

Claverly doesn't pick up on Samuel's disappointment.

CLAVERLY

Can't let another firm steal you away.

He chuckles.

SAMUEL

As for the tires, sir. The British will not inspect them closely, I am sure.

CLAVERLY

And the next time? And the time after that? Perhaps we conceal the opium in a wooden horse.

(then)

A gentleman does not profit from forgery and deceit.

A KNOCK ON THE DOOR and EZRA CLAVERLY pokes his head in. A good-looking dandy of twenty-five.

CLAVERLY (CONT'D)

Son. Join us in a drink?

EZRA CLAVERLY

I need Samuel, actually. There's a local at the door. A woman. Making a bit of a ruckus.

SAMUEL
What does she want?

EZRA CLAVERLY
(shrugs)
No speak-a English. A one-woman
tower of Babel. Sort it out, will
you?

INT./EXT. CLAVERLY TRADING LOBBY / STREET - CONTINUOUS

Samuel emerges from the office into the lobby, where a CHINESE WOMAN is SCREAMING and gripping the doorway desperately as two clerks try to yank her out onto the street by her legs. This is DONGMEI YIN, 25.

As she kicks one of the Clerks in the stomach--

DONGMEI
Let go, you brute!

The Clerk YOWLS in pain and grabs her hair, but Samuel intercedes.

SAMUEL
What's this about?

Dongmei looks up, surprised to hear Cantonese.

DONGMEI
*My husband works in your warehouse.
He is missing for two days.*

SAMUEL
Why is that our concern?

DONGMEI
*I know what happens. When there is
an accident, you barbarians do not
want to pay. So you hide the body.
Where is my husband?*

On Samuel. Hesitating ever so slightly.

SAMUEL
*There has not been an incident at
our warehouse.*

Dongmei returns his stare. She knows he's lying. And Samuel can tell. But he's too tough to crack.

SAMUEL (CONT'D)
*Perhaps he has been smoking. Have
you checked the dens?*

DONGMEI

My husband does not use opium.

SAMUEL

*Seems that no woman in Shanghai
believes her husband smokes. And
yet...*

Two AMERICAN SOLDIERS approach on the street.

SOLDIER #1

Problem here?

Samuel puts up his hand to back them off. On Dongmei:

DONGMEI

Please, sir. Tell me where he is.

SAMUEL

Go, before they arrest you.

... And Dongmei gives up. Lets go of the doorway and shuffles down the street.

On Ezra and the clerks, who have been watching this exchange with fascination.

EZRA CLAVERLY

Nice work, Sammy. Arrange to meet
her later?

He guffaws along with the other clerks. Off Samuel's strained smile--

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON an opium pipe being lit, the smoke curling up towards a shabby, peeling ceiling. WIDEN TO:

INT. BOARDING HOUSE - LOBBY - DAY

Ward, inhaling uncomfortably. He's with two other men-- one's as stoned as can be, staring at a spot on the floor. The other is PIERRE BOURGUIGNON, 40s, stocky body just starting to go to seed.

From across the lobby, the CHINESE FAMILY that runs the boarding house observes with varying degrees of annoyance, curiosity, and fear.

BOURGUIGNON

(French accent)

Hold the smoke in the mouth for a
time of many seconds.

Ward bursts into a coughing fit.

WARD
Don't feel nothing.

BOURGUIGNON
(taking the pipe)
The effect, it is not immediate.
Ask our friend here. When he can
speak again.

As he inhales, there's a COMMOTION outside on the street. Shouting. Horses. Through the window, we see a crowd gathering.

WARD
What's that?

Bourguignon shrugs indifferently as he tokes. Ward gets up and heads to the doorway, where he sees...

EXT. SHANGHAI - OLD CITY - STREET

A PROCESSION OF HORSES carrying CHINESE SOLDIERS-- dead, dying, wounded. Some still have arrows protruding from their bodies. Onlookers gather, peering at the casualties as they pass.

Ward watches, stupefied. Bourguignon joins him in the doorway, along with the Chinese family.

BOURGUIGNON
They're looking to see if it's
their brother. Or husband.

Sure enough, a CHINESE WOMAN examines the face of a corpse passing by on the caravan, and bursts into tears.

WARD
Who're they fighting? Thought they
surrendered to the Brits.

BOURGUIGNON
It's an insurrection. One of their
own. A farmer who declared he's
Jesus, I hear.

WARD
You mean Jesus Jesus? Our Jesus?

BOURGUIGNON
What I hear. Sieged Nanking, a
week's ride west of here.

At the end of this grisly procession is a horse carrying THREE PRISONERS, bound from head to toe and white with fear. A man, a woman, and a teenage boy. As they pass, the crowd jeers them and throws rocks.

WARD
Collaborators?

Bourguignon nods. A chant rises up from the crowd as they pelt the prisoners. 'Taiping! Taiping!' Next to Ward and Bourguignon in the doorway, the boarding house family joins in.

Ward watches with fascination as the prisoners pass, followed by more soldiers. Then, suddenly--

A YOUNG MAN rushes from the crowd of onlookers into the procession. A moment of confusion as he reaches under his cloak for something--

-- a PRIMITIVE BOMB, the fuse burning. He holds it above his head. Just as the soldiers start to scatter...

YOUNG MAN
Taiping!

BOOM. It explodes. Chaos. Fleeing crowds. Smoke. Body parts.

On Bourguignon and Ward, watching from a safe distance. Too stoned to panic.

WARD
Followers of Jesus, eh?

Off Bourguignon's shrug...

EXT. SHANGHAI - OLD CITY - ESTABLISHING SHOT

Amid the squalor of the old city stands Xunfu Palace, the ornate seat of the Chinese government.

INT. XUNFU PALACE - RECEPTION ROOM - DAY

On an ivory throne sits ZHOU FENG, in heavy ceremonial robes. Mid-forties, bloated. Lu stands by him.

ZHOU
How many dead?

LU
Four, Your Grace. Three more wounded in the explosion.

On Zhou, assessing this. Unmoved, calculating.

ZHOU

*There could be more within the
walls of the city. I will not
attend the funeral rites tomorrow.*

LU

*Your Grace, I believe the people's
spirits would be lifted by--*

ZHOU

*Too much danger. If a Taiping will
die for four mere foot-soldiers,
how many will sacrifice themselves
to kill a Prince Of Heaven?*

Before Lu can protest--

ZHOU (CONT'D)

*(to guard at doorway)
Send in the Western barbarians.*

Lamberth enters along with WARD ROEBLING (30s), the earnest governor of the American Colony. With each of them is a small contingent of British and American soldiers, respectively.

Lamberth approaches the throne.

LAMBERTH

*On behalf of Her Majesty, Queen
Victoria, I pay respect to your
emperor Hong Xiuquan through you,
his cousin Zhou Feng.*

He bows ever so slightly. Then signals two of his guards, who come forward carrying something veiled by a draped cloth. They lift the cloth to reveal an oil portrait of Queen Victoria.

Zhou stares at it blankly. An awkward silence, and then Lamberth clears his throat.

Lu leans over to Zhou.

LU

*That's their ruler. They expect you
to bow.*

ZHOU

Bow to a painting?

LU

*As it was negotiated in Peking, to
end the war.*

Zhou grunts. Stands from the throne. Gives the tiniest of bows. Sits back down.

Then, Roebling approaches.

ROEBLING

The United States of America also
pays the respects of one sovereign
nation to another.

He bows slightly. Lu catches his eye and motions for him to bend deeper. He deepens his bow, almost to the floor, until Lu gives him a subtle nod and he stands.

An American soldier steps forward, bearing a gift box.

ROEBLING (CONT'D)

In appreciation of the cooperative
spirit between our two nations, I
present you with this gift.

The soldier hands the gift box to Zhou, who opens it indifferently, revealing an ornate table clock. As he unwraps it from its packing paper...

ROEBLING (CONT'D)

(proud)

It is called a 'clock'. It keeps
track of time in a precise fashion.
A mechanical ingenuity developed in
America.

LAMBERTH

Tell that to the Swiss.

