

THE LEGEND OF MULAN

Written by

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Inspired by the narrative poem, The Ballad of Mulan

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"She goes ten thousand miles on the business of war.
She crosses passes and mountains like flying."

--The Ballad of Mulan

EXT. ANCIENT CHINESE VILLAGE - DAWN (415 CE)

Settled in a fertile, misty valley, the sleepy, tranquil village glows in the morning light. A prosperous rural hamlet, it's picture perfect.

EXT. COURTYARD - MULAN'S PARENTS' HOUSE - SAME

HUA MULAN (early 20s) tall, strong, and full of determination, gracefully carries heavy pails of water on a stout pole balanced on her shoulders. Her long dark hair falls down the back of her simple but neat robe. There's something carefree and almost girlish about her, not yet worn down by adult worries.

Mulan heads across the courtyard toward a well-kept house, past a magnolia tree in full bloom.

Note: the name Mulan means magnolia flower.

A FURTIVE MOVEMENT out of the corner of her eye. Mulan tenses. Looks. Nothing out of the ordinary. She relaxes.

Suddenly, a MIDDLE-AGED MAN holding his own stout staff darts around a corner. ATTACKS with a YELL.

Mulan FLIPS the buckets at him -- projectiles. The man easily dodges them. He swipes at her feet, causing her to leap back. They engage -- staff to staff, fighting fiercely.

Mulan is aggressive, fighting more with her heart than her head. The middle-aged man doesn't have her speed, but his greater reach, strength, and experience means he can out maneuver her.

With a final hit, he drops Mulan to the ground. Holds his staff to her throat--

--primed for the kill. But he doesn't strike.

This is Mulan's father, HUA HU (late 40s), a former soldier and a village leader.

HUA HU

You are strong, Mulan, but I am stronger.

MULAN

Yes, father. That's pretty clear from down here.

Hua Hu hauls her to her feet.

HUA HU
If you keep trying to win with
strength, you will always lose.

MULAN
At least it's taking you longer to win.

Hu smiles at his incorrigible daughter.

Mulan's mother, HUA WUWEI, (40s) hustles out of the house.

HUA WUWEI
Fighting again!? How are we to find
her a husband if all the men know
she can trounce them soundly.

HUA HU
(teasing)
Don't all wives trounce their
husbands one way or another?

Wuwei frowns at him. Hu kisses her cheek to show he was
kidding. Wuwei isn't mollified. This is a serious problem.

HUA WUWEI
Who will look out for Mulan once
we're gone if she never marries?

MULAN
I've always done pretty well taking
care of myself.

Wuwei looks pointedly at the overturned buckets.

HUA WUWEI
Says the girl who can't even fetch
water from the well.

Wuwei turns on her heel and stalks back to the house. Hu puts
a sympathetic hand on Mulan's shoulder.

HUA HU
Your mother makes a good point. A
better fighter would not have
spilled the water.

Mulan resents the criticism, but she picks up the buckets.

A rough wind blows in suddenly from the north, shaking the
magnolia tree. Mulan shivers. Lifts her head. Something about
that wind just doesn't feel right.

ALARM BELLS RING OUT.

A warning CRY from the GUARD on the WATCHTOWER.

GUARD

Rourans! We're under attack!

Hu instantly understands the danger -- invaders from the North! He grabs Mulan's hand and tugs her into the--

INT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Racing across the small main room, Hu grabs his stout, single-edged sword and slides into his studded leather armor.

HUA HU

(to Mulan)

Stay here with your mother.

MULAN

I can help!

HUA HU

I know. By keeping her safe.

And Hu races out the door.

Wuwei bars the doors and windows while from OUTSIDE comes the CLASH of weapons and the NEIGHING of horses.

Mulan hears the CRIES of villagers. She looks from her mother to the barred doors, torn in her duty. Finally, she can't take it anymore. While Wuwei's back is turned, Mulan grabs her father's long spear and slips out the door.

EXT. VILLAGE - DAY

Mulan races past the modest houses, pushing through fleeing VILLAGERS, heading toward the battle, her long hair flying behind her.

She reaches the--

EXT. OPEN PLAZA AT THE CENTER OF THE VILLAGE - SAME

ROURAN RAIDERS, uncivilized horse people from what will someday be Mongolia, charge the VILLAGE DEFENDERS. Their horses are small, hairy and tough, but they're strong. The Rourans wear fearsome helmets decorated with bleached skulls and bones (we'll call them **Skull and Bones** from here on out).

Mulan's father leads the village defense force.

Leading the Rourans is their KHAN, Yujiulu Datan (30s), handsome, but an especially cruel and aggressive leader.

The DEFENDERS form a line -- pikes aimed at the approaching riders.

The Khan stands on the back of his galloping horse. Runs across its withers. Leaps off the horse's head. The horse swerves, dodging the pikes.

The Khan runs through the air, defying gravity. He passes over the heads of the astonished defenders, easily clearing their raised pikes.

He drops gracefully to the ground behind their defensive line and attacks, hacking them to ribbons!

Mulan watches in horror as the rest of the Rourans leap off the backs of their horses, flying through the air--

--a black cloud of invaders coming to destroy the village.

The Rourans stab villagers from the air. Drop burning brands on the thatched roofs of houses, setting them alight. Orange flames lick the sky.

Other Rourans pull VILLAGE WOMEN and LIVESTOCK out of the houses. Hoist the plunder across their saddles.

Mulan catches a glimpse of a hooded figure through the billowing smoke -- a Rouran WITCH, her face carefully PAINTED like a mask in red and white. Curved metal CLAWS worn like rings cover her fingertips.

The witch flicks her incredibly long sleeves at the sky -- a DANCE of flowing crimson fabric. THUNDER BOOMS and LIGHTNING strikes a house, igniting the thatched roof. The villagers tremble in fear.

VILLAGER
A witch! A witch!

Wind HOWLS out of the north, buffeting the defenders, knocking several to the ground.

Some of the villagers turn tail and run.

HUA HU
Stay strong! Stand your ground!

But the wind swirls around the witch as she whirls and flicks her sleeves. LIGHTNING flashes across the sky. Hu's words have little effect on his terrified men.

The witch flicks her sleeves again and a line of defenders go down like they've been hit with a wrecking ball.

She flicks her other sleeve and a house EXPLODES in a shower of splintering wood.

Any village defenders not scared off are decimated by the acrobatic Rouran fighters -- bodies litter the village.

Hua Hu grits his teeth and charges toward the Witch. The Khan WHISTLES. His horse races to him and the Khan leaps straight off the ground into the saddle.

The Khan whirls his horse and charges to intercept Hu. Their blades CLASH in a fury of steel.

Seeing her father engaged with the Khan, Mulan fights her way toward Hu--

--ducking a charging man TWICE HER SIZE, hearing her father's words, knowing she can't win against such strength--

--she flicks her spear at his legs, using the brute's size against him, knocking his feet out from under him. He falls hard. But Mulan doesn't wait around, she keeps moving, dodging two enemies in heated battle--

--a horse charges towards her. She swings her spear in an arc and--

--knocks the ROURAN RIDER off his horse. But the fallen rider leaps to his feet. LUNGES for her. Using her speed, Mulan DODGES--

--gets around the rider and STABS him in the side, slipping the blade between the panels of his thick leather armor.

It's her first kill, but she has no time to feel it. She moves on, dodging past other Rouran fighters. All she can think about is the need to get to her father, fighting with the Khan.

As Mulan watches in horror, the Khan strikes Hu in the side. Hu DROPS to the ground, alone, crippled.

MULAN

Father!

The Khan raises his sword for the killing blow when--

--Mulan leaps forward and--

--BLOCKS the blow with her spear. The Khan is startled -- especially that a woman would try to fight him.

Mulan takes advantage of the Khan's surprise and strikes out, but he blocks her blow. They begin a furious fight.

KHAN

You cannot hope to defeat me, girl.
I am the Khan of the Rourans! You
are a speck of dust beneath my boot.

Furious, Mulan takes too big a swing, telegraphing her strike. The Khan slices right through her spear, the blade tumbling to the ground, leaving Mulan without a weapon.

Mulan knows she's done for, but she keeps her chin high, still defiant. The Witch takes that in.

The Khan swings his sword--

WITCH

Stop!

The Khan's blade freezes, millimeters from Mulan's neck.

KHAN

Why? What does it matter, one
peasant girl more or less?

The Witch speaks with a weird, high-pitched voice, almost like a wind blowing through a cave.

WITCH

This one is special.

The Witch caresses Mulan's chin with a single claw.

WITCH (CONT'D)

But enough heroics.

The Witch shoves the air with her palm. A ripple in the air. It's like a bag of bricks hits Mulan in the chest. She flies across the village and--

BLACKOUT.

INT. PLEASURE HOUSE - DAY

GAIUS CORVUS (30s) a ruggedly handsome Roman trader who hides his sadness with a quick smile and roguish charm, hangs out in his underwear with a group of CHINESE PROSTITUTES. The elegantly dressed/undressed ladies GIGGLE and flirt with Gaius as they share food and wine.

GAIUS

Ladies, I've been to pleasure houses from Rome to Delhi, and I can assure you, nothing compares to your charms.

PROSTITUTE 1

You flatter us, Gaius.

PROSTITUTE 2

More wine?

She fills his cup, making sure Gaius gets a good glimpse of her luscious cleavage.

From outside comes BANGING and SHOUTING.

MAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

Gaius Corvus, you Roman crow! I know you're in there!

Gaius leans out the window. In THE STREET below, a MOUNTAINOUS CHINESE MAN, looking real pissed off.

PROSTITUTE 1

Who is that?

GAIUS

A man I owe money to. Slight gambling debt.

PROSTITUTE 2

So, pay him.

GAIUS

I had a tough choice to make, ladies... pay him or pay you. And I infinitely prefer your company.

He nods at the purse sitting in front of Prostitute 1. She protectively slips it into her elegant robe.

Gaius searches the room.

GAIUS (CONT'D)

Clothes. Where are my clothes?

The prostitutes share a look.

DOWNSTAIRS

The mountainous Chinese man stomps up the stairs. Bursts into the--

PROSTITUTE'S ROOM

To find--

Only ladies. No Gaius. The mountainous Chinese man frowns.

MOUNTAINOUS CHINESE MAN

Where is he?

One of the "ladies" in the darkest corner flutters her fan over her face -- behind the fan, we catch a glimpse of Gaius' scruffy chin and calculating eyes.

PROSTITUTE 1

Who is this man you speak of? We do not know him.

The prostitutes all shake their heads. Prostitute 2 sidles up to the Mountainous Chinese Man.

PROSTITUTE 2

But perhaps we could show you a good time. A very good time.

She waves her fan provocatively. While Gaius (in a wig and ladies' robe, still hiding his face with the fan) sidles unnoticed toward the door.

MOUNTAINOUS CHINESE MAN

Stay away from me, mongrel bitches.
I don't want your fleas.

Mountainous Chinese Man backhands Prostitute 2 hard across the face. She CRIES out and drops to her knees.

Gaius hesitates. He knows he should just leave, but he can't quite do it. He snaps the fan shut, revealing his face.

GAIUS

Manners! These are ladies. Highly skilled ladies.

He gives the ladies a small bow. They bow back.

With a ROAR, Mountainous Chinese Man swings at Gaius who ducks -- his fist catches the wig which goes flying. Mountainous Chinese Man lumbers around the room, knocking over furniture as Gaius stays one step ahead, fighting back with the fan.

GAIUS (CONT'D)

Look, I will pay you. I'm just a little short of funds right now.

MOUNTAINOUS CHINESE MAN
I will break your spine over my
knee, horse trader!

Gaius finally tires of the dance. He FLICKS the fan hard into Mountainous Chinese Man's throat. The huge man CHOKES. Staggers. Keels over like a tree.

Prostitute 1 holds out Gaius' clothes. Since he helped destroy their room, they no longer look so friendly.

GAIUS
I'd pay you for the damage, but...

He shrugs. Takes the clothes.

LUCIUS (30s) another muscular Roman and Gaius' best friend since childhood, pokes his head in the door.

LUCIUS
Gaius! That giant from the mahjong is--

He sees the GROANING mountainous man on the floor.

LUCIUS (CONT'D)
Oh, I see he found you.

Gaius yanks on his pants and boots.

GAIUS
Thanks for the timely warning.

LUCIUS
Always glad to be of service.

Gaius gives the prostitutes a courtly bow.

GAIUS
It's been enchanting, ladies.

And the two men stride out the door.

EXT. BROTHEL - DAY

Gaius pulls on his shirt as they head for their HORSES (Roman horses -- big and sleek). Waiting for them are the other members of their crew:

KARIM (20s) a wise-cracking Tunisian Arab.

SAHAT (40s) a solemn, Indian warrior.

They have with them a herd of beautiful Roman horses as well as pack mules piled high with goods that they plan to trade.

GAIUS

Karim! Sahat! Could I borrow some money?

KARIM

Gambling or whores?

GAIUS

Little of both.

SAHAT

I fear these hobbies of yours will not lead to long life.

Gaius shrugs.

GAIUS

Why sacrifice life's pleasures to plan for a day that may never come?

Lucius, Sahat and Karim share a concerned look.

KARIM

Pay the giant and live for another day.

Karim tosses Gaius his purse. Coins JINGLE when it lands in Gaius' palm.

GAIUS

Thank you, my friend. I--

SAHAT AND LUCIUS

Owe you one.

Gaius gives a wry smile. His friends know him well.

EXT. STREET IN MULAN'S VILLAGE - DAY

Hua Hu leans on a crutch as he hobbles toward a frail VILLAGE ELDER and his son, HOP (20s) pudgy, klutzy, but with a big heart. Hop loads supplies onto a horse.

Wuwei and Mulan follow Hu toward the horses.

HUA WUWEI

You are in no shape to travel.

HUA HU

The Emperor must be warned. The Rourans are too bold.

(MORE)

HUA HU (CONT'D)
They must be stopped before the
Kingdom of Northern Wei is overrun.

HUA WUWEI
Surely someone else can take the message.

HUA HU
Half the village is dead or run off.

Hu nods at the Elder and Hop.

HUA HU (CONT'D)
It is our responsibility.

Hu kisses his wife.

HUA HU (CONT'D)
Do not worry, love. I promise to be careful.

HUA WUWEI
Good. Because Mulan is coming with you.

HUA HU
What?

MULAN
I am?

HUA WUWEI
You need someone to take care of you.

Hua Hu narrows his eyes skeptically, but then says...

HUA HU
Get your things.

Mulan's eyes light up with joy. Hu turns to his horse. Wuwei leans over to Mulan.

HUA WUWEI
Protect him.

Mulan nods seriously.