ZHOU

*Another one? Will these barbarians
ever learn to tell time from the
sun?*

Lu giggles. Collecting himself:

LU

Governor Zhou thanks you for the
gift. He is very impressed.

Lamberth produces a document.

LAMBERTH

As Governor of the British
Concession in Shanghai, I have
affixed my signature to the treaty
of peace. It now requires
ratification by the local powers.

He hands the document to Roebing, along with a fountain pen.

LAMBERTH (CONT'D)

If you will?

Roebing signs the document. A British guard takes it, and approaches the throne.

LU

They want your seal.

ZHOU

Where is their tribute?

Lu hesitates.

LU

Heavenly Cousin, the terms of the treaty stipulate that these payments are now made in silver, directly to Peking--

ZHOU

No. Tell them I want it now.

As the Westerners look on, a little confused:

LU

But, sir, the Board of Taxation will--

ZHOU

The Board of Taxation will not dare challenge a cousin of the Heavenly Son. Tell the barbarians to bring the tribute here.

(re: clock)

And get this stupid thing out of my face.

Lu turns to Lamberth.

LU

Sir, the governor asks that the nine percent tariff due on your opium imports be delivered to this court in kind. Today, if possible.

LAMBERTH

In kind?

LU

In the form of opium.

LAMBERTH

But the treaty stipulates--

LU

It is simpler this way. A matter of accounting. Surely you understand.

He gives Lamberth a look. The universal shrug of one mid-level functionary to another.

INT. XUNFU PALACE - HALLWAY

Clock under his arm, Lu approaches a door, which he opens, revealing...

INT. XUNFU PALACE - STORAGE ROOM

... a room stocked with other gifts from foreign powers. Almost entirely clocks-- around a dozen, in all shapes and sizes. He finds some space on a shelf and deposits the new one.

Looks around. Sighs.

EXT. BRITISH CONCESSION - ESTABLISHING SHOT

A modest house, next to a small church. PRE-LAP the sounds of heavy breathing and a WOMAN giggling...

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

NATHAN and PHOEBE HOLLINGHURST, both mid-twenties, in bed together, having sex. The vibe is nervous teenage hanky-panky - clumsy, friendly.

NATHAN

Is it... in?

PHOEBE

I don't think so, darling. Maybe if you... There. Yes.

NATHAN

Yes. Very nice.

He hovers above her, tensed up and still.

PHOEBE

I believe we're supposed to...

NATHAN

Move back and forth, yes, last time that seemed to, um... yes, this is..

As Jonas gazes, mesmerized, into the case--

ABIGAIL

Dear, we must be getting home.

JONAS

(agonized)

I can't decide.

The DOOR CHIME rings as TWO BRITISH WOMEN swan into the store with a gaggle of CHILDREN. Cheerful chatter, peals of laughter.

CLERK

Hello, ladies. Fine afternoon sun.

BRITISH WOMAN

Indeed, Winston. Have you any of your rum cakes today? We'll take two. And half a pound of toffee, along with a dozen licorice rolls, vary the flavors as you will. And some of the chocolate covered--

Only now does she notice Abigail and Jonas.

BRITISH WOMAN (CONT'D)

(to Abigail)

I'm sorry, how rude. After you, of course.

ABIGAIL

We're leaving.

JONAS

But Mother, I haven't--

She practically yanks him out of the store.

INT. SAMUEL'S HOUSE - EVENING

A modest home. One room upstairs, one room downstairs. Samuel, Abigail, and Jonas eat dinner.

ABIGAIL

Eight.

SAMUEL

That's right. Monthly.

ABIGAIL

Had you not been expecting twelve?

Samuel stares at the potato he's cutting.

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)

Well, eight isn't nothing. It will help. And perhaps with time...

Samuel put his knife down.

SAMUEL

Jonas, go upstairs.

JONAS

Yes, father.

He scampers off. Samuel turns to Abigail.

SAMUEL

I must tell you something. The boat that the British seized yesterday. It portends gravely for us.

ABIGAIL

None of the cargo on the Frolic was from your firm. If anything, Jardine's loss is to Claverly's benefit.

SAMUEL

But the next ship, Abigail. The Jeremiah comes to harbor next week.

ABIGAIL

Are you worried for your position? If George Claverly cannot sell opium, he'll find another way to make money.

Samuel takes a long gulp of water. Then:

SAMUEL

Abby, all our money is on the Jeremiah. Everything we own.

ABIGAIL

What did you say?

On Samuel. This isn't easy to admit.

SAMUEL

I noticed a clerk made an error calculating the cargo capacity of the Jeremiah. That it could hold a quarter-ton more than Claverly's records show. So I... I contacted our bank in Boston. Secured a loan against our property.

ABIGAIL

The Salem house?

(off his nod)

Sam, that house, it's all we have.
How could you--

SAMUEL

I filled that quarter-ton with an
opium order. The finest grade
available in Calcutta. On my
account, not Claverly's.

ABIGAIL

And that quarter-ton is on the ship
now?

And it dawns on Abigail-- and us-- why he is so concerned.

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)

If the British board the
Jeremiah...

Samuel nods.

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)

We're never going home, are we?

INT. TAVERN - EVENING

Crowded and raucous-- men blowing off steam. Mostly
Westerners but a few Chinese faces as well. Sailors,
dockworkers, and soldiers (some in uniform). A few
prostitutes. Not a high-end place.

In a corner, Ward huddles with Bourguignon. They're a few
drinks in.

BOURGUIGNON

The Crimea? You fought the
Russians? For England?

WARD

'Fought' ain't the word. British
had us garrisoned in Anatolia two
years. Only thing I fought were
mosquitoes.

(takes a swig)

Pay wasn't bad.

BOURGUIGNON

You are lucky, mon ami. I fought in
Sevastopol with the Regiment De
Chasseurs, how you say, horses--

WARD

Cavalry.

BOURGUIGNON

Yes, Cavalry. Wounded, shrapnel.

He winces at the memory.

WARD

Cavalry. You can ride, then.

BOURGUIGNON

I do not understand. You are a soldier, yes? But you do not join your own army, the American army. Why?

WARD

Mister Bourguignon. When you were wounded, in the siege of Sevastopol, fighting for your country, what did you get?

BOURGUIGNON

I am sorry, what did I get?

WARD

What did France give to you?

From across the bar we see an AMERICAN SOLDIER eyeing Ward.

BOURGUIGNON

I was given an honor, the blesse civile. For the wounds.

WARD

A pretty little ribbon. For almost dying. Thoughtful of 'em.

The American Soldier huddles with another soldier as he points out Ward.

WARD (CONT'D)

What I figure is this. Some men, you and me, we're called to be soldiers by the Almighty. But if I am to die on the field of battle, I'm not dying for my country. I'm dying for myself.

(getting up)

Buy you another round.

Bourguignon watches him as he saunters to the bar.

EXT. TAVERN/STREET - NIGHT - LATER

Ward and Bourguignon stumble outside. They're really drunk.

BOURGUIGNON

How much? How much they pay us?

WARD

They see what we can do for them, a dammed goldmine. More than you're getting down at the dock, that's for sure.

Ward lurches toward the gutter. As he unbuttons his trousers to take a piss:

BOURGUIGNON

You, my friend, are crazy. A crazy man.

But he's clearly impressed. Then:

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Frederick Ward?

Ward and Bourguignon turn. It's the American Soldier from the bar. Ward squints at him. Trying to place him.

SOLDIER

Louis Ferling. You were in my bunk. Up at West Point.

WARD

Don't remember.

FERLING

Well, you were. Until you mouthed off to that general and they booted you. I remember that, for sure. What are you doing here?

WARD

Takin' in the sights.

FERLING

Heard you were down in Nicaragua with Walker's crew. Now you're in goddamn China. Well, you were an odd one.

WARD

Friend, you got me confused with someone. Have a good night.

He turns back toward the gutter, fiddling with his trousers again.

FERLING

I don't mean nothing personal by it. Just surprised to see you, that's all.

Ward stops.

WARD

That so?

FERLING

We all figured you'd end up in prison. Or the nuthouse, for that--
WHAT THE FUCK?

He looks down, where Ward is pissing on his polished officers' boots.