INSERT:

A MAP of Ancient China. Prominently pictured is the KINGDOM OF NORTHERN WEI and its neighbor to the north, the TERRITORY OF THE ROURANS.

A dotted line shows Mulan's journey from her village to the capitol city, YUNZHONG.

EXT. CAPITOL CITY - DAY

Mulan, Hua Hu, Hop and the Elder ride on their shaggy horses through the prosperous city toward the IMPERIAL PALACE.

Mulan's eyes light up with excitement as she looks at the beautiful palace with its massive gates and high walls topped with gilded, decorative roof tiles. She's never seen anything so magnificent.

Hop gapes at the huge walled complex, feeling small.

Hu rubs his wounded side -- he looks pale and tired. Mulan watches him with worried eyes.

They ride through the huge gate into the--

EXT. COURTYARD - IMPERIAL PALACE - DAY

They ride past the BARRACKS. SOLDIERS practice with swords and spears. Mulan watches their technique critically. Mirrors their sword movements with her hands, soaking it all in.

They ride through the busy palace grounds. NOBLES and SERVANTS (men and women) bustle around. Nearly everyone is dressed better than the dusty travellers. Bright silks, extravagant headpieces and formal hats catch her eye.

Suddenly aware of her provincial robe, Mulan brushes at her garment, vainly trying to rid it of the travel dust.

A STREET MAGICIAN works the crowd as the group rides past. With a flourish of misdirection, a plate of BLACK POWDER explodes with a poof of smoke. The AUDIENCE OOHS.

Mulan's horse (closest to the explosion) shies at the noise. She MURMURS soothing words, quickly calming the horse. She hustles to catch up with the others.

EXT. STABLES - IMPERIAL PALACE - DAY

Gaius and his crew (Lucius, Sahat and Karim) show off their horses to the imperial HORSE MASTER. Sahat effortlessly rides the biggest, most beautiful of the stallions, putting the huge creature through complex moves.

GAIUS

Just imagine, riding into battle on
Black Wind here. His speed, his
strength -- your enemies won't know
what hit them.

HORSE MASTER

He is a fine animal, but we are not
at war. Therefore, we have no use
for war horses.

Gaius's face darkens -- giving a hint of his pain.

GAIUS

War is always around the corner.

With a worried glance at his friend, Lucius jumps in.

LUCIUS

That's why you should take
advantage of today's low prices.

The Horse Master looks skeptical.

ACROSS THE STABLE AREA

Mulan helps her father down from his horse. He winces.

HUA HU

(to Hop)

Take care of the horses. We'll see
about getting an audience with the
Emperor.

Mulan and Hop bow to their fathers.

As Hu and the Elder walk away and Hop deals with the horses,
Mulan's eye is caught by the gorgeous horse Black Wind,
standing patiently by the STABLES.

Entranced, Mulan crosses the courtyard to the sleek animal.

MULAN

(softly)

Hello, beautiful.

The horse NICKERS a greeting. Rubs his muzzle in her hand.
His whiskers tickle her palm and she GIGGLES.

Gaius spots a dirty peasant girl touching his valuable horse.
He frowns.

GAIUS

You there!

Gaius grabs Mulan's hand.

GAIUS (CONT'D)

Don't touch my horse!

Mulan jerks, startled by his touch and his harsh tone. She pulls away.

MULAN

Let go of me!

Sensing the conflict, the horse REARS, pawing the air with his sharp hooves.

GAIUS

Look out!

Gaius shoves Mulan clear of the dangerous horse. His momentum carries them both to the ground.

Sahat rushes to Black Wind. Speaks Hindi softly to the giant stallion, calming him.

Gaius and Mulan lie face to face on the ground, spitting mad.

MULAN

Get off of me, you oaf!

GAIUS

Well, excuse me for saving you!

MULAN

I was only in danger because you scared the horse.

GAIUS

I scared the horse?!

Hop hustles toward them.

HOP

Mulan!

(to Gaius)

Let her go, foreign devil!

Hop (ever klutzy) trips over a bucket and goes flying.

HOP (CONT'D)

Whoa!

Lucius grabs him with one hand, keeps him from biting the dust. Lucius sets Hop back on his feet.

Gaius stands.

GAIUS

(to Hop)

Take her. Please. She's a danger to herself and others.

Overcome with fury, Mulan leaps to her feet. Stalks to Gaius. And, quick as a flash, she grabs his arm and TWISTS, throwing him to the ground. Gaius is startled, but not hurt.

MULAN

You're right, I am dangerous.

Mulan lets Gaius go.

MULAN (CONT'D)

Come on, Hop.

Mulan strides away, chin held high. Hop scurries after her.

Lucius and Karim howl with LAUGHTER as Gaius picks himself up off the ground. Sahat raises one eyebrow in an "I told you, you were gonna get into trouble" sort of way.

KARIM

I can't believe--

GAIUS

Yes, we all saw it. There's no need to talk about it.

That just makes Lucius and Karim LAUGH harder.

EXT. PALACE ENTRANCE - DAY

Mulan and Hop catch up with Hua Hu and the Elder by the palace steps. Hua Hu has a twinkle in his eye.

HUA HU

Making friends already?

Mulan frowns.

MULAN

The city contains more garbage than I expected.

HUA HU

Things cannot be known by their looks, just as the sea cannot be measured by a bucket.

MULAN

(unconvinced)

I'll keep that in mind.

A COURT OFFICIAL waves them toward the door.

COURT OFFICIAL
The Emperor will see you now.

And they start up the steep steps.

INT. THRONE ROOM - IMPERIAL PALACE - DAY

The biggest room Mulan has ever been in. Richly painted screens. Ornate carvings. More luxury than she has imagined.

EMPEROR MINGYUAN (23) an intelligent and rational ruler as well as a strong warrior, sits on a raised throne. His golden robe glistens in the diffuse light filtering through the paper covered windows. A small crown encircles his warrior's top knot.

The huge room contains many ADVISORS in their ceremonial robes as well as DELEGATIONS from other villages.

Proximity to the Emperor is determined by status. Hua Hu and the Elder are near the front of the delegations while Mulan and Hop are so far away from the Emperor, they're practically out the door.

Everyone kneels and touches their foreheads to the floor in the traditional KOWTOW. Hua Hu winces as he sits up. Mulan notices his pain and looks worried.

EMPEROR MINGYUAN
Tell me of this threat to our kingdom.

HUA HU
Your Imperial Majesty, four days ago, the Rourans attacked our village. They burned our houses. Kidnapped our women. Stole our livestock.

ANOTHER ELDER
The same is true of our village, Son of Heaven.

ANOTHER ELDER (CONT'D)
And of ours, Lord of Ten Thousand Years.

EMPEROR MINGYUAN
This is deeply troubling. The Rourans have a new Khan, Yujiulu Datan.

Emperor Mingyuan nods at his advisors.

EMPEROR MINGYUAN (CONT'D)

My advisors have informed me he wishes to annex Northern Wei to the Rouran territory. He may even be uniting the Rouran tribes beneath a single banner.

ANOTHER ELDER

(contemptuous)

The Rourans are brutes. Completely uncivilized. They cannot hope to win.

MURMURS of agreement from those who haven't yet seen the Rourans in action. Mulan can't let it slide. She leaps to her feet.

HOP

(hisses)

Mulan!

MULAN

The Rourans may be "uncivilized," but they will not be easy to defeat. They have mastered advanced wu-shu techniques.

The men in the room stare at this woman who has dared to break protocol. Hua Hu silently prays she won't cause too much trouble.

EMPEROR MINGYUAN

It is highly irregular for a woman to speak out about something of which she knows so little.

MULAN

But I do know. I fought them.

MURMURS of disbelief from the crowd.

HUA HU

(bowing)

Son of Heaven, my daughter is highly irregular.

Hu gives Mulan a firm "sit down" look. Not wanting to embarrass him further, she does.

HUA HU (CONT'D)

However, she also speaks the truth. The Khan has a witch who appears to have helped his men gain mastery over the elements.

More MURMURS from the crowd. This is getting more serious.
Emperor Mingyuan stands.

EMPEROR MINGYUAN

Then we must take the battle to the
Rourans. I decree, every household
will supply one man to join the
army and fight for our homeland.

Mulan looks at her pale, injured father with fear.

EMPEROR MINGYUAN (CONT'D)

We are at war.

Hop gulps. Hua Hu closes his eyes, resigned to his fate.

EXT. STABLE AREA - DAY

Gaius, Lucius, Sahat and Karim pack up. They still have their
herd of horses -- no sale.

KARIM

Where should we try next?

Gaius shrugs.

GAIUS

Heard the Khan of the Rourans is a
fan of good horse flesh.

Lucius frowns.

LUCIUS

So are tigers. Doesn't mean we
should do business with them.

SAHAT

They have no honor.

GAIUS

What care we for honor? The only
thing I care about is who will put
more gold in my pocket.

SAHAT

You can't mean that.

Lucius knows Gaius does.

GAIUS

Honor doesn't put food on your
table. Honor doesn't save your wife
from the sword.

(MORE)

GAIUS (CONT'D)

I have no use for honor. Or men who
value honor above survival.

This saddens Sahat.

LUCIUS

Well, let us look to our survival
and plan our route.

Lucius pulls out a map. The others bend over it with him.

The Horse Master rushes over to them, moving at an
undignified pace.

HORSE MASTER

I'll take them. Every horse you have.

Gaius looks shrewdly at the Horse Master. He's trying to hide
it, but he looks eager. Too eager.

GAIUS

They're not for sale anymore. You
had your chance.

KARIM

(softly to Gaius)
Gaius, what are you doing?

Lucius puts a hand on Karim's shoulder.

LUCIUS

(softly)
Trust him.

Karim keeps his mouth shut, but he's nervous. Sahat and
Lucius, however, enjoy watching Gaius reel in his fish.

The Horse Master edges closer to Gaius.

HORSE MASTER

I can pay you more.

Gaius seems to ignore him. Throws a bedroll over his horse's
flanks.

GAIUS

We have other buyers.

The Horse Master grows desperate.

HORSE MASTER

I will pay much more.

GAIUS
How much more?

HORSE MASTER
Double.

CRIES ripple through the courtyard.

PEOPLE
War! We're at war! War with the
Rourans!

Gaius smirks.

GAIUS
Triple it and you've got a deal.

The Horse Master knows he's over a barrel. He nods.

EXT. IMPERIAL PALACE/ IMPERIAL CITY - SAME

We pull back as the news of war spreads out of the palace and through the city. MESSENGERS ride out of the city gates, carrying the news all over the kingdom.

EXT. MULAN'S VILLAGE - DAY

The dusty, weary travelers ride up to Mulan's parents' house.

Mulan slides easily off her horse. Hua Wuwei rushes out the door to greet them.

HUA WUWEI
You're home!

Hua Hu gets off his horse. Takes a step toward his smiling wife and--

--COLLAPSES. Drops, unconscious, to the ground.

With a cry, Hua Wuwei rushes to Hu.

MULAN
(to Hop)
Help me get him to his bed.

Together, Mulan and Hop lift Hu.

INT. HUA HU AND WUWEI'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Soft lamplight illuminates the plain room. Hua Hu lies in his bed, pale with fever. Wuwei examines his red, angry wound while Mulan hovers.

HUA WUWEI
It has festered.

Wuwei and Mulan share a look -- they know what this means.

MULAN
He'll have to stay.

Wuwei looks skeptical.

HUA WUWEI
The man does not know his own
limitations. He will ride out, full of
pride, and never return.

MULAN
Then we must tie him to the bed.
He's too weak to fight us, let
alone fight the Rourans.

HUA HU
(weakly)
It's my duty. I am a soldier.

Hua Wuwei kneels by the bed.

HUA WUWEI
You're too ill. If you go...If you go...

She can't bring herself to say it.

MULAN
Father, you'll die.

Hua Hu pushes himself upright in bed.

HUA HU
And who should go in my place? We
have no sons. The Emperor commands
it. One man from every house.

Mulan gets a steely look in her eye.

MULAN
Then we shall give them that.

Wuwei swallows hard. She knows what this means.

INT. MAIN ROOM - MULAN'S PARENTS' HOUSE - NIGHT

Mulan stares at her father's armor and sword. It's a heavy burden she's about to assume, but she's determined to bear it.

Wuwei comes in behind her. Speaks softly.

HUA WUWEI

If anyone discovers you're a woman...

MULAN

They won't.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

--Mulan stands naked, her back to camera. Slowly, her womanly curves are masked as Wuwei binds Mulan's breasts.

--Wuwei puts Hu's leather armor on Mulan. She pulls the straps as tight as they go, but even then, it's too big for Mulan's petite body.

--Mulan kneels on the floor as Wuwei brushes her long, thick hair -- a mother brushing the hair of her child. Wuwei gathers Mulan's hair into the traditional top knot of a Chinese soldier.

--Mulan picks her father's sword up from its wooden cradle. She wraps the sword belt around her armored waist and straps the heavy blade on.

INT. HUA HU AND WUWEI'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mulan, no longer a girl, but now a warrior, stands in the doorway watching her feverish father.

Hua Hu wakes. Sees her there. Understanding dawns for him. He is simultaneously proud and heartbroken.

Mulan kneels by her father's bed. Puts her fist to her palm and bows.

Hu reaches out a trembling hand. Cups her cheek. Father and daughter look deep into each others eyes as a single tear rolls down Hu's face.

HUA HU

Come back to us.

MULAN

I promise.

EXT. MULAN'S PARENT'S HOUSE - DAWN

Wuwei watches tearfully from the doorway as Mulan the soldier strides into the new day, past the magnolia tree. The pink petals flutter to the ground.

EXT. MULAN'S VILLAGE - MORNING

A smattering of VILLAGE MEN march down the road away from their homes. A few are just BOYS -- one looks like he might be thirteen. A couple are OLD MEN -- one leans on his spear like a cane. All look frightened, but full of determination.

Trailing them is Mulan, trying to stay inconspicuous.

Hop spots her. Hustles over to her.

HOP

Mulan?!

MULAN

Shhh! Not so loud! You'll get me killed.

HOP

You'll get yourself killed. You'll never pass for a man.

MULAN

I have to. You saw my father. The journey alone would kill him. I must be the Hua soldier now.

Hop shakes his head.

HOP

You're insane.

MULAN

I know more kung fu than you do.

HOP

That's true. You are a better fighter, but you are not a better man. You don't even walk like one.

MULAN

I walk just like you.

HOP

No, you walk like this.

Hop minces in an exaggerated version of a woman's walk.

MULAN

I do not.

He quirks a brow.

MULAN (CONT'D)

Fine, then show me how to walk.

Hop swaggers for a few paces before he trips on a rock and stumbles. Mulan catches his arm. Braces him.

MULAN (CONT'D)

At least I can stay on my feet.

Hop pulls his arm out of Mulan's grip.

HOP

I don't need your help.

MULAN

Yes, you do. And I need yours. If we're going to survive this war, we need to work together. I'll train you. Teach you kung fu. And you teach me how to pass as a man. We'll keep each other alive.

He hesitates.

MULAN (CONT'D)

Hop, please.

Hop shakes his head, exasperated.

HOP

I don't even know why I bother arguing.

Mulan smiles.

EXT. ARMY ENCAMPMENT - DAY

The huge Northern Wei army is camped on a flat plane by a large river. Tents. Cooking fires. Thousands of SOLDIERS.

Hop and Mulan move through the hustle and bustle. Mulan throws Hop a worried look. He whispers to her.

HOP

Remember. No fear. You're a man.

Mulan nods. Lifts her chin, determined to be confident.

CHEN HONGHUI (which means great splendor) (20s) an entitled jerk, calls out to them.

HONGHUI
Hey! Fresh meat! Pick up your tags
over there!

Mulan and Hop look over to the REGISTRATION STATION where a line of NEW RECRUITS check in and get their "dog tag" -- a wooden plaque with a name painted on.

LATER

Mulan reaches the head of the line. Hop waits behind her.

OFFICER
Name?

MULAN
(squeaks a little)
Hua.

Mulan clears her throat. Speaks in her deepest voice.

MULAN (CONT'D)
Hua Fan.

A CALLIGRAPHER quickly paints the characters for Hua Fan onto a wooden dog tag. The officer looks at the small Mulan.

OFFICER
You don't look lethal to me.

Mulan aggressively slaps her hand on the desk.

MULAN
That's because you haven't angered
me. Yet.

The Officer LAUGHS. Tosses Mulan her freshly painted dog tag.

OFFICER
We'll see if your attitude is enough
to keep you alive, little one.

Mulan takes her tag and goes. Hop shakes his head.

HOP
(whispers)
Maybe a little less aggressive.

Mulan nods.

EXT. FIRE - ARMY ENCAMPMENT - DAY

Mulan and Hop sit with their BUNKMATES around a fire, eating their bowls of noodles. Honghui is among them.

Mulan sits with her knees pressed together, taking up very little space. Hop elbows her. Nods at the other men, all of whom sit with their knees spread wide.

Mulan takes the hint. Shifts her stance. She notices other things, too -- the way the men hold their bowls and slurp their noodles -- a far cry from her own dainty eating style. Mulan mimics the men, guzzling her food and rice wine. Wiping her mouth on her sleeve.

Hop watches Mulan with relief -- they might be OK after all.

HONGHUI

These Rouran scum need to be taught
a lesson!

The Bunkmates MURMUR their agreement.

HONGHUI (CONT'D)

I say, never let a wrong go
unpunished. When they fear you,
they respect you.

Most of the Bunkmates nod in support. Mulan frowns, she's not a fan of this blowhard.

HONGHUI (CONT'D)

Why, only last week, when packing,
my servant did not wrap my sword
properly. He could have dulled the
blade. That kind of carelessness
cannot be tolerated.

BUNKMATE 1

You punished him?

HONGHUI

Naturally. Five lashes. How else is
he to learn?

MULAN

You could have shown him how you
wanted the sword wrapped.

A ripple of tension runs through the group.

HOP

(whispers)

Let it go.

HONGHUI

(to Mulan)

He knew. He was just too lazy to do it.

Hop begs her with his eyes, but she really doesn't like Honghui.

MULAN

Where is the honor in hitting a man
who cannot hit back?

Honghui leaps to his feet.

HONGHUI

You dare impugn my honor, Fan?

Mulan stands. Faces off with Honghui.

MULAN

I say a man who beats his loyal
servant has no honor.

There's a fight brewing. Honghui and Mulan stare each other down. Will he realize there's no scruff on her chin?

Desperate, Hop leaps between Mulan and Honghui.

HOP

If you are caught fighting, you
will both be lashed!

HONGHUI

Then we will save this for the
practice field.

MULAN

I will see you there.

Honghui and the Bunkmates who support him stalk away. Hop sighs and shakes his head at Mulan.

HOP

I don't think anyone's questioning
your manliness, though I am
questioning your sanity.

EXT. PLAIN BY THE ROURAN ENCAMPMENT - DAY

Tents and yurts set up on a vast arid plain. Mongolian horses graze nearby. ROURAN RAIDERS and their WIVES and CHILDREN go about their daily tasks. The Rourans are a nomadic people and they're roughing it all the time. Their hands and faces hardened by wind and weather. These people are tough.

Gaius, Lucius and Sahat approach the encampment on their big, Roman horses. Sahat's horse carries a large bundle.

Sahat eyes the many banners flying over the camp.

SAHAT

Looks like this new Khan is uniting
the Rouran tribes. Building a
bigger army.

GAIUS

Then they'll need more swords.

A SENTRY spots the intruders. Calls to his brethren who grab swords and ready themselves.

The Rourans eye the visitors warily -- these strange looking men and their giant horses are unknown in these parts.

Gaius raises his hands to show he's unarmed and trots forward toward the camp.

GAIUS (CONT'D)

Where is your Khan? I have
something he will want to see.

The Khan steps out of the LARGEST YURT. Assesses the intruders with a glance and nods for his men to let them through.

EXT. ROURAN ENCAMPMENT - CONTINUOUS

Gaius, Lucius and Sahat ride through the camp. Suspicious gazes follow them.

They pass a group of the elite Skull and Bones Rourans. SLAVE GIRLS deferentially serve them huge platters of meat.

A pair of CROWS fight over a bone on the ground.

LUCIUS

(softly to Gaius)
I still say this is a bad idea.

GAIUS

Your purse will thank me.

INT. KHAN'S YURT - DAY

As luxurious as a Mongolian yurt can get. Lots of soft furs and wool blankets.

A fire burning in the center of the round room. Gold and silver dishes glittering on the table. Whatever wealth this society has is concentrated here.

The Khan sits on a big wooden chair covered with furs. Gaius, Lucius and Sahat stand before him with the large bundle.

A VEILED SLAVE GIRL -- a distinctive BIRTHMARK on her forehead -- brings in a tray of cups and FERMENTED YAK MILK -- a traditional drink.

The slave girl's hands tremble as she nervously pours the milk out for the Khan. A single drop falls on the tray.

The Khan hurls the milk in her face and strikes her hard on her ear.

KHAN
Clumsy fool.

Gaius trembles with barely controlled rage. Lucius puts a warning hand on his arm. Gaius makes a face, but stands down.

The slave girl successfully pours a second cup of yak milk for the Khan. Hands it over with a deep bow. The Khan takes it, but doesn't even bother to drink. Just sets the cup aside. The slave girl cowers in the corner, head lowered.

KHAN (CONT'D)
Why have you come here, white ghost?

Gaius bows perfunctorily.

GAIUS
For this.

He draws the steel sword at his side.

The Khan's BODYGUARDS react instantly, drawing their shorter, bronze swords. Gaius raises his hands carefully.

GAIUS (CONT'D)
Just a demonstration.

The Khan waves and the Bodyguards stand down.

LUCIUS
May I?

Lucius points to a Bodyguard's sword. The Khan nods and the man hands it over.

GAIUS
Your men mostly carry bronze
swords. But this...

Gaius hefts his weapon.

GAIUS (CONT'D)
...is Damascus steel. The hardest
metal known to man.

Gaius swings and--

--his blade cuts cleanly through the bronze sword in Lucius' hand.

The Khan's eyes light up with greed at the sight.

Sahat unwraps the bundle revealing--

--twenty of the beautiful swords.

He reaches out for a blade. Gaius gracefully flips the sword and hands it, hilt first, to the Khan.

The Khan gazes rapturously at the almost woodgrain patterns on the shiny metal.

KHAN
Beautiful.

The Khan whips around and--

--STABS his bodyguard in the gut. The Khan pulls out the blade and the unarmed bodyguard drops with a GROAN.

KHAN (CONT'D)
And effective.

The Khan points the sword at the unarmed Gaius.

KHAN (CONT'D)
Tell me, why should I not kill you
and take these for myself?

Gaius doesn't even flinch.

GAIUS
You could do that. But then you
wouldn't get the thousand others we
have hidden in the desert. And the
tens of thousands more we can get
from Constantinople.

The Khan smiles appreciatively.

KHAN

In that case, it seems like we have some business to discuss.

EXT. EDGE OF THE ROURAN CAMP - DAY

Rouran raiders carry sacks of Damascus swords away from Gaius, Lucius, Sahat and Karim who load sacks of gold onto their MULES.

KARIM

Look at this haul!

LUCIUS

(to Gaius)

So, we keep selling to both sides?

GAIUS

I'm on one side. My own. We're businessmen, Lucius. What care we for politics? Gold is good enough for us.

EXT. TRAINING GROUND - ARMY ENCAMPMENT - MORNING

The mist hangs heavy over the river.

SOLDIERS stand in neat rows on the training ground, shivering slightly in the chill morning air. Each man has a dog tag tied on his belt.

Mulan and Hop stand in the front row, waiting with the others. Honghui stands a few men down. He and Mulan eye each other, a hatred brewing there.

GENERAL LUO CHENG (50s) a real hardass, but a fantastic warrior, rides up on the horse, Black Wind.

Riding behind him on another Roman horse is the General's daughter, XIANNIANG (30s) a tough, warrior woman.

Xianniang is dressed in a unisex, functional robe. While she's not hiding the fact that she's a woman, she's not accentuating her femininity either.

A ripple of curiosity goes through the crowd at the sight of Xianniang -- a woman in this camp is unexpected.

Mulan averts her eyes, worried that another woman might see through her disguise.

General Luo pulls Black Wind up in front of the army. Bellows so his voice carries far across the assembled soldiers.

GENERAL LUO

New recruits! I am General Luo Cheng, commander of the army of Northern Wei. Yesterday you were farmers, craftsmen, merchants and scholars. But from this day forward, you are soldiers!

SOLDIERS

Yes, sir!

GENERAL LUO

You will eat as soldiers, sleep as soldiers and, most importantly, train as soldiers!

SOLDIERS

Yes, sir!

GENERAL LUO

Those of you who prove yourselves on the practice field will be promoted to unit commanders.

In the crowd, Honghui gets a covetous look -- he wants that promotion and he expects to get it.

GENERAL LUO (CONT'D)

I and my daughter Luo Xianniang will see to your training.

MURMURS of astonishment from the crowd. Mulan looks up sharply. How is it this woman can fight as herself?

General Luo silences the murmurs with his voice.

GENERAL LUO (CONT'D)

You will obey her as you would obey me.

SOLDIERS

Yes, sir!

General Luo nods to Xianniang. She urges her horse forward.

XIANNIANG

Soldiers! Thrust punch!

The entire army punches as one.

XIANNIANG (CONT'D)

Whip punch!

The army punches again.

Mulan relaxes into the basics of the kung fu. But Hop is unsure and fumbles the punches. Honghui punches confidently, keeping an eye on Mulan.

XIANNIANG (CONT'D)

Wave punch!

We pull back as the army practices their kung fu.

SERIES OF SHOTS -- Mulan, Hop, Honghui and the other soldiers train under the watchful eye of Xianniang.

--They run, kicking up dust clouds. Out of shape, Hop struggles to keep up, but Mulan pulls him along.

--The soldiers carry heavy water buckets slung on poles across their shoulders. They struggle up a steep hill. Of course, Mulan is great at this. Sweat pours down Hop's forehead.

--The soldiers stand on small pillars, working on their balance. Even Honghui struggles with this one, but Mulan balances easily. Hop tumbles off.

END SERIES OF SHOTS.

EXT. TENT - ARMY ENCAMPMENT - EVENING

Mulan, Hop, Honghui and their Bunkmates head back to the tent, exhausted from a day of training.

SOLDIER 1

These drills are so tedious. When
will we get to the real fighting?

HONGHUI

What do you expect from a woman?
What can she know of real battle?

Mulan opens her mouth to object, but Hop kicks her.

HOP

(playing along)
How does the General expect us to
follow the likes of her?

The Bunkmates head into the tent, but Mulan grabs Hop.

HOP (CONT'D)

Ow! That hurts! Everything hurts.

MULAN

You are lucky I'm not hurting you more. How could you say that?

HOP

I don't believe it. But it's dangerous to say otherwise.

It's hard for Mulan, but she knows he's right. She tugs on Hop's arm.

MULAN

This way.

HOP

That's not where my bed is.

MULAN

That's because you're not going to bed.

HOP

I'm not?

MULAN

You said you wanted to be good at kung fu. That means practice.

HOP

I already practiced. All day.

MULAN

Now you're going to practice more.

Hop sighs, but follows her.

EXT. CLEARING IN THE TREES - NIGHT

Bright moonlight illuminates the misty green glen.

Mulan walks Hop through the sequence of punches they did today. She gently corrects his form. Hop gains confidence.

Mulan and Hop spar -- he throws the punches and she blocks them in sequence. Hop does well -- he might become a fighter after all.

Mulan smiles and pats Hop on the back, proud.

HOP

Ow.

EXT. TRAINING GROUND - ARMY ENCAMPMENT - DAY

The hot noon sun beats down on the soldiers performing a series of staff strikes and blocks. Sweat glistens on their foreheads.

Hop grimaces as his sore muscles strain with the effort, but he's far less klutzy than he was.

Mulan and Honghui stand out as the two best fighters, easily moving through the exercises. Xianniang ponders them.

Mulan feels Xianniang's eyes on her. She turns her face away, fearful this woman will recognize a fellow female.

The soldiers reach the end of the sequence. Do a final thrust and stand at attention.

XIANNIANG

You.

She points at Mulan. Mulan shrinks back -- Oh, no!

XIANNIANG (CONT'D)

Step forward.

Mulan throws Hop a worried look. He has no help to offer her.

Mulan squares her shoulders and strides forward. She puts her fist to her palm and bows respectfully to Xianniang.

XIANNIANG (CONT'D)

You have excellent form.

MULAN

Thank you, Mistress Luo.

XIANNIANG

Let us see how you do against an opponent.

Xianniang points to Honghui.

XIANNIANG (CONT'D)

You.

Honghui grins. This is what he's been waiting for. He steps forward eagerly. Bows to Xianniang.

XIANNIANG (CONT'D)

Impress me with your skill.

Honghui and Mulan face off. Circle each other, assessing.

Honghui makes the first strike. Mulan easily blocks it. Whips around and swipes at Honghui's feet. He leaps over the staff.

SMACK! SMACK! Their staffs crash into each other. The opponents evenly matched.