FERLING (CONT'D)

You paint-licker...

He steps back, draws his saber, and TACKLES WARD, pinning him to a fence. Slaps him on the face with the flat side of the sword. Hard. Hits him again. And again.

Ward calls to Bourguignon as the blade slams into his cheekbone and blood starts to ooze:

WARD

A little help, friend?

BOURGUIGNON

A wise man chooses his battles.

On Ward's face as Ferling whips him again and again with his saber blade. Under the sweat and blood, it almost looks like he's grinning.

EXT. SHANGHAI - STREET - CHINESE QUARTER - DAY

This street is lined with traditional Chinese shophouses--open-air shops on the ground level selling everything from vegetables to scrap tin, with living quarters above.

Samuel makes his way through the crowds of Chinese shoppers and merchants. Arrives at a shophouse selling fruit. Unlike the others all around, this shop is curiously quiet. Nobody's there except for TWO CHINESE CHILDREN, a boy and a girl, both around nine. Sitting on stools in sullen silence.

Samuel peers into the shop.

SAMUEL
Where is your mother?

On the little girl. Silent. Then, answers-- in the form of tears dripping from her eyes...

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. BROTHEL - DAY

One of Shanghai's higher-end establishments. Sumptuously decorated. Customers-- mostly Chinese men, but a few Westerners as well-- lounge with Chinese prostitutes.

Among the customers we see a MIDDLE-AGED PERSIAN MAN. Elegantly dressed. The camera lingers on him for a moment, because we'll be meeting him later. Then:

Samuel storms in. The HOST rushes to intercept--

HOST
 Greetings distinguished sir, and
 welcome to--

Samuel pushes him aside. Scans the room. There, in a corner, chatting with a potential customer, is Dongmei.

SAMUEL
 (pulling the customer up)
Find another one.

He pushes the customer aside.

SAMUEL (CONT'D)
Why are you not at your shop?

Dongmei looks at him, seething with anger.

DONGMEI
*Because you killed my husband. I am
 bad luck. No one will buy from me.
 Here it doesn't matter.*

Samuel can't quite meet her accusing stare.

SAMUEL
*I came to bring your husband's
 wages for the last two weeks.*

He reaches into his coat and holds out an envelope stuffed with cash. She looks at it. Doesn't take it.

SAMUEL (CONT'D)
I am trying to help.

DONGMEI

Then tell me where he is.

SAMUEL

I don't know.

DONGMEI

He must be buried correctly. Or his ghost will be tormented forever and he will not ascend to the Heavenly Plane. Where is he?

SAMUEL

Take the money and go back to your children.

DONGMEI

Any of these men will give me money. I do not want yours.

She gets up. Leaves Samuel standing there, looking like a fool waving around the wad of cash, the whole room gawking at him...

INT. XUNFU PALACE - LU'S CHAMBER - DAY

Samuel confers with Lu.

LU

This is a matter between your two countries. I do not have authority over the British Concession. You know this, Sir.

SAMUEL

Yes, but--

LU

If you wish to challenge the right to seizure, take it up with your government. I understand that it is very responsive to the will of the people.

SAMUEL

I've read the treaty. I know there's a way to protect the shipment.

Lu looks up.

LU

Enlighten me, Mister Parkhurst.

SAMUEL

The British are expressly forbidden from seizing cargo owned by your Board of Taxation.

LU

Yes, so that our country can transport funds from the treasury in Peking throughout the kingdom.

SAMUEL

Twenty percent.

LU

Excuse me?

SAMUEL

Put a Taxation seal on those chests and I'll give you twenty percent of the proceeds. Thousands of dollars for a little bit of wax.

Lu glares at Samuel.

LU

Do you know I have a son?

SAMUEL

(not following)
I don't.

LU

He is sick, because of what you and your people brought here. When he has the opium, he is a ghost. Just stares. Speaks only to himself. And when he does not have the opium, he has the worst fever I have seen. The doctor says he will die soon.

Lu's imperious facade cracks as he ponders this. Just a little bit.

LU (CONT'D)

There are millions like him.

SAMUEL

Xiancheng Lu. With respect. That cargo will be unloaded in Shanghai. If not by me, then the Brits. You can choose to profit, or not profit. I know which is better.

Lu rises. Now he's pissed off. But he maintains his self-control.

LU

In China, we do not think of ourselves first. We are the most glorious country on Earth precisely because of this. Perhaps your people should emulate.

SAMUEL

Your glorious country just got blown to bits by the British Navy. Your glorious people are starving, hobbled by superstitions and false beliefs. And the glorious Emperor your serve cares for nothing but his own treasure. There's no glory anywhere I can see. Your country is dying, Lu. And it's not because of the opium.

Lu is shocked speechless by this outburst. He pauses before mustering a response:

LU

Do not speak ill of the Emperor.
Even an American can hang for that.

Samuel takes a step back. Realizes he's lost.

SAMUEL

(in Cantonese)
*Forgive me. Thank you for your
time, esteemed sir.*

He bows politely and leaves.

On Lu, mulling this confrontation...

INT. ROEBLING'S OFFICE - DAY

On Ward, his face swollen and bruised from the previous night's melee.

WARD

I ain't saying I ain't somewhat blameful of the incident, sir. As I said, we had all been drinking. Spirits were running high. I bear no ill will to the gentleman.

On Roebling, frowning.

ROEBLING
You don't, do you?

WARD
I see this as a matter of the
barroom, not the courtroom.

ROEBLING
Lieutenant Ferling says you defiled
his shoes without provocation. As
for your friend, he claims not to
speak English, and has thus been
unable to give a statement.
(cocked eyebrow)
I suppose you two converse in
French, then.

WARD
(no accent whatsoever)
Wee mon-sur.

ROEBLING
I'm charging you with assault. The
consular judge is in Hong Kong
until January. When he comes back,
we'll set a trial. If you're still
here in Shanghai, that is. I
suggest you not be.

WARD
Sir, Lieutenant Ferling attacked me
with his saber.

ROEBLING
Retaliated.

WARD
With his saber. Which I believe is
property of the US Army. Which
means the proper jurisdiction, I
might argue, is a military court. I
would like to request trial in such
a venue.

Roebing scowls. This guy is a major fucking headache.

ROEBLING
Ward, why did you come here?

Ward gives him a crooked grin.

WARD
Same as everyone, I suppose.
Seeking an honest day's work.

INT. SAMUEL'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Samuel enters, in his bedclothes. Abigail is already in bed, reading by candlelight. She looks up from her book.

ABIGAIL

There is a hat that suits me at Denton's. Three dollars and forty cents.

SAMUEL

Abby. You know our current circumstances.

ABIGAIL

You mean your current circumstances.

SAMUEL

I did what I did for us.

ABIGAIL

You did it for you. We were decent, Samuel. Not rich, but decent. And you have a position with the wealthiest American merchant in Shanghai. Yet you risk everything.

Samuel sits on the bed.

SAMUEL

Do you understand what I do for Claverly? I clean up. Fix what is broken. I do the ugly tasks so he and his fop of a son can pretend to their uprightness.

ABIGAIL

It is better than crewing. No more months at sea.

SAMUEL

I did not bring us here so I could serve another man.

Abigail looks at him.

ABIGAIL

Be that as it may, we now must consider the future. We cannot return to Salem with no home there. And if Claverly discovers what you've done, no firm in the American colony will hire you.

(MORE)

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)

And what of Jonas's schooling? Do you think the Claverlys will still allow him their tutor?

(then)

As I said, I shall require three dollars and forty cents.

SAMUEL

At a time like this, you covet a hat?

ABIGAIL

That hat is how I plan to save our family from your recklessness.

She snuffs out the candle. Darkness.

INT. NATHAN AND PHOEBE'S HOUSE - DAY

Phoebe sits with HAN WEXU, 20, earnest, skinny. In front of them on the table are various items which Han, concentrating hard, identifies in stilted English.

HAN

Pencil. Fan. Knife.

PHOEBE

(gently corrects)

Spoon.

HAN

Spoon, and...

(struggling to find the word)

I am sorry Miss Teacher Phoebe. I can not...