Honghui gets frustrated. Attacks faster. Harder. But Mulan keeps up.

Xianniang smiles -- they are as good as she hoped.

The fight's exciting. The soldiers watching get riled up. Place bets on who's going to win. Start to holler support for Honghui and "Fan."

Fired up by the crowd, Honghui strikes harder -- really aiming to hurt Mulan.

Worried, Hop rushes to Xianniang. Bows, fist to palm.

HOP

Mistress Luo, please, you must stop this!

Xianniang keeps her eyes locked on the fighters. Mulan and Honghui get more passionate. More acrobatic. Almost flying at each other -- the very limits of human potential.

As Xianniang watches--

--the air around their strikes starts to ripple -- the molecules disturbed by the hits.

Dust clouds rise when their feet hit the ground. Xianniang smiles. These fighters have potential.

XIANNIANG

They need to work it out themselves.

Hop turns back to the fight, face tight with concern.

INT. GENERAL LUO'S TENT - ARMY ENCAMPMENT - SAME

General Luo sits across a table from Gaius -- a Damascus sword between them. An ARMY ACCOUNTANT with an abacus and money chest kneels behind the General.

Drifting in from OUTSIDE is the noise of the crowd, CHEERING ON the opponents.

GENERAL LUO

This is extortion.

GAIUS

This is business. I suffer when demand is low. I prosper when demand is high. And demand is very high right now.

A huge CRY from the crowd OUTSIDE. So loud the General can no longer ignore it. He leaps to his feet.

GENERAL LUO

Confound it! What is going on out there?

EXT. GENERAL LUO'S TENT - ARMY ENCAMPMENT - SAME

General Luo stalks toward the noise, Gaius following. Sahat, Lucius and Karim spot them and hustle to follow, curious.

EXT. TRAINING GROUND - ARMY ENCAMPMENT - SAME

Mulan and Honghui fight vigorously as the soldiers SHOUT their encouragement.

General Luo storms onto the field.

Mulan spots Gaius in the crowd. Startled, she lets her guard down. Honghui seizes the opening. Knocks her down.

Hop gasps in horror. Honghui grins with satisfaction.

On the ground, Mulan grits her teeth, furious with herself for being distracted.

Mulan leaps to her feet, ready to resume the fight when--

GENERAL LUO

Enough! This undisciplined disorder is unacceptable!

Everyone (including Xianniang) bows to the General.

Honghui and Mulan glance sideways at each other -- this may be over for now, but it's far from resolved.

INT. GENERAL LUO'S TENT - ARMY ENCAMPMENT - DAY

Mulan and Honghui stand, heads bowed, facing General Luo. Behind him, Xianniang watches.

GENERAL LUO

What is the punishment for inciting disorder in the ranks?

XIANNIANG
Fifty lashes, father.

Honghui and Mulan both gulp.

GENERAL LUO
I should see you both flogged.

He turns on Xianniang.

GENERAL LUO (CONT'D)
And you as well for failing to
curtail this disgraceful display.

Xianniang bites her tongue and lowers her head respectfully,
but resentment seethes beneath the surface.

General Luo turns his attention back to Honghui and Mulan.

GENERAL LUO (CONT'D)
My daughter informs me you are the
best fighters we have. And so,
against my better judgement, I am
promoting you.

Mulan and Honghui look up, shocked.

GENERAL LUO (CONT'D)
You will join an elite team of the
best fighters for some... special
training. However, if I see any
sign of trouble from either of you,
I will not be so lenient.

Honghui and Mulan bow, grateful. Head for the exit.

GENERAL LUO (CONT'D)
(to Xianniang)
Do not disappoint me again.

Mulan glances back over her shoulder at Xianniang. Xianniang
catches her eye. Mulan quickly looks away and hustles
outside.

EXT. GENERAL LUO'S TENT - ARMY ENCAMPMENT - DAY

Gaius, Lucius, Sahat and Karim wait for the General outside
the tent.

GAIUS
I've got him on the hook. The only
thing to be decided is the price.

LUCIUS
(to Karim and Sahat)
How fast do you think we can do
another run?

Sahat shrugs.

SAHAT
We can be quick. There's sure to be
another Roman trader along the Silk
Road soon.

Mulan and Honghui pass them as they walk away from the
General's tent.

Honghui sticks out a foot and trips Mulan. She goes flying.
Falls--

--straight into Gaius. Automatically, he reaches out and
catches the petite soldier. Their eyes lock. Recognition
flashes across Mulan's face. He sees it. She looks familiar
to him, too.

Mulan shoves him away. Hustles off. Gaius follows her.

GAIUS
I know you.

Mulan keeps her head averted. Makes her voice extra deep.

MULAN
I don't think so.

GAIUS
I'm great with faces. I'm sure I know
you. Maybe mahjong in Yunzhong?

MULAN
Never been there.

Lucius waves at Gaius.

LUCIUS
Gaius! Let's not keep the General
waiting!

Gaius looks over at him. Mulan takes the opportunity to slip
away. When he looks back, she's gone, vanished into the crowd
of soldiers. He shakes off his unsettled feeling and heads
back toward Lucius.

INT. TENT - ARMY ENCAMPMENT - DAY

Mulan and Hop's barracks tent. Simple sleeping mats. Storage for their weapons, shields and armor. Not much else.

Hop paces, worried. Finally, Mulan enters. Hop rushes to her.

HOP
You're back! What did they say?
What's your punishment?

MULAN
I'm being promoted.

HOP
What? Why?

MULAN
Come on.

She pulls Hop toward the exit.

HOP
Where are we going?

MULAN
To train. I'm not getting promoted
without you.

EXT. LAKESIDE TRAINING GROUND - DAY

A vast, tranquil LAKE stretches out behind the small group of soldiers arrayed on the banks. A thick stand of bamboo protects this beach from view.

Mulan, Honghui and Hop are all among this elite group, waiting, unsure of what the future holds.

Xianniang faces them.

XIANNIANG
The Rourans are fighting with more than
swords. Some of you may have heard the
rumors of a witch working with them. I
will tell you, it is true.

GASPS from the crowd.

XIANNIANG (CONT'D)
And so, we must train to fight her
and those she has taught. I will
teach you advanced wushu techniques.
You will learn to harness your chi.
(MORE)

XIANNIANG (CONT'D)

Tap into the energy of the earth. To
amplify your power.

Xianniang breathes deeply, centering herself. Takes a strong stance. She kicks toward the stand of bamboo.

Even though her foot doesn't make contact, the bamboo sails backwards as though flattened by a great force. The bamboo whips back up as the soldiers look on, impressed.

Honghui overcompensates. Mutters to his NEIGHBOR.

HONGHUI

My wushu master taught me that
years ago.

Though it seems she could not possibly have heard him, Xianniang turns her laser focus on Honghui.

XIANNIANG

Honghui. Show me these skills of yours.

Honghui bows respectfully. Steps forward. Prepares himself and--

--kicks toward the bamboo. The green stalks quiver, but do not bend.

XIANNIANG (CONT'D)

It seems we have much work to do.

Honghui reddens with embarrassment.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

--Xianniang leads the soldiers as they leap like monkeys from bamboo stalk to bamboo stalk. The vivid green bamboo sways under their weight. Mulan, the lightest and most agile of them, excels at this -- leaping the farthest. Hop is afraid, but with Mulan's encouragement, he finds his bravery.

--The soldiers are lined up, pissing into the bamboo forest. Mulan slips away by herself.

--Gaius, Lucius, Sahat and Karim haggle with a ROMAN TRADER on the SILK ROAD. They exchange some of the Rouran gold for more swords and horses.

--Mulan, Hop, Honghui and the other soldiers spar with their staffs while perching on thin poles. Again, Mulan's quickness and agility serves her well. She easily bests her opponent. Hop's skills are improving. He, too, wins his match.

--The Rouran army masses on the border. The Khan at its head. Damascus steel blades at their sides.

--Xianniang watches while the soldiers kick at the bamboo, trying to use their chi to sway the green stalks. Mulan and the other soldiers see incremental improvements. The bamboo starts to tremble under their kicks, but it's a long way from the dramatic sway that Xianniang managed to cause. Mulan's chi seems strongest -- bamboo around Mulan actually bends but she lacks focus.

END MONTAGE.

EXT. ROURAN ENCAMPMENT - NIGHT

The moon shines down on the tents, yurts and grazing horses. The encampment is larger than we've seen it before. More SOLDIERS sleeping beneath more TRIBAL BANNERS.

INT. WITCH'S TENT - ROURAN ENCAMPMENT - NIGHT

The Witch (with her painted face and metal claws) sits before a brazier which burns with a dark, smoky flame.

Organs from a small animal ooze blood on a small tray. The witch stabs a heart with her claw. Drops it into the brazier and carefully watches the smoke curl upward.

The Witch smiles and looks over to where the Khan waits, anxious for news.

WITCH
(voice like wind)
The time is nearly upon us.

The Khan smiles. The Witch crosses to him. Anoints his forehead with a streak of blood.

WITCH (CONT'D)
Your power grows like the mighty
stallion, my Khan. Only you could
unite the many tribes of the Rouran
people.

The Witch slides the Khan's heavy robe off his shoulders. It drops to the ground. She paints symbols in blood on his naked chest.

WITCH (CONT'D)
Soon, we will rule all of China.

The Khan kisses her fiercely. Scoops her up and carries her toward the fur-covered bed.

EXT. LOOKOUT POST - TREETOP - DAY

Mulan and a HUNGRY SOLDIER sit on a small platform perched high in a tree affording a good view of the surrounding area.

Mulan scans the plain while Hungry Soldier yammers on.

HUNGRY SOLDIER
Nothing but noodles, noodles,
noodles! And have you noticed? The
servings are getting smaller. And I
think I found a weevil in my bowl
yesterday. Do you think we're going
to get some new supplies? Because...

Mulan tunes him out. HORSES come into view. MEN riding the front ones. Hungry Soldier finally spots them.

HUNGRY SOLDIER (CONT'D)
Are those Rourans?

But Mulan has recognized the big, Roman horses and sees the sun glinting off two of the men's white faces. She knows it must be Gaius and his men.

MULAN
No. They're traders.

EXT. NEARBY PLAIN - SAME

Gaius, Lucius, Sahat and Karim ride at the head of the line of newly purchased Roman horses.

LUCIUS
We've been riding so long I can't
feel my arse anymore.

GAIUS
We'll finally get a break tonight.
Sell this load tomorrow.

A DEER sprints across the track and into the TREES.

SAHAT
Dinner!

Sahat, Karim and Lucius kick their horses into a gallop and chase after the animal.

GAIUS
(calling, sarcastic)
Oh, sure. I'll watch the horses.
Thanks for asking!

Gaius sighs, resigned.

But then his horse's ears twitch. The horse's head goes up and he SNORTS. Gaius stiffens. He trusts his horse.

Suddenly, Gaius sees A TIGER stalking them! His horse REARS with a WHINNY of fear! Shies sideways. Gaius is flung off as the horse BOLTS away. The rest of the horses follow -- STAMPEDING away from the tiger!

EXT. LOOKOUT POST - TREETOP - DAY

Mulan and Hungry Soldier stare down at the horses racing into the trees, followed by the tiger.

HUNGRY SOLDIER
T-t-t-tiger!

As they watch, the tiger gives up on the fast moving horses and circles around -- heading back toward Gaius!

Mulan doesn't hesitate for a second. She LEAPS out of the lookout post, jumping from tree to tree as she hustles toward the downed man.

EXT. ROCKY SLOPE - SAME

Gaius slides helplessly down a steep, shale covered bank. He loses his grip on his sword.

SLAM! He crashes into a line of rocks. His foot slides into a crevice. Gaius takes a breath.

A LOW GRUMBLE. Gaius looks around. The tiger is back. And it's interested in him. Oh, crap.

Gaius frantically searches for his sword. It's up the hill, out of reach. He lunges for it. But he's pulled up short--

--his foot is TRAPPED in the crevice. He yanks and heaves, trying to move the rocks holding him in, but to no avail.

The tiger creeps closer. Crouches, ready to spring.

Gaius grabs the biggest rock he can find. Hurls it. Hits the big cat on the nose. The tiger HISSES and shows its fangs.

Gaius keeps hurling whatever rocks he can find at the beast, but the tiger is undeterred.

The tiger crouches, ready to spring.

Suddenly, Mulan drops out of a tree. Sword raised defensively, she puts herself between the big cat and Gaius.

MULAN

Go now, brother tiger. This man is not for you.

The tiger ROARS at her.

GAIUS

Call me cynical, but I don't think reasoning with the tiger is going to work out. For either of us.

MULAN

Go!

Mulan pulls her arm back as if to strike with her sword, but--

--instead, she thrusts her chi energy at the tiger. A puff of wind ripples through the air. The leaves on the trees tremble. It's not that hard a strike, but it's just enough to disturb the tiger. The cat shakes its head. It's never felt anything so odd. Unsettled, the tiger turns tail and runs.

Mulan sheathes her sword and turns to Gaius.

GAIUS

I'll be damned. How did you do that?

MULAN

You wouldn't understand.

Mulan grabs a branch. Uses it as a lever to move the rock pinning Gaius' foot. He pulls his leg free. Rubs it gratefully. He gets a good look at her. That same soldier...

GAIUS

You're sure you've never been to Yunzhong?

MULAN

I do not know you. You do not know me.

Mulan starts to head back into the trees.

GAIUS

Wait! Where are you going?

MULAN
Back to my post.

Gaius hustles after her.

GAIUS
But I owe you a reward.

Gaius pulls his purse off his belt.

MULAN
It's really not necessary.

He shakes some coins into his hand.

GAIUS
I have money.

Mulan watches him as he carefully counts out the coins.

MULAN
And you're trying to decide how
much of it your own life is worth?

GAIUS
You're right. Take all of it.

Gaius catches her arm. Spins her to look at him. He grabs her hand. Sets the purse in her open palm.

They're both caught off guard by the sparks the touch sets off. Gaius notices her fine features. Her dainty hands. Is he attracted to a guy?

Mulan pulls away, afraid her caught breath and blush will give her away.

MULAN
(extra deep)
I don't want it.

GAIUS
If you weren't after a reward, why
risk your life?

MULAN
Because it was the right thing to do.

Gaius isn't sure what to say to that. But before he can decide, Lucius, Karim and Sahat ride up, towing some of the lost horses.

LUCIUS
(calling to Gaius)
You had one job!

GAIUS
It's not my fault. There was a
tiger. Tell him--

He looks around for Mulan. But, she's gone.

EXT. TREETOP - DAY

As the sun lowers toward the horizon, Mulan looks down on Gaius from her perch high in a tree. She traces the spot on her hand that Gaius touched with her fingertips. Then clenches her fist, closing off her feelings.

EXT. ARMY ENCAMPMENT - NIGHT

The soldiers sit around their fires, slurping their noodles.

Mulan glances around furtively -- no one is watching. She ducks out of camp.

EXT. HOT SPRING - NIGHT

Steam wafts off the hot pool. The bright moon glints on Mulan's studded armor as she lifts off the heavy leather.

Mulan peels off her shirt revealing dirt and bruises on her arms and back. She unwraps the binding on her breasts. Reveals angry red skin on her sides.

Mulan removes the leather thong holding up her top knot. Her long hair falls free.

Her naked back to us, Mulan slides gratefully into the hot water. She sighs with pleasure. Ducks under the water, washing the grime off her face and out of her hair.

Mulan floats out into the middle of the pool, arms spread wide, looking up at the bright stars. Finally, for just a moment, she can truly be herself again.

GAIUS (O.S.)
It's over here!

Mulan snaps upright. It's Gaius, waving Lucius over from the woods!

Panicked, Mulan slips into the shadow cast by a rocky outcropping.

Gaius and Lucius strip off their clothes by the edge of the hot spring.

LUCIUS

Not a true Roman bath, but it'll do.

GAIUS

Muscles could use a good soak.

Mulan can't help herself. She stares at Gaius' rippling muscles, entranced.

But as he removes his breeches, she snaps herself out of it. Blushes and looks away. Mulan realizes how trapped she is.

Gaius and Lucius gratefully lower themselves into the water.

LUCIUS

This is more like it.

Gaius and Lucius duck under the water. Mulan seizes the opportunity. Slithers out of the water. Crouches, wet and shivering behind a rock.

But her clothes! Her armor! They're so close to the pool. How can she get them without Gaius and Lucius seeing her?

Movement on the far side of the bank. It's Karim and Sahat, disrobing to join Gaius and Lucius.

KARIM

Thanks for waiting for us, brothers.

SAHAT

Is your aim to keep the spring all to yourselves?

KARIM

I, for one, need a bath.

SAHAT

Indeed. You stink of horse.

KARIM

We all stink of horse. Except for Gaius. Who stinks of tiger. And fear.

Gaius yanks Karim into the pool. Dunks him. Karim comes up LAUGHING and Sahat slides into the water.

Mulan takes advantage of their distraction. Keeping low, she makes a break for her clothes. She scoops them up and darts behind the nearest tree, frantically pulling on her shirt.

IN THE POOL--

--Gaius sees Mulan's shadow flit past. He frowns.

GAIUS
Who's there?

The guys tense. Peer into the dark woods.

BEHIND THE TREE--

--Mulan stiffens. She takes off, running like a deer through the trees.

IN THE POOL--

--Gaius sees a shape running. He leaps out of the pool. Grabs his sword and races, naked, after the fleeing Mulan.

EXT. THE WOODS - NIGHT

Bright moonlight filters through the trees. Mulan runs for her life through the woods. But she's hampered by carrying her armor and boots. Gaius quickly catches up to her.

Gaius tackles her, throwing her to the ground.

GAIUS
Who are you? Spy or assassin?

Mulan looks up at him and Gaius rears back, shocked to see a woman. A woman he recognizes.

GAIUS (CONT'D)
You! You're a... woman!

Mulan PUNCHES Gaius in the face as hard as she can. He clutches his jaw.

She scrambles up. Grabs her clothes and SPRINTS away into the darkness. Gaius watches her go thoughtfully.

He spots something on the ground. Picks it up -- Hua Fan's dog tag.

EXT. HOT SPRING - NIGHT

Gaius returns to the springs where Sahat, Karim and Lucius wait, intrigued.

LUCIUS
What was that about?

GAIUS
A woman. There's a woman in the
imperial army.

Gaius holds up the dog tag. Lucius, Sahat and Karim look genuinely surprised.

EXT. TENT - ARMY ENCAMPMENT - NIGHT

Mulan, damp and disheveled but dressed in her armor once more, approaches her tent. She smooths her clothes. Realizes--

--her dog tag isn't at her belt. She searches her clothes. It's gone. She looks back toward the woods. Uh-oh.

Hop spots her and rushes over.

HOP
Mistress Luo is looking for you!

Mulan pales. This can't be good.

MULAN
What do you think she wants?

HOP
Asking a soldier to her tent.
Alone. At night?

Hop waggles his eyebrows suggestively and makes a vulgar hand gesture implying sex.

MULAN
Surely not.

HOP
What else can it be?

Mulan swallows hard.

EXT. XIANNIANG'S TENT - NIGHT

Mulan waits outside the luxurious private tent. A SENTRY comes out.

SENTRY
Mistress Luo will see you now.

Mulan nods her thanks and heads--

INT. XIANNIANG'S TENT - NIGHT

Warm lamplight illuminates the comfortable space. It's so unlike Mulan's own tent -- soft cushions and furs, brightly colored fabric and rugs decorating the tent.

Dressed in flowing feminine robes, very different from her training outfit, Xianniang makes tea.

Mulan bows, fist to palm. Her eyes wander toward the sleeping mat in the corner.

MULAN
What do you ask of your soldier Hua Fan?

XIANNIANG
Come, drink tea with me.

Xianniang waves Mulan over to a small table. Mulan kneels, but keeps her face down.

XIANNIANG (CONT'D)
(sensual)
There's no need to avert your eyes.

Mulan presses her lips together. This will not end well.

XIANNIANG (CONT'D)
I know you're a woman.

Mulan looks up, astonished.

MULAN
How... How long have you known?

XIANNIANG
Since the moment I saw you. Men are fools. They see only what they expect. But, you and I, we see more.

MULAN
Will you tell your honored father, the General?

XIANNIANG
Why would I? Then you would be killed and I would lose my star pupil. And I have big plans for you.

Mulan takes a relieved breath.

MULAN

Thank you, Mistress Luo.

XIANNIANG

Xianniang.

MULAN

Mulan.

XIANNIANG

Hmm. Fan suits you. You are no soft flower, easily crushed.

MULAN

I hope so.

Xianniang pours Mulan a cup of the hot tea. Sets it in front of her.

XIANNIANG

I envy you.

Mulan is startled again.

MULAN

What is there to envy?

XIANNIANG

I am trained as a warrior, but my father will never let me fight. Instead, I am confined to training and strategy only. I will never be a soldier as you are.

MULAN

I fight because I have to, not because I want to. I would love to be home in my peaceful village. But I am a soldier because my father had no sons. He was too ill to come himself. So, now I must live a lie.

Xianniang sits across from Mulan with her own tea.

XIANNIANG

Your filial piety is commendable. But I did not bring you here just to let you know you have an ally.

Mulan looks curious.

XIANNIANG (CONT'D)

What do you know of elemental magic?

MULAN

Not much. I saw the Rourans' witch.
When they burned my village. She
had... such power.

Xianniang gives Mulan a long look.

XIANNIANG

You have potential for that same
power, Mulan.

Mulan's eyes go wide with shock.

XIANNIANG (CONT'D)

You'll need some additional training,
of course, but soon, you, too, will be
able to command the elements.

Xianniang flicks her hand and a wind gusts through the tent,
shaking the lanterns and ruffling the canvas.

XIANNIANG (CONT'D)

It seems like witchcraft, but
really, it is connecting your chi
to that of the earth and sky and
focusing it on your target.

Xianniang nods to Mulan.

XIANNIANG (CONT'D)

Just as your chi travels through
your sword or through your foot
when you attack, now use your chi
to travel through the air. Make it
strike for you. But remember to
aim. Like a strike from your sword,
your chi is only effective if it
hits its mark.

Xianniang nods at her shield, hanging on a weapon rack.

XIANNIANG (CONT'D)

Hit only the shield. Focus.

Mulan focuses on her breathing. On the chi flowing through
her. She flicks her hand like Xianniang did and--

--sends a ripple of chi toward the shield. But, her focus
still needs work and she KNOCKS OVER the entire rack.

XIANNIANG (CONT'D)
Well, that's a start.

EXT. LAKESIDE TRAINING GROUND - DAY

Xianniang faces the soldiers.

 XIANNIANG
You've done well. But now it's time to
see just how much you have learned.

She whirls around and--

--races across the lake! Her feet skim over the grey water.

 HOP
Impossible!

 MULAN
Clearly it's not.

From the far bank, Xianniang calls back to them.

 XIANNIANG
What are you waiting for?

Mulan takes a deep breath, preparing herself. She and the
other soldiers CHARGE--

--right into the water. Every one of them failed.

They slosh back to shore. Some of the men pull off their
armor. A few even pull off their wet shirts.

Mulan averts her eyes and focuses on her task, fearing that
some might notice her blush.

 XIANNIANG (CONT'D)
Again!

Mulan focuses on her breathing. She sprints toward the lake.
Again she splashes in.

But Honghui does it! He runs across the water! Mulan watches
him go, frustrated.

But a few yards from shore, Honghui makes the mistake of
looking down and--

--tumbles into the lake. He comes up spouting water. Some of
the soldiers LAUGH, which just infuriates Honghui.

LATER

Standing on the shore, Mulan looks over at Honghui, determined he won't beat her again. She breathes. Focuses on her chi flowing through her and she--

--CHARGES onto the lake. It's working! Her feet fly across the water!

But Honghui's doing it, too. They race out over the lake, running like the wind, pushing each other, each determined to run farther and faster than the other.

The other soldiers fall behind -- one after another they drop into the lake. But Mulan and Honghui keep going!

Honghui pulls ahead! He throws a gloating look over his shoulder at Mulan and--

--SPLASH! He drops down into the chilly lake.

Mulan leaps over Honghui's head and skims across the water to the far shore.

The soldiers CHEER her victory. Xianniang smiles at her.

XIANNIANG

Well done, commander.

Honghui hauls himself out of the lake and glares at Mulan.

EXT. COMMANDER'S TENT - NIGHT

A small, personal tent.

INT. COMMANDER'S TENT - NIGHT

Mulan and Hop look around the Spartan tent happily.

MULAN

Smells a lot better in here than the barracks.

HOP

Come on, you'll miss us.

MULAN

I'll miss you.

Hop blushes a little, then deflects.

HOP
Still plenty of time in the day for
you to boss me around. It's just
official now.

They grin at each other.

HOP (CONT'D)
Your father would be proud.

MULAN
Thank you, Hop. I wouldn't have
survived without you.

Embarrassed, Hop retreats.

HOP
Well, enjoy your privacy...
(whispers)
Mulan.

Mulan scowls at him as he slips out of the tent.

EXT. ARMY ENCAMPMENT - NIGHT

Gaius holds Mulan's dog tag. He stops a SOLDIER.

GAIUS
Where can I find Hua Fan?

The soldier shakes his head. Gaius moves on.

INT. COMMANDER'S TENT - NIGHT

Mulan unbuckles her sword. Takes off her armor. Hangs them on
the stand provided. She sighs, glad to be alone. To be a
woman again.

HONGHUI (O.S.)
So, this is the commander's tent.

Mulan whirls around to see Honghui and three GOONS.

HONGHUI (CONT'D)
It should be mine.

MULAN
Too bad you didn't earn it, then.

HONGHUI
This is war. I can take it.

Honghui attacks with his three goons.

Quick as a flash, Mulan pulls her sword and the fight is on. Mulan is fast and strong, but it's four against one.

EXT. CHOW LINE - ARMY ENCAMPMENT - NIGHT

Hop stands in line with other soldiers, waiting for his bowl of rice.

GAIUS (O.S.)

Excuse me. I'm looking for Hua Fan?

Hop whirls around. Spots Gaius. He hustles to the Roman.

HOP

What do you want with the commander?

GAIUS

I have something that belongs to... him.

HOP

You can give it to me.

Gaius ignores his outstretched hand, wary of this eager soldier.

GAIUS

I think I need to deliver it personally.

HOP

Then I will escort you.

GAIUS

Fine.

Hop turns on his heel and marches toward the tents. Gaius follows. Hop glances over his shoulder at Gaius, deeply suspicious of the foreigner.

INT. COMMANDER'S TENT - NIGHT

Mulan moves like lightning as she fights Honghui and his three goons. But Honghui's satisfied smile fades as he realizes his soldiers are no real match for her.

Mulan ducks--

--two of the goons take each other out. She defends on her right while--

CLANG! She attacks on her left.

It seems like her sword is everywhere at once.

But Honghui is also a hell of a fighter and he advances, pushing Mulan toward the wall of the tent.

SLASH!

Honghui strikes at Mulan's chest. She jumps back, but can't clear the blade. It SLICES--

--through Mulan's shirt and the bindings over her breasts, cutting a shallow furrow in her chest.

Mulan clutches her wound, but it's too late. Honghui and the goons have seen -- she's a woman.

The goons who were down get to their feet.

MULAN
(breathing hard)
I suppose you're going to run off
and tell the general.

HONGHUI
Oh, no. I'm going to kill you. Save
the executioner some trouble.

Four swords point directly at Mulan. She raises her own blade, prepared to go down swinging when--

GAIUS (O.S.)
This doesn't seem like a fair fight.

Gaius and Hop stand in the doorway of the tent.

HONGHUI
Get out of here, white ghost. This
is none of your business.

HOP
You get out of here! You're
assaulting a commander of the
Northern Wei army!

HONGHUI
This is a woman. We're meeting out
her just punishment -- death.

GAIUS

I have a problem with men who
mistreat women.

Gaius draws his sword and rushes at Honghui, but two goons step in, leaving Honghui free to focus on Mulan. Hop jumps into the fray, taking on his own goon.

Gaius is more brute strength, but he knows how to wield a sword. He takes on the two goons with no trouble.

Mulan focuses on Honghui. Feels her chi flowing through her. She gives a roundhouse kick to Honghui's chest sending him--

--FLYING through the air!

The kick sends a SHOCK WAVE through the tent, shoving everyone back. Rippling the canvas walls.

Everyone freezes. What just happened? Even Mulan looks shaken by her own power.

But before the fight can resume, from OUTSIDE come the CRIES of soldiers.

SOLDIERS

Attack! Rourans! Attack! To arms!

EXT. ARMY ENCAMPMENT - NIGHT

THUNDERING HOOVES as the Rourans GALLOP into camp, swinging their deadly Damascus swords at the unprepared Wei soldiers.

Leading the strike are the Khan's elite men, their skull-covered helmets extra terrifying in the moonlight.

The camp is filled with the SCREAMS of wounded men and the CLASH of steel.

The Skull and Bones leap off their horses, harnessing their chi to make extraordinary strikes, flying from opponent to opponent, cutting a swath of death through the camp.

Mulan, Gaius, Hop, Honghui and the goons rush out of the commander's tent into the chaos of battle.