PHOEBE

(prompting him)

C. C. Ca...

HAN

Cards. A deck of cards.

PHOEBE

You're doing quite well, Han.

Nathan enters. He and Phoebe exchange a glance.

HAN

Hello Mister Nathan.

NATHAN

Hello, Han. Nice to see you.

PHOEBE

I'm going to fetch the laundry.

She exits. Nathan sits. We see that he is carrying a Bible.

NATHAN

Han, Phoebe tells me you are her best student.

HAN

I try very hard learn. For maybe job.

NATHAN

Good for you.

HAN

You Miss Teacher Phoebe very, you, I, no money to you... Thank you.

NATHAN

Han, I am a minister. Do you know that word?

HAN

I no, I sorry, I...

NATHAN

Priest? God?

HAN

(recognition)

God!

(pointing upward)

God, yes!

NATHAN

Yes. God. And his son, Jesus Christ--

HAN

Jesus Christ.

This catches Nathan off-guard.

NATHAN

You know Jesus Christ?

HAN

Yes.

NATHAN

You do?

HAN

Yes.

(then)

(MORE)

HAN (CONT'D)
 Taiping. Taiping God Jesus Christ
 you. Taiping my village then
 Emperor...

He mimics fighting-- slashing an imaginary sword, shooting
 arrows. Nathan tries to understand.

NATHAN
 Taiping... good? Emperor... bad?

HAN
 (nods)
 Taiping good. Emperor bad. Taiping
 Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ good.

On Nathan, confused, but pleased.

EXT. PARK / MERRY GO ROUND - DAY

Children SQUEAL WITH DELIGHT as they go round and round on
 garish horses, two-seaters with their mothers perched behind.
 CHINESE WORKMEN operate the hand-cranked turning mechanism.

On one of the horses, we find Jonas and Abigail. Like all the
 other women, Abigail is wearing an elaborate, frilly hat.

Her attention is focused on another YOUNG WOMAN AND BOY as
 they approach the carousel and wait to board.

JONAS
 Mummy, can we go again?

Abigail eyes the woman as she and her son climb on.

ABIGAIL
 (getting up)
 Let's try a new horse.

She practically drags Jonas to an empty horse, directly in
 front of the one occupied by the woman she was watching.

As Abigail and Jonas get settled, Abigail 'accidentally' lets
 her handbag tilt over, and a magazine falls to the ground.
 It's the journal we saw in the first scene at the dock,
 featuring 'Great Expectations.'

The woman behind her reaches down to pick it up. Taps Abigail
 on the shoulder.

WOMAN
 (British accent)
 Pardon me.

ABIGAIL
 (feigning surprise)
 Oh! Thank you.

The woman cocks her eyebrow, noting Abigail's accent--

WOMAN
 An American reading Dickens. I'm
 quite impressed.
 (then)
 Charlotte Lamberth. How do you do?

She extends her hand.

ABIGAIL
 Delighted. Abigail Parkhurst.

INT. XUNFU PALACE - RECEPTION HALL - DAY

Lu enters to find Zhou on his throne, passing an opium pipe back and forth to a COURTESAN sprawled next to him. A few other PALACE COURTIERS lie about. The only one who isn't stoned is the GUARD.

Nobody notices Lu until he clears his throat.

LU
*Your Grace, an American seeks an
 audience with you.*

ZHOU
An American. Which one?

LU
*I have not seen him before. He
 appears to be a commoner. He brings
 you this as a gift.*

Lu holds out a pocket-watch. Zhou scoffs. Tosses it to the Courtesan, who stares at it, fascinated.

ZHOU
Let him approach, I suppose.

Lu beckons into the hallway, and Ward enters. He's cleaned up since we last saw him. Shaven, wax in his hair.

WARD
 Thank you for the audience, your
 Grace.

He kowtows deeply, touching his forehead to the ground. Zhou's eyes widen, impressed-- not used to a proper kowtow from a foreigner.

ZHOU

Begin.

Ward looks at Lu, who nods. Clears this throat:

WARD

My name is Frederick Townsend Ward.
I am a soldier. I want to offer my
services to you against the lawless
Taiping rebels.

Zhou turns to Lu, who's been caught off-guard. Not what he expected.

LU

*He wants to fight for us. In the
army.*

This gets the attention of the whole court. Such a bizarre idea.

ZHOU

*An American as a bannerman? Does he
wish to pray to Confucius as well?*

His entourage laughs. Ward, confused, laughs along.

WARD

Your Grace, I have only been here
one week but already I can see your
city is in great peril. I
understand that the rebels are
sending patrols closer and closer
to Shanghai. They clearly intend to
lay siege, and there are
infiltrators among your people.
Your men are untrained, your
armaments unfortified. I schooled
at West Point, the finest military
university in America. I am expert
with rifle, horse and sword. I have
led soldiers on three continents. I
can help you.

Lu takes a moment, trying to figure out how to translate this tactfully:

LU

*He is concerned about the Taiping.
He claims to have special knowledge
that can defeat them.*

Zhou mulls this. Then, he turns to Ward, addressing him directly. As he speaks he gets more and more agitated.

ZHOU

It is not enough for you swine to be foolish, apparently. You must brandish your foolishness in front of us. And expect us to believe your shit is silver. You barbarians barely have a country. When America has prospered for thousands of years, as we have in China, perhaps then your descendents will be worthy of standing with us. Until then, be gone.

He concludes by SPITTING at Ward. The glob of saliva doesn't quite reach the target, and lands a couple feet short, glistening on the palace floor.

LU

(to Ward)

He says no thank you.

Ward did not expect his outcome. Frowns.

WARD

Did you mention the part about three continents?

Lu signals to the Guard, who gently escorts Ward out.

ZHOU

Perhaps we should retain him as the court fool.

Appreciative laughs from his entourage.

LU

Your Grace. Another matter regarding the Taiping rebels. The family apprehended for allowing them crops from their farm has been tried. The magistrate sentenced them to die, as befits traitors.

ZHOU

Good, good.

LU

However, perhaps you should decree that the child be spared.

Zhou considers this. A novel thought.

ZHOU

For what end?

LU

He is but eleven years of age, and was surely unaware of his parents' treachery. It would show you to be a wise and merciful leader.

Zhou strokes his beard, considering this. Lu watches, hopeful
Then--

ZHOU

No. Execute them all.

He takes another drag from his opium pipe. Lu tries to conceal his disappointment:

LU

Yes, sir.

EXT. XUNFU PALACE - MAIN GATE - DAY

Ward emerges, finding Bourguignon waiting for him.

WARD

It's a negative. We ain't getting hired.

BOURGUIGNON

Merde alors. What do we do now?

WARD

They don't want us in their army?
We start our own.

Off Bourguignon's reaction--

INT. CHURCH - DAY

On Nathan, singing a hymn, along with twenty or so churchgoers, concluding with a robust 'Amen.'

NATHAN

Go in peace to love and serve the
Lord in the name of Christ. Amen.

The worshippers file out. Nathan tidies up, straightening out the pews and gathering the hymn books. He looks up to see...

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Han?

Han stands in the doorway, looking wary.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
 I thought your lessons were
 Wednesday--

Han thrusts a letter at Nathan.

HAN
 Taiping me letter you.

NATHAN
 I don't--

HAN
 Secret.

He hurries out, leaving Nathan holding the letter.

EXT. SHANGHAI STREET - OLD CITY - DAY

Samuel heads deep into the city. Westerners don't come around here much, and he's conspicuous. People gawk.

Samuel passes TWO YOUNG MEN lying on the street, destitute, in an opium haze. He bends down, speaking to them in Cantonese. One of them points down the street. Samuel tosses him a few coins and heads that way.

He comes to a shabby storefront. Through the window, we see the telltale signs of an opium den-- clouds of smoke, people sprawled around.

Samuel pushes open the door.

INT. OPIUM DEN - BACK ROOM - MINUTES LATER

Samuel sits with VAHID MAZDANI-- the elegant middle-aged Persian man we saw in the brothel.

MAZDANI
 When the British came here, and then you, the Americans, I was quite concerned for my business. More competition. But I needn't have worried. Your opium was too fine for my customers, too expensive. And some of your customers, once they spend all their money, they become my customers.

He gestures towards the grimy, sordid den of smokers.

MAZDANI (CONT'D)

You say there is a quarter-ton of weight on this ship, the Jeremiah.

SAMUEL

The finest grade from India.

MAZDANI

Where is it now?

SAMUEL

Somewhere off of Rangoon, most likely. It should arrive here within the week.

Mazdani unrolls a map of the China coastline on his desk.

MAZDANI

There is a harbor I use, a day's ride south of here. It is hidden. Surrounded by sandbars, difficult to navigate. The Chinese do not know of it. Nor do the British. Your ship should pass by within the next few days. We can signal it as it passes. Unload the cargo. Then the ship continues to Shanghai, nobody is the wiser.

SAMUEL

Alright.

MAZDANI

You will need to be present so that your captain understands my men are not pirates. We will blindfold you on the journey to conceal the location. For your opium, I will pay you twenty-eight dollars a pound.

(off Samuel's reaction)

I have expenses. Men. Ships. Donkeys. Bribes.

SAMUEL

Thirty-three. At twenty-eight I barely profit.

MAZDANI

Yet should that opium arrive in port, the British will pay you zero. You do not have a choice.

SAMUEL

Sir, it is you who does not have a choice.

MAZDANI

How do you deduce that?

SAMUEL

Now that the war has ended, the British will flood the market. Which means the price of their Indian opium will decrease. The product you bring from Afghanistan, which as you say, is inferior, will no longer be cheaper.

(gestures towards the
sprawled smokers)

You will lose these customers to the British. Unless you have a source in India.

Mazdani responds with silence. Samuel's nerve cracks just a little:

SAMUEL (CONT'D)

Thirty.

INT. NATHAN AND PHOEBE'S HOUSE - DAY

Phoebe reads the letter Han gave Nathan. Astonished.

PHOEBE

A map of Shanghai? Why would they...

NATHAN

Presumably because they plan to invade.

PHOEBE

Oh, dear. I suppose we simply pretend we never...

NATHAN

Phoebe, Han risked his life to bring us that letter.

PHOEBE

Well, we don't have a map to give him.

NATHAN

I know there's one in Colonel Lamberth's office.

Phoebe looks up from the letter.

PHOEBE

Nathan. You aren't thinking we...

NATHAN

You've seen how the people are treated here. And if this rebellion is truly Christian in nature? Remember Luke. 'He has sent me to set at liberty those who are oppressed.'

PHOEBE

Our own government just made peace with the Emperor.

NATHAN

The crown cares for nothing more than silver and tea. We are servants of Christ, Phoebe. Not Dutch East India.

On Phoebe, still unconvinced...

EXT. SHANGHAI - DOCKS - MORNING

Dozens of CHINESE LABORERS stand around, hoping to be picked by the WESTERN MERCHANTS for a day of work on the cargo docks, all negotiated in pidgin English.

Ward stands among the merchants as Bourguignon approaches with a YOUNG LABORER from the crowd. Ward looks him over as he mimics shooting an arrow.

YOUNG LABORER

Rabbits. Many.

WARD

He'll do.

ANOTHER LABORER, a few years older, hustles over. He and the Young Laborer speak in Cantonese for a moment. Then:

YOUNG LABORER

He Army, three year. Gun good.

The other laborer smiles. But Ward shakes his head.

WARD

Not him. Go.

He gestures for the other laborer to get lost. The laborer leaves, confused.

BOURGUIGNON
We don't want experience?

WARD
Old dog, new tricks.

Ward scans the remaining laborers in the thinning crowd. He spots a TALL LABORER sitting on a crate, alone, in contrast to all the others who talk among themselves, sharing tea.

Ward approaches. The Tall Laborer looks up. Ward mimes firing a rifle:

WARD (CONT'D)
Boom-boom. OK?

The Tall Laborer stands. As the unlikely foursome of Bourguignon, Ward, and the two laborers leave the docks, we see...

Ferling-- the soldier who confronted Ward-- watching from a distance. Doesn't like what he sees.

INT. QUNFU PALACE - LU'S CHAMBER - DAY

Lu reads the North China Post. He turns the page, finding an advertisement for steam-powered engines ('THIS AMAZING INVENTION WILL TRANSFORM SEA TRAVEL').

A KNOCK on his door. An ATTENDANT enters.

ATTENDANT
Sir, it is time.

Lu puts the newspaper down. Takes one last wistful look at it as he stands.

INT. SAMUEL'S HOUSE - DAY

As Samuel gets dressed--

ABIGAIL
For how long?

SAMUEL
I don't know. A few days.

Abigail is silent.

SAMUEL (CONT'D)
Abby, when this is finished, I shall pay back the loan on the house. We'll go home.

ABIGAIL
Do you mean that?

Samuel nods. Straps his pistol to his belt.

SAMUEL
If Claverly sends for me, tell him
I'm struck with the flu.

EXT. ROAD - DAWN

A horse-drawn carriage bumps along a road that barely exists. Overgrown jungle all around.

Inside, Samuel, blindfolded, rides with TWO CHINESE MEN. Shaking. Trying to control his nerves.

EXT. SHANGHAI - PUBLIC SQUARE - DAY

A CROWD encircles a public square. At the center, the three prisoners we saw being brought into Shanghai earlier-- mother, father and son-- are bound to stakes. A soldier stands behind each one. All of this is presided over by Lu.

Lu reads a proclamation from a scroll:

LU
*These citizens committed treason by
aiding those who would destroy our
country. In accordance with the
decree of the Heavenly Son, the
sentence unto Wei-Chuan, his wife
Wei-Ling, and their son Wei-Ting,
is death by strangulation.*

Lu rolls up the scroll. The soldiers turn to Lu, awaiting a signal.

On Lu, hesitating. Then, he lifts his arm. The guards wrap garottes around the prisoners' necks, and pull tightly...

Close on Lu, trying not to hear the gasps and squeals from the family as they flail, dying.

FADE TO:

VIEW THROUGH SPYGLASS

Of a shipping frigate, plowing through the ocean waves as the sun sets. We can just barely make out the name on the stern-- Jeremiah.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. SHORE - DUSK

Samuel, perched on a rocky coastline, peers through the spyglass. He turns to the men from the carriage.

MAN

Yes?

SAMUEL

Yes.

MAN

We go boat.

They stand, and head toward a primitive dock in distant view down the shore.

EXT. SHANGHAI - PUBLIC SQUARE - DUSK

The crowd has dispersed, but the three corpses remain bound to the stakes-- heads rolled over and lifeless eyes bulging as the people of Shanghai go about their business, barely giving the macabre scene a second glance. It's not an unusual sight.

Among the passers-by are Nathan and Phoebe. They stop, dead in their tracks. Nathan crosses himself.

Then, they turn to each other. A question in Nathan's eyes. In response, Phoebe nods. There are no words.

EXT. OCEAN / SAMPAN - DAY

The waves buffet a sampan. On board, Samuel gazes at the Jeremiah as it draws nearer. Also on the sampan are the two men from Shanghai and a CHINESE PILOT.

Samuel's voice is already hoarse from shouting:

SAMUEL

CAN YOU HEAR ME? SIGNAL IF YOU CAN
HEAR ME.

He scans the deck of the Jeremiah with his spyglass and sees sailors watching the sampan intently, one with a telescope. But they're just specks. Which means to them, Samuel is also a speck. Could be friend or foe.

Samuel shifts his spyglass to see--

Oh no. The Jeremiah's THREE-CANNON BATTERY rotates towards the sampan from behind the gunnery slot in the hull.

SAMUEL (CONT'D)
Take cover!

Samuel tries again--

SAMUEL (CONT'D)
DON'T FIRE. I'M FROM CLAVERLY.
CLAVERLY!

This seems to have gotten their attention. From his spyglass, Samuel sees the men on deck crowd around the one with the telescope.

SAMUEL (CONT'D)
SIGNAL WITH A RIFLE SHOT IF YOU
HEAR ME!