Mulan dives straight into the fray--

--hacking Rouran after Rouran. Blood spatters her face.

Hop has come a long way from the klutzy boy he was -- now he's a warrior, confidently fighting the Rouran raiders.

Hop uses his chi to make an amazing leap and dispatches the Rouran he's fighting. Spots another soldier fighting three Rourans. Hop rushes to the soldier's aid. Together, they make quick work of the raiders.

HOP

Nice work.

SOLDIER

Tha--

The soldier turns -- it's Honghui! The two men glare at each other. But there's no time for grudges. Another wave of Rourans comes at them and they're fighting for their lives again.

BY THE COMMANDER'S TENT--

--a Rouran swings his sword at Gaius' head. Gaius matches him swing for swing.

Suddenly, a sword sails through the air. Stabs the Rouran right through the chest.

Gaius turns to see the thrower--

--Sahat on horseback. Karim and Lucius on their own horses.

GAIUS

What are you doing here?

LUCIUS

Looking for you.

KARIM

Wherever there's trouble...

SAHAT

What do you want to do? Do we stay and fight?

Gaius pulls Sahat's bloody sword out of the fallen raider.

GAIUS

This isn't our war.

Lucius offers Gaius a hand. Pulls the big man up on the back of his horse.

They ride away from the fighting.

MULAN--

--spots the General atop Black Wind, rallying the disorganized troops.

GENERAL LUO

To me! To me!

From out between a pair of burning tents strides--

--THE WITCH.

The firelight plays across her crimson robe as if it, too, were aflame.

General Luo spots the Witch. With a CRY, he kicks Black Wind into a gallop.

The Witch shoves the air with both clawed hands. Black Wind slams to a halt like he's run into an invisible brick wall.

General Luo is catapulted forward, toward the Witch. Black Wind crumples, stunned.

Black Wind struggles to his feet, his reins tangled in a demolished tent. He WHINNIES in distress.

At the sound of the horse, Gaius looks back -- sees Black Wind trapped in the fighting. Gaius LEAPS off Lucius' horse.

The Witch looks down at the dazed General.

Mulan runs at the Witch. The Witch sees her coming. With an almost bored flick of her hand--

--she sends Mulan flying. Mulan CRASHES into wooden supply crates. They splinter under her.

On the ground, the General locks eyes with the Witch and--

--she raises an ornate dagger high in the air.

MULAN

No!

Gaius looks up from untangling Black Wind's reins. Sees--

--Mulan fling her arms out, sending a ripple of energy at the Witch. But she's so upset, she can't focus and her chi is weak. The Witch's robe billows around her, but Mulan's chi doesn't do any damage.

The Witch looks over at Mulan, lying on the ground. A tiny smile quirks the edge of her mouth. And--

--the Witch PLUNGES the dagger through the General's heart.

The Witch smiles as the life drains from the General's eyes. Tears of fury and frustration run down Mulan's cheeks.

A Rouran rider gallops up behind her and--

--WHAM! Hits Mulan in the head.

BLACKOUT.

INT. CAVE - DAY

Head bandaged, Mulan wakes in a dim cave. INDISTINCT MALE VOICES drift to her.

She risks a glance around -- the men are sitting by a fire. Far enough away that they haven't noticed that she's awake.

Mulan looks around for a weapon. Near her is a bowl of water. She waits until the men LAUGH. Uses their laughter to cover the sound of her breaking the bowl under her blanket.

Mulan clutches a sharp shard of the bowl. Creeps around the edge of the cave, staying in the shadows

She LUNGES toward the smaller of the two men. Holds her shard of pottery to his throat--

--Karim puts his hands up in surrender. Sahat's hand goes to his sword, but he doesn't draw.

MULAN

Who are you? Why are you holding me?

KARIM

(calls)

Uh, Gaius? Your lady friend is awake.

(to Mulan)

I'm going to let him explain.

Gaius and Lucius come into the cave. Mulan pulls her shard of pottery tighter against Karim's throat.

KARIM (CONT'D)

Easy there!

Gaius spots Mulan threatening Karim.

GAIUS

Killing my friend would be pretty poor repayment for saving your life.

Gaius recognizes her from the Imperial Palace.

GAIUS (CONT'D)

Now I remember who you are! The girl who scared my horse. You are never grateful.

MULAN

I am never in need of saving.

GAIUS

That's a matter of opinion.

KARIM

Perhaps you could continue this conversation while you're not holding jagged pottery to my throat?

MULAN

I demand you release me.

GAIUS

No one is keeping you here.

Mulan drops her hand from Karim's neck.

MULAN

Very well. I'm leaving... Where am I?

SAHAT

Three leagues west from your encampment.

LUCIUS

But I'm not sure you want to go back there. There's not much left.

Mulan grabs her sword off a rock.

MULAN

That's exactly why I have to go. My men need me.

She starts for the door. But the world starts to swim and Mulan stumbles. Gaius catches her.

GAIUS

Or you need to rest.

Mulan shrugs off his supportive arm.

MULAN

I am honor-bound to my men. You should not have taken me away from them.

GAIUS

If we had left you there, you would be dead.

MULAN

I don't expect a self-absorbed, money-driven, foreign devil like you to understand what it means to be honor-bound.

Something snaps in Gaius. His face suffused with fury, he shoves Mulan back against the wall of the cave.

GAIUS

I know where honor gets you. I have been honor's fool. Did my duty to defend my city. Left my wife and child with no one to protect them. They died because of honor.

Mulan is horrified by her sudden urge to kiss him. She shoves him away.

MULAN

And what of your pathological need to save the damsel in distress? You have needlessly saved me three times! And I'm sure I'm not the only one.

KARIM

She has a point.

LUCIUS

There were those prostitutes...

SAHAT

Those girls in Constantinople...

KARIM

That milkmaid in Delhi...

GAIUS

Thank you, I don't need your help!

MULAN

Your friends know you better than you know yourself. You have honor. You fight for causes outside of yourself. You just won't see it.

Gaius turns on his heel and stalks out of the cave.

EXT. ROCKY AREA - LATE AFTERNOON

The sun casts a reddish glow over Gaius as he stands looking out at the horizon. Lucius joins him.

LUCIUS
I like her.

GAIUS
You would.

LUCIUS
You like her, too.

GAIUS
Shut up.

INT. CAVE - LATE AFTERNOON

Mulan straps on her sword.

SAHAT
I would feel better if we
accompanied you back to your camp.

MULAN
I am no delicate flower. I can take
care of myself.

KARIM
I am certain that is so. However,
the Rouran camp is not far and--

MULAN
You know where the Rouran camp is?

KARIM
...Yes.

MULAN
Show me.

Sahat and Karim share a look.

EXT. RIDGE OVERLOOKING THE ROURAN ENCAMPMENT - DUSK

Mulan, Gaius, Lucius, Sahat and Karim look down on the Rouran camp. It's grown even larger -- more tribes, more banners, more Rouran raiders.

MULAN

I suppose your meddling didn't ruin everything. Now I have the chance to kill the Khan and end this war, once and for all.

Mulan gets to her feet, staying crouched, preparing to make a break for it.

KARIM

Where are you going?

SAHAT

They are certain to spot you.

GAIUS

They're right. You'll get yourself killed trying to get in there alone.

KARIM

We could get her in.

GAIUS

Absolutely not.

MULAN

You could? How?

LUCIUS

We've had... dealings with the Rourans.

Understanding dawns for Mulan.

MULAN

You've been selling to both sides.

GAIUS

We're businessmen. We don't take sides.

MULAN

Since I know you won't help me on principle, let's make a business arrangement. I'll pay you. To get me in and out.

GAIUS

Pay us with what?

MULAN

I'm an officer of the Northern Wei army.

(MORE)

MULAN (CONT'D)
I have access to funds for supplies. I
will give it all to you if you help me.

GAIUS
You'll listen to us? Do it our way?

MULAN
(hard for her)
Agreed.

GAIUS
Then we have a deal.

Gaius and Mulan shake on it.

MULAN
What's the plan?

Gaius smiles.

INT. CAVE - NIGHT

Mulan watches while Sahat and Karim pull silks and dresses
out of a sack. Sahat holds a blue dress out to her.

SAHAT
Put this on.

But before Mulan can grab it, Karim yanks the dress away.

KARIM
It was greener. Like this.

He holds a green dress out to Mulan. Again, she reaches for
it. This time, Sahat yanks it back.

SAHAT
I'm telling you, she was wearing blue.

Lucius looks up from the sword he's sharpening.

LUCIUS
Green.

Karim gives Sahat an "I told you so" look.

GAIUS
It doesn't matter! Just pick one.

Mulan snatches the green dress out of Karim's hands. Gaius
glances over at it in her hands.

GAIUS (CONT'D)
The other one's better.

Mulan hurls down the dress in exasperation. Gaius smirks. She's cute when she's pissed off. Lucius notices -- his friend may finally be warming to their guest.

EXT. ROURAN ENCAMPMENT - NIGHT

Gaius, Sahat, Lucius and Karim ride up to the sentries. Their horses are loaded down with LARGE SACKS OF GOODS.

Gaius calls to the SENTRY.

GAIUS
More swords for your Khan!

The Sentry waves them in.

EXT. KHAN'S YURT - NIGHT

A BODYGUARD escorts Gaius, Sahat, Lucius and Karim (carrying large bundles) into the yurt.

Gaius glances back over his shoulder to the--

HORSES

--tied up in a shadowy corner of the encampment.

A blade sticks through the bottom of a bag still slung over the back of a horse. RIP. A slit and--

--Mulan slithers out onto the ground. She's dressed as a Rouran VEILED SLAVE GIRL.

Sticking to the shadows, Mulan makes her way through the encampment.

A few ROURAN RAIDERS march her way. She ducks down an even darker--

ALLEY BETWEEN TENTS

One of the tent flaps is slightly ajar. Inside, Mulan SPOTS--

--Xianniang!

Quickly, Mulan slips inside.

INT. TENT - ROURAN ENCAMPMENT - CONTINUOUS

Mulan bows before Xianniang.

MULAN

Mistress Luo, never fear, your loyal soldier is here to rescue you.

Mulan peels back her veil, revealing her face.

XIANNIANG

Mulan! I'm so glad to see you alive.
But... I have no need of rescue.

One by one, Xianniang slides the witch's claws onto her fingers. Mulan gasps.

MULAN

You? You're the witch?

Xianniang pulls her crimson robe from behind a screen and puts it on.

XIANNIANG

I am a wu-shu master. I am the Empress of the Rourans. And, once we destroy the false emperor Mingyuan, I will be the Empress of all of China... And you could be by my side.

MULAN

What?

XIANNIANG

I have known you were special from the moment I saw you back in your village. And then, when you joined the army...! How could it not be fate? I have been searching for someone worthy of passing on my knowledge to for a long time. You and I are the same.

MULAN

I'm nothing like you. I am here to save my father's life. I watched you murder your father for your own gain.

XIANNIANG

There are sacrifices in every revolution. Besides, my father never respected me. Not the way the Khan does.

MULAN

You think the Khan respects you?
He's using you.

XIANNIANG

That's not true!

Xianniang flicks her crimson sleeve at Mulan. A SHOCKWAVE reverberates outward.

But Mulan isn't there! She uses her own chi energy and acrobatic skills to flip out of the way.

MULAN

You and the Khan must be stopped.

Mulan attacks, using her chi energy. Xianniang fights back. The two women go at each other using wu-shu moves and elemental magic. It's one hell of a fight.

INT. KHAN'S YURT - ROURAN ENCAMPMENT - SAME

The swords are displayed on the floor as the Khan examines the workmanship.

KHAN

Where are the tens of thousands I
was promised?

KABOOM! An explosion of elemental magic reverberates across the camp. The veiled slave girl with the distinctive birthmark cranes her neck to look.

The Khan roughly shoves the slave girl out of his way as he stalks for the door. She falls.

KHAN (CONT'D)

(to bodyguards)
Keep them here.

And the Khan charges out.

On the floor of the yurt, the slave girl eyes the swords.

Gaius, Lucius, Sahat and Karim look at each other.

LUCIUS

So much for the plan.

As one, they draw their swords. Take down the bodyguards in seconds flat.

Gaius reaches a hand down for the slave girl. Helps her to her feet. He smiles at her. She averts her eyes.

EXT. ROURAN ENCAMPMENT - NIGHT

LIGHTING flashes across the sky. Gale force WINDS whip in every direction. The witch's tent is in pieces and--

--Rouran tribesmen watch in astonishment as Mulan and Xianniang fight.

The Skull and Bones unit rushes toward the fighting women. Xianniang calls out to them.

 XIANNIANG

 Stay back!

The Skull and Bones obey, falling back. But they form a tight circle around Xianniang and Mulan, watching the battle eagerly.

Fueled by rage, Mulan strikes at the witch, but Xianniang keeps knocking her down. However, nothing keeps Mulan down for long. But, while she can defend herself, she can't seem to get a good strike in.

THE KHAN--

--lacks the witch's patience. He raises his sword to hurl it at Mulan.

SMACK!

A bolt from a crossbow buries itself in the Khan's arm. He whirls to see--

--Karim on horseback, a crossbow in his hands. Behind him are Gaius, Lucius and Sahat.

The Khan whips his sword at Karim. It flies in an astonishing arc, and--

--BURIES itself in Karim's forehead. He drops, lifeless eyes staring out at nothing.

Furious, Gaius hacks his way toward Khan -- a sword in each hand -- a death machine. The desire for revenge is written all over his face.

 LUCIUS

 Gaius, no!

Gaius looks over at him.

LUCIUS (CONT'D)
Get the girl or Karim died for
nothing.

Gaius looks from the Khan (who yanks the bolt out of his arm and grabs a sword from one of his men) to Mulan. Damn it. He goes for the girl.

SAHAT--

--hurls a flaming brand onto the tent next to the Khan. The canvas bursts into flame, distracting the Khan.

From out of the smoke leaps--

--the slave girl, waving a sword. With a SCREAM, she attacks the Khan. She's clumsy, but catches the Khan off guard. All her fury at her mistreatment focused on her tormenter. She manages to prick his cheek -- a drop of blood wells up in the scratch.

LUCIUS--

--focuses his crossbow fire at the witch, forcing her to use her chi energy to flick them away.

GAIUS--

--reigns Black Wind up by Mulan.

GAIUS
Live to fight another day!

Mulan looks from the witch to Gaius on the horse. Makes her choice and leaps onto Black Wind in front of Gaius.

They thunder away.

Lucius and Sahat whirl their horses and gallop after Gaius.

THE KHAN--

--jabs his sword straight through the stomach of the poor slave girl. She drops, dead. He kicks her body.

He calls to his men.

KHAN
After them!

The Khan leaps on his horse. Spurs it after the retreating fighters.

All over camp, Rourans leap on their horses and kick them into the chase.

EXT. THE PLAINS - NIGHT

The huge Roman horses gallop full tilt across the arid planes. The Khan and Rouran riders behind them.

Coming up fast are the Skull and Bones. They're not on horseback, but instead are leaping across the landscape, moving faster than any horse.

Gaius, Lucius, Sahat and Mulan stay low over their horses as Rouran arrows fly around them.

They ride into a--

EXT. NARROW RAVINE - NIGHT

The Rouran riders are forced to ride close together, limiting the damage their arrows can do.

The Khan leaps off the back of his horse, bouncing from rock to rock, flying back and forth across the ravine.

His Skull and Bones fighters are right behind him, quickly catching up to Mulan, Gaius, Lucius and Sahat.

Sahat and Lucius manage to pick a few of the fighters off with their crossbows.

SAHAT

There's too many of them!

The Khan and the Skull and Bones who escape the arrows LEAP at the riders, slashing with their swords as they crisscross the ravine. Mulan, Gaius, Lucius and Sahat dodge and fight back, steel clashing with steel.

Riding together on Black Wind, Mulan and Gaius quickly become a seamless fighting team.

--Gaius pushes her clear of his sword and takes out the Skull and Bones coming at them.

--Mulan shoves Gaius aside and takes out the fighter coming at their back.

--Mulan works the left side of Black Wind while Gaius covers the right.

--It's a dance of motion and steel as Gaius and Mulan fight the Skull and Bones.

The Khan pulls out a pack of throwing knives. Using his chi, he whips them at the riders. The blades fly farther and faster and more accurately than any ordinary soldier could throw them.

SAHAT (CONT'D)

Look out!

They manage to dodge most of the deadly missiles, but one SLICES Lucius' arm.

Lucius drops his crossbow. Undaunted, he pulls out his sword and keeps fighting.

Mulan hands her sword to Gaius.

MULAN

Take this.

Gaius fights with two blades while Mulan--

--channels her chi. Uses it to hurl rocks at the Khan and his men.

She manages to knock some of the fighters down, but the Khan and others manage to dodge the flying stones.

A Skull and Bones leaps toward Gaius' back. Gaius whirls around. Rides Black Wind backwards so he can battle the oncoming Skull and Bones while Mulan guides Black Wind.

Mulan looks around desperately for something to turn the tide.

Ahead, she spots a huge boulder perched precariously high on the ravine wall.

She takes a deep breath. Musters her chi and sends a SHOCKWAVE straight at the boulder.

The whole ravine RUMBLES.

The huge boulder trembles. Wavers.

MULAN (CONT'D)

(mutters)

Please.

It tumbles free!

Mulan calls to her cohorts.

MULAN (CONT'D)

Faster!

LUCIUS

We're going as fast as we--

He sees the boulder, tumbling down the ravine, knocking more and more rocks loose as it goes. Oh, crap.

LUCIUS (CONT'D)

(to his horse)

Come on! Come on!

Somehow, they manage to get even more speed from their horses. Race past the boulder milliseconds before it--

--SMASHES into the ravine floor, crushing a Skull and Bones beneath its huge bulk.

Other rocks cascade down, taking out more Skull and Bones as they fall. The Khan skids to a stop just in time, barely avoiding being crushed.

The rockfall fills the ravine. The Rouran riders pull up their horses, unable to get through.

THE KHAN--

--leaps to the top of the rock pile. SNARLS as he watches Mulan, Gaius, Lucius and Sahat escape into the night.

EXT. RIVERBANK - DAWN

Gaius, Mulan, Lucius and Sahat ride beside the rushing water as the rising sun burns off the night fog.

They pull up their horses. Dismount to let the horses drink.

Mulan splashes water on her face. Sips from her cupped hands.

Gaius stalks over to her, his face hard.

GAIUS

We did what you asked. Take us to the money.

MULAN

There is no money.

GAIUS

(icy)

All this talk of honor, but you lied to our faces. And you got Karim killed.

MULAN

You are right. What I did was dishonorable. But it was for a greater good.

GAIUS

But you failed! You failed and my friend paid with his life.

MULAN

I'm sorry your friend is dead. But I am not sorry I tried to end this war before more lives were lost.

Mulan grabs Black Wind's reins. Leaps onto the big horse.

MULAN (CONT'D)

And now I must try again. Because I know what I'm fighting for. Even if you don't.

She whirls Black Wind and rides off. Gaius calls after her.

GAIUS

You're stealing my horse!

LUCIUS

Technically, we sold him to the army.

Gaius rubs his temples, fighting with his emotions.

GAIUS

We should never have gotten involved.

LUCIUS

We were involved as soon as we decided to make money off this war.

SAHAT

Karim knew the risks. He faced them gladly. His was a noble death. Fighting for something he believed in.

LUCIUS

You can't keep pretending that you don't have to choose a side, Gaius.

This hits Gaius hard.

EXT. RIDGE ABOVE THE IMPERIAL ARMY ENCAMPMENT - DAY

Mulan (sitting on Black Wind) looks down at the encampment below her. It's devastated. Tents burned and trampled. WOUNDED SOLDIERS tended by the WALKING WOUNDED. Mass graves. The dog tags of the dead flutter in the wind, hung on lines strung between bamboo poles. There are so many.

Mulan is deeply saddened by the destruction. She looks down at the slave girl outfit she's still wearing. How is she, a woman, supposed to make a difference?

But who else is going to do it?

Determined, she pulls her sword from where it's strapped to Black Wind's saddle. Belts it on. And kicks Black Wind into a canter.

EXT. IMPERIAL ARMY ENCAMPMENT - DAY

WOUNDED lie on pallets and stretchers around camp.

The several dozen soldiers who are unhurt are gathered near the center of camp.

Honghui tries to create order.

SOLDIER 1

Why should I stay? War's over and we lost.

SOLDIER 2

That's right. I'm going home.

HONGHUI

As the ranking officer, I demand you stay put! Desertion is a capital offense.

SOLDIER 3

Just who's gonna stop me? You?

The soldiers shake their heads and turn away.

HONGHUI

(futile)

I am in charge here!

Mulan pulls Black Wind up before the soldiers. They stare at the woman in the dress.

SOLDIER 1

Who are you?

MULAN

I am Hua Fan. And I am your
commanding officer.

GASPS and MURMURS ripple through the crowd.

HONGHUI

You can't be an officer! You can't
even be a soldier. You're a woman!

HOP (O.S.)

So what?

Mulan looks for the source of the voice. Hop struggles to sit up on his stretcher, a bloody bandage wrapped around his stomach.

Mulan leaps off Black Wind. Races to kneel beside her friend.

MULAN

Oh, Hop.

HOP

It's alright, Mulan. I fought well.
Thanks to you.

Mulan tenderly strokes his cheek, tears leaking from her eyes. Hop gently wipes one away.

HONGHUI

Look at her! Weeping like a woman!
This is why women aren't soldiers.
They're weak!

Mulan whirls on Honghui. Moving almost faster than the eye can see, she KNOCKS Honghui to the ground. Puts her foot on his chest.

MULAN

Then how weak are you, to be bested
by this woman?

She lets him go and Honghui angrily scrambles to his feet.

Hop weakly addresses the soldiers.

HOP

She's the best fighter we have.
(wheezes)
She knows strategy.
(wheezes)
She can lead us. She can help us win.

More MURMURS. This time, of agreement.

HONGHUI

But--

Mulan whirls on him again.

MULAN

Honghui, you are one of the best.
We need you. So, are you going to
keep fighting me or are you going
to fight with me?

She stares him down. He locks eyes with her. Knows she's
right. He gives in.

HONGHUI

I will fight with you.

MULAN

Now we have a chance at winning
this war.

She calls out to her men.

MULAN (CONT'D)

The Khan of the Rourans is planning
to attack the Imperial Palace. It
is our duty to protect the Emperor.
Only we have this knowledge. Only
we can save our homeland.

SOLDIERS

We're in! You can count on us!

HOOFBEATS behind her. Mulan turns to see--

--Gaius, Lucius and Sahat.

GAIUS

And on us.

CHEERS!

Mulan grins. Turns to share her victory with Hop.

He's limp. Eyes closed. Not breathing. Mulan gently lifts his
dog tag off his body and ties it around her own belt.

EXT. PLAINS OF THE NORTHERN WEI - DAY

The massive Rouran army is arrayed before the Khan. But the
Rourans aren't lined up in neat rows like Roman soldiers.
They're clustered by tribe beneath their banners.

The Khan rides his horse up and down the line as he calls out to his army. Xianniang watches him hungrily.

KHAN
Rourans! We are many tribes, but
today, we are one people!

A ROAR of agreement from the listeners.

KHAN (CONT'D)
Like the deadly viper, we will strike
at the heart of the Northern Wei and
take the land that should be ours!

Another ROAR of approval.

KHAN (CONT'D)
Ride with me to our victory!

The Khan whirls his horse and gallops off. The Rourans kick their horses into motion and, with THUNDERING HOOFBEATS and WAR CRIES, follow.

EXT. IMPERIAL ARMY ENCAMPMENT - DAY

Mulan (suited up in armor once again) Gaius, Lucius, Sahat, and Honghui discuss strategy.

HONGHUI
We can't hope to beat them to the
palace. They're on horseback. We're
on foot. Besides, we have to go all
the way around the lake.

He points to the huge lake between them and the capital city.

MULAN
No. We go across.

GAIUS
You have boats?

MULAN
Not exactly.

EXT. LAKESIDE - DAY

A massive expanse of water before the army. What's left of the elite unit stands with Mulan, Gaius, Lucius and Sahat.

Honghui looks out over the lake, concerned.

HONGHUI

We've never run that far before.

GAIUS

You realize you're looking at water,
right? You can't run across water.

MULAN

We can. We must.

Mulan faces the troops.

MULAN (CONT'D)

You have seen us harness our chi.
Bend the elements to our will.

Mulan races out onto the lake. Runs easily across the water.
Gaius, Lucius and Sahat are seriously impressed.

MULAN (CONT'D)

Now we must push ourselves to our
limits. Run farther than we have
ever run before.

Gaius sets a foot on the water. It splashes right in.

GAIUS

Uh, Mulan? Is there a plan B?

Mulan looks over at the Roman horses, loaded with stuff.

EXT. LAKESIDE - LATER

Mulan takes off Black Wind's bridle. Gently scratches his
forehead.

MULAN

Thank you.

She claps Black Wind on the rump and he takes off,
unfettered, into the plains.

Mulan turns back to the lakeside where several BAMBOO RAFTS
wait. Gaius, Lucius, Sahat and some wounded soldiers stand by
the rafts.

Some of the other soldiers hold brightly colored SILK SAILS.
The elite soldiers are ready to run without assistance.

MULAN (CONT'D)

We are all that stand between the
Rourans and our Emperor. So, we
must run!

Mulan summons a wind that fill the silk sails.

Together, her soldiers race out onto the lake. Several of the elite soldiers grab ropes and tow the rafts carrying Gaius, Lucius, Sahat and the wounded soldiers.

Mulan sprints at the head of the pack, bringing the wind along with them.

Though they run toward a fight, for this moment, they are filled with joy as they run with the wind across the blue water, brightly colored silks billowing in the breeze.

Spray splashing his face, Gaius looks ahead to Mulan, awed by the woman before him.

EXT. PLAINS OF THE NORTHERN WEI - DAY

The Rouran army, mounted on horseback, moves like a black wave over the plains toward a small village. At the head ride the Khan and the Witch (Xianniang), the promise of devastation in their eyes.

EXT. OUTLYING VILLAGE - DAY

The Rouran army descends on the hapless village, burning and killing as they ride through. VILLAGERS SCREAM and run in terror before the Khan, the Witch and their army.

EXT. IMPERIAL PALACE - DAY

The majestic palace glistens in the sunlight. People go about their business as usual, blissfully unaware danger approaches.

A cloud of dust heralds the approach of Mulan, Honghui, Gaius, Lucius and Sahat at the head of what's left of the Imperial army.

LOOKOUTS on the battlements CRY out. People are distressed to see troops on the move.

INT. THRONE ROOM - IMPERIAL PALACE - DAY

An ADVISOR ushers Mulan, Honghui, Gaius, Lucius and Sahat into the throne room.

The Chinese and Sahat kowtow. The Romans bow awkwardly.

ADVISOR

The commander of the army of the
Northern Wei, Hua Fan!

Mulan kneels before her Emperor. So much closer than the last
time she was in this room.

EMPEROR MINGYUAN

Where is General Luo?

MULAN

Killed, Son of Heaven. Murdered by
his own daughter.

MURMURS of horror from the ADVISORS in the room.

MULAN (CONT'D)

She is a traitor. She has been helping
the Rourans. She is their witch.

More GASPS of disbelief.

MULAN (CONT'D)

She is on her way here with the Khan
and five thousand mounted soldiers.

ADVISOR

The palace cannot withstand a siege.
We must leave at once! Get you to
safety, Lord of Ten Thousand Years.

Emperor Mingyuan stands.

EMPEROR MINGYUAN

I did not train eight years in my
father's army to be chased out of my
own palace. I will stay and I will
fight. With General Hua at my side.

Mulan bows, fist to palm.

MULAN

You honor me, Imperial Majesty.

Honghui has mixed feelings about this, but keeps them to
himself.

ADVISOR

Majesty, I humbly beg you to
reconsider, we're outnumbered five
to one!

MULAN

We cannot win with strength. We
will have to win with cunning.

EXT. PLAIN - DAY

The Rouran army's horses THUNDER across the plain as they approach the--

EXT. IMPERIAL CITY GATES - DAY

The gates stand open. undefended. A greedy grin spreads across the Khan's face.

KHAN

We've taken them by surprise!

Xianniang frowns. Something about this doesn't feel right. She looks around. Not only are the gates undefended, there are no people around either.

XIANNIANG

Something's wrong, my Khan. We
should approach with caution.

KHAN

Stop thinking like a cowardly
woman. This is our hour of triumph!

This hits Xianniang hard. Maybe she overestimated the Khan.

The Khan kicks his horse into a gallop. Leads the charge through the gates and into--

EXT. THE IMPERIAL CITY - CONTINUOUS

It's deserted except for the stream of Rouran soldiers flowing through the city streets.

Xianniang hangs back, sensing something is off.

Suddenly, Mulan, Gaius, Lucius, Sahat, Honghui and a handful of other Wei SOLDIERS appear on the roofs of the houses lining the main thoroughfare.

MULAN

Fire!