More commotion on board. And then--

A RIFLE SHOT echoes in the vast ocean. Samuel collapses with relief. PRE-LAP the SHOT ECHOING to...

EXT. JUNGLE - DAY

... the two laborers, lying prone, coughing from the gunpowder as their rusted flintrock rifles recoil. They're aiming at two bottles placed on bushes as targets. Ward and Bourguignon stand over them, observing.

WARD
Reload... and fire!

BOOM. BOOM. They shoot.

Ward and Bourguignon approach the bottles. One is barely nicked on the side, and the other is untouched. Off Bourguignon's skeptical look:

WARD (CONT'D)
Good enough.

BOURGUIGNON
For what?

WARD
Fighting ain't checkers, friend.
It's chess. Every piece got its
use.

He turns back to the laborers. Bourguignon follows, mystified...

MAN'S VOICE (PRE-LAP)
And... mainsail down!

ON THE MAST OF THE JEREMIAH

SAILORS hoist down the sail.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. OCEAN INLET / JEREMIAH - DAY

A beautiful day for opium smuggling. Sun, blue sky, gentle waves.

A CHINESE BARGE tows the Jeremiah through a narrow inlet, guiding it towards shore past small rocky islands. At the wheel of the Jeremiah is the Chinese Pilot, who SHOUTS BACK AND FORTH in Cantonese to the BARGE PILOT, as they make minor steering adjustments.

Around the deck, the crew of the Jeremiah hurries around, tying down sails, preparing for a rough landing.

On Samuel and the CAPTAIN (fifty years of accumulated nautical crust), watching the Pilot as he steers:

CAPTAIN

Opium or no opium, I'm out to pasture. Five years from now, it'll all be steam. The hell an old sailor knows about steam?

SAMUEL

Suppose we all have to adapt.

The boat JERKS a bit, and starts to slow.

CAPTAIN

Why are we stopping? We're nowhere near shore.

Samuel goes to the bow. Focuses the spyglass on...

THE BARGE

... which he sees has DROPPED ITS ANCHOR. Perplexed, Samuel turns to the Pilot, still on the wheel.

SAMUEL

Why are we stopping?

PILOT

(points at sky)
Storm coming. Not safe.

Samuel looks up. A sole lazy cumulus cloud waffles across the sky.

SAMUEL

There's no time. Keep going--

He is interrupted by PANICKED SHOUTS from the aft side of the deck.

SAILOR (O.S.)

PIRATES!

Samuel rushes to the aft. Sure enough, off the stern, emerging from behind one of the islands the Jeremiah just passed...

A CHINESE WAR JUNK. Closing fast. Its BATTERY OF CANNONS aimed right at the Jeremiah.

And it dawns on Samuel:

He's been set up.

SAMUEL

Oh, no.

He rushes to the Pilot--

SAMUEL (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

The pilot doesn't respond, just grips the wheel. And then--

CAPTAIN

To the cannons! Now!

-- the deck of the Jeremiah ERUPTS IN CHAOS.

-- CANNONBALLS fly from the Chinese ship across the deck. They're aiming for the masts to prevent the Jeremiah from sailing away.

-- SAILORS desperately try to raise the sails again. One, climbing the main mast, is knocked off when a CANNONBALL tears into his shoulder.

-- Another SAILOR takes a sword to the line tethering the Jeremiah to the towing barge, met with RIFLE FIRE from the men on the barge trying to stop him from severing the rope.

-- Below deck, GUNNERS swivel the three cannons towards the junk and LET LOOSE with BARRAGE AFTER BARRAGE of cannonballs. But a CANNONBALL from the junk smashes through the hull, KNOCKING BACK a gunner and CRUSHING HIS LEG. The others scramble as water seeps in.

-- Samuel and the Pilot fight over the wheel, grappling each other. Samuel tries to reach for his gun with one hand, clawing at the Pilot's face with the other...

The Captain shouts up the mast--

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
Get that sail up or we're dead men!

The sailor at the bow manages to sever the tow line, freeing the Jeremiah from the barge. Meanwhile, Samuel gains control of the wheel--

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
Pivot! Pivot Starboard!

--and jerks it hard. The Jeremiah keels, taking on water as starts to tack toward the junk, facing it head on-- just as the sailors manage to raise the mainsail and jib.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
If we can get to the open water, we can outrun it.

He shouts down to the CANNON CREW:

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
On my order! Aim for the sails!!

As the Jeremiah picks up speed and closes in on the junk...

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
FIRE!!

The CANNONS ROAR. It's a direct hit and the main sails of the junk fall. The Jeremiah makes its way past, and up the inlet. The junk lets loose a few final cannonballs, but they fall short, sinking into the ocean.

Danger over. Everyone catches their breath. Bleeding sailors cry out for help.

The Captain takes the wheel from Samuel. He's furious.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
You got us set up. They pay you off or are you just a moron?

Samuel doesn't respond. Re: the Chinese pilot, who writhes on the deck in pain:

SAMUEL
Is there a brig on board?

The Captain looks down at the pilot, who is muttering--
begging for his life-- in Cantonese.

CAPTAIN

No.

He draws his pistol and SHOTS the Pilot in the head.

Off Samuel's reaction, as it dawns on him how screwed he
is...

PRE-LAP the sounds of WOMEN LAUGHING.

EXT. LAMBERTH MANSION - DAY - ESTABLISHING SHOT

A stately home on a hill above the British Concession.

INT. LAMBERTH MANSION - SITTING ROOM - DAY

Tea time. Charlotte hosts half a dozen BRITISH SOCIETY
LADIES, along with Abigail-- and Phoebe, who looks out of
place in her plain dress. A CHINESE MAIDSERVANT serves tea-
cakes on fine plates.

CHARLOTTE

The best aspect of Shanghai? The
service. Once they understand what
you want, they accommodate so
graciously.

SOCIETY LADY #1

And eat so little. Just rice. In
London, we've a Scottish girl, fat
old thing. Gobbles her salary again
in ham and cakes.

The ladies laugh in recognition. On Abigail, trying to play
along. One of the ladies turns to her.

SOCIETY LADY #2

We are delighted to have you. We do
not meet many of the Americans.
Where in the States are you from?

ABIGAIL

Boston.

SOCIETY LADY #3

You must know the Clermonts, on
Beacon Hill. I understand their
Winter Ball is quite the do.

Abigail half-nods and smiles, gulping down tea.

ABIGAIL

Do you all have children at St. Bartholomew's? My Jonas--

CHARLOTTE

Hello, dearest one.

Abigail is interrupted by the arrival of Howard Lamberth.

LAMBERTH

What have we here?

CHARLOTTE

Just us hens having a bit of tea and gossip.

LAMBERTH

Don't mind me. I'm straight to the bath. Wash this sea-salt right off me.

He heads up the stairs. As he turns, Phoebe notes the KEY-CHAIN clipped to the belt of his dress uniform.

SOCIETY LADY #1

You're fortunate. I do wish my husband would bathe more than once a fortnight.

SOCIETY LADY #2

My Charles and I have an arrangement.

(lowering voice)

If he wishes to make love, he must first bathe.

Giggles all around.

SOCIETY LADY #2 (CONT'D)

And fortunes be praised, he often falls asleep in the tub.

More giggles. Phoebe stands.

PHOEBE

Excuse me. I need a bit of powder.

CHARLOTTE

(points up the stairs)

First door on your left.

After Phoebe leaves:

SOCIETY LADY #2

Dear me. I fear I offended the
reverend's wife.

CHARLOTTE

I wouldn't be so sure.
(leans in)
I am told by the laundress she
brings their bedclothes in nearly
every morning.

Raucous laughter. The Maidservant reappears with a pot of
tea. As she refills cups, Abigail takes another shot--

ABIGAIL

St. Bartholomew's sounds quite
brilliant. My Jonas, he's a little
scholar. Teaching himself geography
now, knows the name of every-- OH!

As she gesticulates, she knocks the maidservant's teapot with
her hand. Tea spills all over Abigail's dress.

CHARLOTTE

(to maid, furious)
Clumsy girl!
(to Abigail)
Are you burnt, my dear?

Abigail stands, mopping tea off her dress with a napkin.

ABIGAIL

I'm fine. I'll just wash this off.

She flees up the stairs. After she leaves, a beat, then--

All the ladies burst out giggling.

INT. LAMBERTH MANSION - BEDROOM / HALLWAY - DAY

We hear the BATH RUNNING in an adjacent room as Phoebe
tiptoes down the hall and pokes her head in the grand master
bedroom. There, on the bed, is Lamberth's uniform, along with
the belt-- and, the object of Phoebe's attention, his
keychain.

Phoebe's shaking. Trying to control her nerves.

She creeps into the room. Grabs the keys, stuffing them in
her purse. Hurries out. Breathes deep with relief and--

PHOEBE

OH!

Runs practically right into Abigail.

 PHOEBE (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, you-- I, I was just--

 ABIGAIL
The WC's in there?

 PHOEBE
Yes. No. Down the hall.

She runs down the stairs, leaving Abigail befuddled.

EXT. JUNGLE / TRAIL - DAY

A trail cut through thick jungle. Hidden in the brush is Ward, crouched and perfectly still. Silent but for the chirps of crickets and birds.

Then, in the distance, the WHINNY of a horse.

Ward pokes his head above the overgrowth. Peers down the trail with his spyglass.

Then, he WHISTLES. Across the trail, Bourguignon's head emerges from the brush. Ward signals to him- holds up eight fingers, then wiggles two fingers on each hand.

Bourguignon nods. Both men duck back down.

Concealed again, Ward WHISTLES THREE TIMES. PRE-LAP to...

HILLSIDE OVERLOOKING THE TRAIL

Where the two Laborers lie prone. The Young Laborer WHISTLES THREE TIMES in response, and they ready their rifles.

ON WARD

Watching the trail as a TAIPING RAIDING PARTY approaches. Eight footsoldiers and two cavalry, armed with swords, bows, and a couple rifles. (Unlike the Manchu soldiers and courtiers we have seen in Shanghai, they do not wear their hair in pony-tails, and their uniforms are far less ornate.)

Ward sucks in his breath as they pass.

ON THE LABORERS

watching from the hillside as the Taiping party makes its way up the trail. As they approach, the laborers nod at each other, and...

BOOM. BOOM. Fire their rifles. Reload. BOOM. BOOM. Reload again. They don't come anywhere close to hitting their targets. They KEEP FIRING as the

TAIPING PARTY

takes cover in the brush, trying to locate where the gunfire is coming from. But the laborers are well-concealed on the hillside. BOOM BOOM. Pause. BOOM BOOM.

TAIPING COMMANDER

Retreat!

The raiding party turns around and doubles back...

... running right into Bourguignon and Ward standing in the trail. They UNLOAD A HAIL OF BULLETS-- Bourguignon with a rifle and Ward with pistols in each hand, cowboy style.

It's carnage. The Taiping are decimated, toppling from their horses and writhing on the ground.

One FOOTSOLDIER manages to flee, dropping his heavy bow and running up the trail.

Ward takes aim. SHOOTs.

On Ward's eyes, blank and terrifying, as the soldier collapses into the dust.

EXT. BRITISH CONCESSION - STREET / GOVERNANCE HALL - NIGHT

A BRITISH GUARD stands watch in front of the Governance Hall, the seat of power in the British Concession. Phoebe approaches.

BRITISH GUARD

Evening, ma'am.

PHOEBE

I'm so sorry to disturb you. I believe my necklace fell off on the street. Might you help me?

On the Guard, hesitating.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)

Family heirloom.

BRITISH GUARD

I can't be long.

They disappear around the corner. Nathan approaches. Unlocks the door. Slips inside.

INT. GOVERNANCE HALL / LAMBERTH'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

The building is deserted. Nathan approaches Lamberth's office: wood paneling, war trophies everywhere. And there it is, hanging on the wall-- a detailed street-map of Shanghai.

Nathan hesitates. The moment of no return.

Then he takes the map off of the wall. Tears it out of its frame...

EXT. SHANGHAI HARBOR - DAWN

The sun rises on the harbor. The unruly scrum of vessels bobs in the waves.

On the horizon, the Jeremiah appears. Hobbled by the damage from the skirmish, but sailing towards the harbor.

ON THE DECK

Samuel watches from the bow as the harbor looms closer. The Captain approaches.

SAMUEL

The wounded men?

CAPTAIN

(shrugs)

They'll last to shore, at the least.

(then)

I suppose the lime-eaters seize the cargo the moment we arrive.

Samuel is silent.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)

Fair warning. The damage to the ship, the delays... I shall need to tell Claverly what transpired, else my reputation's in the mud.

SAMUEL

Yes. I understand.

CAPTAIN

This life ain't for you, son. Go home.

On Samuel, staring at the port in the distance...

EXT. SHANGHAI - STREET / BOARDING HOUSE - DAY

Ward and Bourguignon careen towards the boarding house, singing merrily.

WARD / BOURGUIGNON (SINGING)
 Dames of France are fond and free/
 And Flemish lips really willing/
 Very soft the maids of Italy/
 And Spanish eyes so thrilling...

As they stumble inside, they practically collide with Ferling and two other soldiers, waiting in the lobby.

FERLING
 Been somewhere, Ward?

WARD
 As a matter of fact...

FERLING
 You're under arrest for sedition.

The soldiers grab him by the arms.

FERLING (CONT'D)
 (points at Bourguignon)
 Him too.

BOURGUIGNON
 (as the soldiers grab him)
Pardon-moi, ne parle pas anglais...

INT./EXT. SHANGHAI DOCKS / CUSTOMS STATION - DAY

Lu looks over paperwork at his desk. He crosses to retrieve some records. As he passes the window overlooking the harbor, he sees the Jeremiah approaching.

Hesitates.

Then, calls out the door to a guard.

LU
Ready a sampan. Be swift.

INT. QUNFU PALACE - RECEPTION HALL - DAY

PALACE GUARDS approach the throne, where Zhou sprawls in an opium haze. In tow are the two laborers.

GUARD
*Heavenly Cousin, these commoners
 bear a gift for you.*

The Tall Laborer unslings a burlap sack from his shoulder.
Turns it upside down--

--and out spill the eight heads of the ambushed Taiping
raiding party.

Off Zhou's reaction...

EXT. SHANGHAI HARBOR / JEREMIAH DECK - DAY

Lu and his guards climb from their sampan onto the deck of
the Jeremiah. Samuel barely registers them. Instead, he
nervously eyes the approaching BRITISH GUNBOAT, with Lamberth
and a contingent of British soldiers on board.

On the Jeremiah deck, Lu approaches Samuel. Then:

Reaches into his robe, producing a wax seal.

Off Samuel's astonished reaction:

LU
Customs inspection. Please direct
me to the cargo from the Board of
Taxation.

CUT TO:

INT. JEREMIAH - CARGO HOLD - DAY

Lamberth glares at the stacks of cargo chests, their lids now
bearing the wax seal of the Taxation Board.

LAMBERTH
(to Lu)
I demand the right to inspect this
cargo.

LU
That would violate our treaty, sir.

LAMBERTH
Then we shall seize them.
(calling his troops)
Men! Take this cargo to the deck.

LU
Sir, if you break those seals, you
challenge the Emperor himself.
Is that within your authority?

Off Lamberth's reaction...

EXT. OCEAN / JEREMIAH DECK - DAY

Samuel and Lu watch as the British gunship glides away and crewmen start bringing the cargo chests up to the deck.

SAMUEL

I will pay you. As we agreed.

LU

Money is not what I want from you.

On Lu. This is a big step for him:

LU (CONT'D)

Please visit my home this evening.

INT. ROEBLING'S OFFICE - DAY

Lamberth and Samuel square off as Roebling looks on.

LAMBERTH

This is a farce. An absolute farce.
And you, sir, have no honor.

SAMUEL

As you know, the seals--

LAMBERTH

The seals. Oh, the seals, eh? You
and I both know those chests are no
more property of China than my left
arse-cheek.

(to Roebling)

Compel this man to surrender the
cargo.

On Roebling, hapless.

ROEBLING

Parkhurst, these chests. What's the
port of origination? You have a
manifest?

SAMUEL

A manifest can be produced.

LAMBERTH

'Produced.' That's rich. Yes, I'm
sure it can be 'produced.' Sir, you
make a mockery of --

He is interrupted when the door swings open and Claverly
strides in.

CLAVERLY

I understand there's an
irregularity involving my firm.

Lamberth extends his hand.

LAMBERTH

Sir, a pleasure. As a man of
integrity, I trust you can resolve
this.

Claverly looks him up and down.

CLAVERLY

Lamberth, is it?

LAMBERTH

Yes, sir.

CLAVERLY

Are you relation to Thomas
Lamberth, late of the Royal Navy?

LAMBERTH

(impressed)

Admiral Lamberth was my father.

Claverly chuckles.

CLAVERLY

Well, that's a doozy. My daddy was
a midshipman on the USS Arcadia.
That is until Admiral Lamberth blew
it bits in 1812 off the coast of
Maryland back when he was Captain
Lamberth of the HMS Winsome.

Lamberth doesn't know how to take this.

LAMBERTH

Well. I'm very... The ways of God
are mysterious to we who toil
under...

CLAVERLY

You bet they are.

(then)

The Jeremiah boarded the Chinese
cargo in Canton. I have the
manifest right here.

He thrusts some papers at Lamberth. Before Lamberth can
respond...

CLAVERLY (CONT'D)

I trust this matter is resolved.

He exits. Samuel tries to conceal his astonishment.

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

CHINESE WORKERS haul in the sealed cargo chests as Samuel looks on, pacing. As a worker narrowly blocks a stack of chests from toppling--

SAMUEL

Take care!

Claverly enters, unnoticed by Samuel. He observes for a few moments.

CLAVERLY

You seem to be taking quite a personal interest in the Emperor's tax revenues.

Samuel turns.

SAMUEL

Sir. For what you did today, I'm forever in your...

CLAVERLY

Didn't leave me with much choice, did you, son? Either forge a document or be party to a fraud, my choice was. You made me into a liar. Jeopardized my honor.

Samuel loses his patience.

SAMUEL

Your honor? Sir, for years I have been performing all the tasks your firm requires but your moral countenance could not fathom. I have sullied my honor for the sake of guarding yours, Sir. Consider this payment on your debt.

The men glare at each other.

CLAVERLY

You are no longer in my employ. And I will expect compensation for the damage to the Jeremiah.

Samuel blinks. That's a lot of money. Then, as the gears turn in his head:

SAMUEL

I will not compensate you. Rather I will purchase it.

INT. AMERICAN CONCESSION - CONSULATE - JAIL CELL - DAY

No windows, no light. Ward crouches in the corner, wearing nothing but his underwear. Defeated and haggard. The door unlocks and swings open, revealing Roebling. Ward musters what bravado he can:

WARD

Brought my supper, did you?

ROEBLING

Get up. You got visitors.

Ward stands. Roebling leads him out into the hall, where waiting for him are Zhou and two Chinese Guards.

Ward stiffens, then kowtows to Zhou. Roebling looks on with disgust.

ROEBLING (CONT'D)

Better get used to that. They're making you a Chinaman.

WARD

What?

ROEBLING

Apparently you impressed someone. If you aren't my problem, you aren't my problem. Stay out of my way, Ward.

One of the guards thrusts a Chinese document and a quill at him.

GUARD

(in halting English)
Cit-izen.

On Ward, taking the quill...

EXT. SHANGHAI STREET - OLD CITY - NIGHT

Samuel makes his way through a residential street lined with traditional Chinese homes. Approaches a house. Looking out the window, waiting for him, is Lu.

INT. LU'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Samuel enters into the sitting room-- where he finds Mazdani, calmly sipping tea.

Seething, Samuel knocks the teacup out of Mazdani's hand.

LU

Mr. Parkhurst, I did not bring you here to fight.

SAMUEL

He tried to have me killed.

MAZDANI

Consider my situation, sir. A man comes to me. A stranger. He tells me, "the business you and your family have conducted for hundreds of years, now I am in this same business, please help me." You, too, would protect your interests, no?

Samuel glares at him.

MAZDANI (CONT'D)

Unhappily for me, and happily for you, I missed my opportunity. I cannot kill you now that is known in Shanghai what your business is. All suspicion would point to me. Of course, for the same reason I am safe from you. The time for killing has passed. So, please. Sit.

Lu motions to Samuel. Samuel sits, reluctantly.

LU

It is my responsibility to maintain peace in Shanghai. I do not want foreigners provoking violence among my people, as occurred on your ship, Mr. Parkhurst.

SAMUEL

I didn't provoke anything--

LU

For the right to trade in opium, you will pay Mr. Mazdani twenty percent of your proceeds.

SAMUEL
Twenty percent?

MAZDANI
 In return, I will not molest your cargo again. Of course, I cannot protect you from the British or the Americans. Or the Chinese.

Samuel knows he doesn't have a choice.

SAMUEL
 Very well.

Mazdani extends his hand. Samuel shakes it.

LU
 Mr. Mazdani, please give me a few moments with Mr. Parkhurst.

Mazdani nods and exits. Lu turns to Samuel.

LU (CONT'D)
 You should sell the cargo as soon as you are able. If Governor Zhou learns of what I did, he may seize it for himself.

SAMUEL
 And punish you severely, no doubt.

Lu nods.

SAMUEL (CONT'D)
 Why did you help me? Why did you take this risk? You must want something.

LU
 Mr. Parkhurst. The Qing emperors have ruled China for only two hundred years. Before them were the Ming. Before then, the Yuan. In each case, the rule ended when the Heavens made it clear that the Heavenly Son had brought disfavor on our people. Through a famine. Or a war.

(then)
 I believe you and your people coming here means that the time of the Qing is nearing its end. What comes next, I do not know. And I fear.

He stands. Heads to the hallway. Calls out in Cantonese...

LU (CONT'D)

Come!

... and TWO TEENAGE BOYS SHUFFLE IN. The older one, around 17, is sickly and pale. The younger, 14, sturdy and self-assured.

LU (CONT'D)

These are my sons. Lu-Chien, whom I have told you about. And Lu-Tseng, my youngest.

He gazes at his sons with love. Pride and concern in his eyes.

LU (CONT'D)

Mr. Parkhurst, I want you to train them in the trades of the sea. And find a way to take them to America.

Off Samuel's reaction...

EXT. DOCKYARD - DUSK

The battered Jeremiah is tied up at the dock. A few CHINESE WORKMEN tear away rotted wood and damaged hull. It's clear there's a long way to go until it's sea-worthy.

Samuel and Abigail gaze up at the boat from the dock, Jonas on Samuel's shoulders.

SAMUEL

When she's seaworthy I shall rechristen her. 'The Jonas'.

JONAS

Can I steer? Daddy, can I steer?

Samuel lets him down off his shoulders and Jonas runs up the gangplank to the helm. As he plays 'sailor':

ABIGAIL

We can afford this?

SAMUEL

With a loan. Using the house in Salem as the collateral.

On Abigail, absorbing this.

ABIGAIL

You said we would return.

SAMUEL

There is opportunity here. I know you, Abby. Do you want to be a sailor's wife? Or would you prefer to be the fine lady of a gentleman trader?

Abigail nods. But we see that she's not so sure...

EXT. SHANGHAI - CHINESE QUARTER - STREET / BROTHEL - NIGHT

Late. Deserted. Samuel waits outside the brothel. As Dongmei emerges, he approaches.

SAMUEL

Your husband tried to steal opium from our warehouse and he fell. That's how he died.

Dongmei reacts. Tears welling up.

SAMUEL (CONT'D)

We threw his body in the ocean. I am sorry.

DONGMEI

Why are you telling me now?

SAMUEL

We can help each other. You need money. And I need something from you.

DONGMEI

What?

Samuel hesitates. Big step for him:

SAMUEL

Mazdani, the Persian man who comes here. Do you know him?

Dongmei nods. Then:

SAMUEL (CONT'D)

I need you to help me kill him.

On Samuel, his face half-illuminated by the street-lamp, we...

FADE OUT.