They rain flaming arrows down on the Khan and his troops. The Khan laughs up at them -- the arrows have missed! They've only struck the ground below the horses hooves.

But hiding in the dust of the road are--
--fuses. The flaming arrows light them up.
The fire races--

BELOW THE ROAD

--where the fuses connect to barrels of black powder.

KABOOM!

The first barrel explodes beneath the Rourans! The soldiers try to scatter, but the houses along the side of the road hem them in.

KABOOM!

The next barrel blows. KABOOM! And the next! Each explosion taking out horses and men.

At the head of the line, the Khan spurs his horse onward, pushing and leaping past his men to escape the carnage.

XIANNIANG--

--locks eyes with Mulan. Grudging respect on both sides.

Mulan whirls on her heel and RUNS--

--leaping easily from rooftop to rooftop, practically flying as she races toward the Imperial Palace.

Honghui and the Wei soldiers follow easily, but Gaius, Lucius and Sahat have more trouble. They struggle while the others soar.

They reach the open space between the houses and the PALACE WALLS.

Mulan leads the group off the roofs and through the GATES which IMPERIAL GUARDS quickly close behind them.

EXT. IMPERIAL PALACE - DAY

Mulan reports to Emperor Mingyuan.

MULAN

It worked. We took out several hundred of their men and slowed them down. But the Khan is sure to regroup.

EMPEROR MINGYUAN
We'll be ready for them.

EXT. IMPERIAL CITY - DAY

The Khan rallies his unharmed troops. The Skull and Bones are right at the front, itching for a fight.

EXT. COURTYARD - IMPERIAL PALACE - DAY

The Emperor, Mulan, Honghui and an army made up of SOLDIERS and IMPERIAL GUARDS waits in the open courtyard.

BOOM! BOOM!

The gate shudders in on its hinges as something massive strikes it.

EXT. IMPERIAL CITY GATES - DAY

Rourans use a BATTERING RAM to pound the gates. But even though they rattle, they hold strong. It's going to take a lot of work to pound through the stout wooden gates.

Xianniang turns to the Skull and Bones.

XIANNIANG
Over!

Xianniang runs straight up the palace wall! The Skull and Bones close on her heels.

EXT. TOP OF THE PALACE WALLS - DAY

Xianniang stabs a DEFENDER through the heart with her sword.

ANOTHER DEFENDER races up behind her. Grabs her sword arm. With her free hand, she--

--pulls the ornamental sticks out of her hair. Her long black hair tumbles free down her back. Xianniang whirls and--

--JABS the sticks in the defender's eye. He tumbles backward, SCREAMING as he falls into the courtyard far below.

EXT. COURTYARD - IMPERIAL PALACE - DAY

As the defenders watch in horror, the Skull and Bones swarm over the walls.

The soldiers on the walls do their best to knock the Skull and Bones back, but they're too powerful. Too full of chi. The defenders are soon overwhelmed. The Skull and Bones hurl the hapless defenders from the walls.

INT. GATE ROOM - DAY

A few Skull and Bones dispatch the soldiers defending the gate machinery. They turn the wheel and--

EXT. IMPERIAL PALACE GATES - DAY

The gates open!

The mounted Rouran army charges in, swarming the courtyard, the Khan at the head of the force.

EXT. COURTYARD - IMPERIAL PALACE - DAY

The Emperor, Mulan, Honghui and the Imperial soldiers dig in their heels, bracing themselves for the onslaught.

EMPEROR MINGYUAN

Now!

Flaming arrows fly. Land in pools of pitch that burn brightly on the edge of the courtyard.

The flames drive the riders toward the center. They gallop straight at the defenders.

EMPEROR MINGYUAN (CONT'D)

Hold! Hold!

It's hard, but the defenders do it, holding their ground as hundreds of horses charge straight at them.

EMPEROR MINGYUAN (CONT'D)

Now!

A pair of soldiers turn a wooden wheel and--

--row after row of six inch long SPIKES shoot up through small holes in the paving stones.

Horses drop as their hooves are IMPALED on the spikes, THROWING their riders onto more spikes.

As the Khan's horse goes down, he leaps into the air. Uses his amazing wu-shu skills to clear the spikes and land safely in the clear zone.

The flames and spikes cause many of the Rourans to pull up short, trapped away from the army. But--

--the Skull and Bones grab the wind and leap straight over the field of spikes and fallen horses and soldiers.

And the hand to hand fight is on --

--defenders against Skull and Bones. All masters of swordplay. But there aren't too many of Mulan's elite fighting force left -- the Skull and Bones outnumber them. And their wu-shu skills mean the ordinary Imperial Soldiers don't stand a chance.

HONGHUI--

--battles three Skull and Bones at once in an acrobatic dance of death. They pin him against a wall. No escape! He's doomed for sure when--

MULAN--

--leaps into the fray. Takes out the closest Skull and Bones. Honghui and Mulan share a look -- a moment of understanding. Side by side, they take out the other two Skull and Bones.

EXT. PALACE ROOF - DAY

Gaius, Lucius and Sahat look down on the battle. Most of the Rouran army is trapped between the main gate and the barricade created by the spikes and burning pitch.

GAIUS
Sitting ducks.

Lucius aims a long BAMBOO TUBE at the Rouran horsemen in the COURTYARD below.

At a nod from Lucius, Sahat pours a BARREL OF PITCH into the bamboo.

COURTYARD - IMPERIAL PALACE

The pitch GUSHES onto the Rourans below. They look up, YELLING and more pitch splatters into their eyes and mouths. They try to wipe away the sticky, stinging liquid.

UP ON THE ROOF

Gaius nocks a lit arrow to his bow. Takes careful aim and--

--FIRES on the pitch covered Rourans.

COURTYARD - IMPERIAL PALACE

The Rourans go up like tinder. Riders SCREAM as they're engulfed in flame. Horses scatter, trying to shake off their burning passengers.

XIANNIANG--

--swirls her crimson sleeves, creating a vortex. With a flick of fabric, she sends the wind out to smother the flames -- both the burning riders and the pitch barriers keeping them from their enemies.

The remaining Rouran riders charge across the smouldering pitch and join the fray.

ON THE ROOF

Gaius, Lucius and Sahat look down.

The Imperial army is definitely outnumbered.

LUCIUS

Are we going to see this through?

GAIUS

I know which side I'm on.

With that, Gaius LEAPS off the roof. SLIDES down a rope of brightly colored silk to the ground.

Lucius and Sahat share a look.

LUCIUS

For Karim.

SAHAT

For Karim.

And they follow Gaius down the silk and into the fray.

EXT. COURTYARD - IMPERIAL PALACE - DAY

Gaius, Lucius and Sahat fight back to back, a whirl of blades. These men are expert fighters, and all their years of experience are on display.

XIANNIANG--

--kicks a discarded SHIELD into the air. Flicks her sleeve, SHOOTING the shield like a saw blade into a line of Imperial Soldiers. They go down like dominoes.

Xianniang smiles wickedly. Uses her wind to call the shield back to her. Snatches the deadly disk out of the air.

HONGHUI--

--realizes they're outmatched. He fights his way to the Emperor's side.

HONGHUI
The Emperor! To safety!

Honghui leads a group of Imperial Guards as they hustle the Emperor inside.

THE KHAN--

--smiles. He's got his quarry on the run now. He races after the retreating Emperor, Skull and Bones on his heels.

INT. THRONE ROOM - THE IMPERIAL PALACE - DAY

Honghui and the Imperial Guard surround the Emperor protectively.

The Skull and Bones break down the doors. The Khan strides in, full of confidence.

KHAN
You've got nowhere else to run.

EMPEROR MINGYUAN
I'm not running.

--Imperial Guards burst through the paper walls! They surround the Khan and Skull and Bones.

The Khan realizes he's been led into a trap.

Furious, he charges the Emperor. The leaders meet in a clash of steel in the center of the throne room.

All around them, Honghui and the Imperial Guard fight the Skull and Bones.

EXT. COURTYARD - IMPERIAL PALACE - DAY

Mulan is a whirl of steel and chi energy. Her every strike is like that of a giant.

XIANNIANG --

--focuses on the slim warrior girl. Mulan could turn the tide of this battle.

Xianniang focuses her chi and--

--slings her shield straight at Mulan.

GAIUS--

--spots the deadly missile heading for Mulan.

GAIUS

Lookout!

Gaius muscles his way through the fray and--

--SHOVES Mulan out of the way just in time. The sharp shield misses her by millimeters.

But Gaius is not so lucky.

The shield hits him right in the chest, burying itself in Gaius' leather armor.

He goes down.

Mulan hesitates, desperate to go after Xianniang, but not wanting to leave Gaius undefended. Lucius rushes to Gaius' side and Mulan's mind is made up. She CHARGES at the witch.

MULAN AND XIANNIANG--

--meet in a flurry of steel and chi. Xianniang is more experienced, but Mulan's fury makes her strong, and the wisdom she's gained from her time as a soldier makes her smart.

The women leap/fly from the COURTYARD to the--

EXT. ROOFTOPS - IMPERIAL PALACE - DAY

--where they fight and leap in the most impressive battle we've seen yet. Masters of wu-shu and controlling the elements, they fight with sword and shield but also wind and lightning.

XIANNIANG

You have surpassed your training.

MULAN

I had something to fight for.

XIANNIANG

You had a good teacher.

MULAN

It's a shame she'll have to die.

EXT. COURTYARD - IMPERIAL PALACE - DAY

Lucius hauls Gaius to his feet while Sahat guards their backs. A deep gash cuts across Gaius' chest plate but he seems relatively unhurt.

GAIUS

Where is she?

LUCIUS

She went after the witch.

GAIUS

Alone?

Lucius nods.

GAIUS (CONT'D)

Determined to get herself killed.

(calls)

Sahat!

The three traders rush toward the spot where Mulan disappeared with Xianniang.

INT. THRONE ROOM - IMPERIAL PALACE - DAY

The Emperor and the Khan are locked in mortal combat. Imperial Guards battle Skull and Bones.

Honghui fights five Skull and Bones at once. Just as he's about to be overwhelmed, he channels his chi. Fires a huge ENERGY BLAST that's so big it--

--KNOCKS his enemies as well as the Emperor and the Khan--

--straight through the paper and wood frame wall!

EXT. COURTYARD - IMPERIAL PALACE

Gaius, Lucius and Sahat pull up short as the Emperor, the Khan, Honghui and the other fighters burst out the palace wall right in front of them!

Furious, the Khan flings his sword straight at the Emperor who is vulnerable -- still getting to his feet.

Gaius makes a heroic leap. Slashes the Khan's blade out of the air with his own sword.

The Khan is unarmed. The Emperor seizes his chance. He channels his chi and FLIES across the courtyard.

For just a moment, fear flashes across the Khan's face.

The Emperor SLASHES his sword in a graceful arc and--

--the Khan's head TUMBLES to the ground.

EXT. ROOFTOPS - DAY

Xianniang backs Mulan to the edge of the palace roof -- nowhere to go.

Mulan leaps down into the--

EXT. IMPERIAL GARDENS - DAY

Xianniang follows Mulan and they continue their battle among the perfectly arranged flowers. The bright colors cheerful in contrast to the life and death struggle going on around them.

XIANNIANG

What if neither of us has to die?
We don't need the Khan. We don't
need the Emperor. We are strong,
you and I. Strong enough to defeat
them both.

MULAN

You're mad.

Mulan attacks, pushing Xianniang out onto the surface of the pond. The women fight across the water.

XIANNIANG

Think about it? Why do we serve
them? When we could rule ourselves.
This war has weakened them. Let the
men wipe themselves out. Together,
you and I could remake the world.

For a moment, Mulan is tempted. But then--

MULAN

And how will we do that? How many
people will die?

XIANNIANG

Only the ones who stand in our way.

Xianniang leaps up to stand on a boulder at the edge of the pond.

MULAN

And that is a price I am unwilling
to pay.

Fast as the flick of a serpent's tongue, Mulan vaults into the air, burying her blade deep in Xianniang's heart.

As the older woman falls backward into the pond, Mulan drops into the water and catches her. Knee deep in water, Mulan holds Xianniang close.

XIANNIANG

(last gasp)

I always knew you were...
extraordinary.

And the life drains from her eyes.

Mulan pulls her sword from Xianniang's chest. Lets the body go and Xianniang drifts out into the still pond, blood mixing with water, crimson robe floating around her still form.

Mulan looks up. Across the pond is--

--Gaius, sword drawn, watching her. Their eyes lock. Their look full of understanding.

EXT. COURTYARD - IMPERIAL PALACE - DAY

The Emperor strides to the top of the palace steps.

EMPEROR MINGYUAN

Your Khan is dead!

He raises the Khan's head in the air, displaying it to the Rourans. Fighting all over the courtyard comes to a stop as everyone's attention switches to the Emperor.

EMPEROR MINGYUAN (CONT'D)

This war is over. Leave now and you
can go in peace!

The Rourans look at each other. They don't want any part of this without their Khan.

All around the palace, the Rourans who are left leap on their horses and gallop away.

The Imperial soldiers CHEER!

SAHAT AND LUCIUS--

--grin and clap each other on the back.

HONGHUI AND MULAN--

--lock eyes across the battlefield. Fist to palm, he bows respectfully to her. And she returns the bow.

GAIUS--

--starts toward Mulan. But before he can reach her, her surviving soldiers rush to her. Clap her on the back. Pick her up and carry her on their shoulders.

SOLDIERS

Hooray for General Hua!

Gaius hangs back, letting her have her moment.

MULAN--

--grins, enjoying the attention from her soldiers.

As they carry her on their shoulders toward the Emperor, she looks around for Gaius. But by the time she spots him, he's walking away.

INT. THRONE ROOM - IMPERIAL PALACE - DAY

Mulan (still in her armor, still dressed as a man) kowtows directly in front of the Emperor -- all the other advisors and lookers-on are arrayed behind her. She has the most important place.

EMPEROR MINGYUAN

General Hua, you have shown yourself to be a great leader of men. It is my wish that you remain here in Yunzhong as my general in command of all imperial forces.

She bows respectfully.

MULAN

You honor me greatly, Lord of Ten Thousand Years and I will do as you command. But... it is my deepest wish to return home.

Listening in the back, this news pricks Gaius, but he stays stoic.

MULAN (CONT'D)

I am my parents' only child and when I left, my father was not well. It is my belief that Chen Honghui would prove a better man for the job.

In the crowd, Honghui looks startled. He never expected this.

EMPEROR MINGYUAN

I cannot say I am not disappointed. But I understand and I admire your sense of duty to your family. Besides, I agree with your assessment. Chen Honghui proved himself a valuable leader in the battle. You are free to return to your village. General Chen, stand and be recognized.

Proudly, Honghui does and receives adulation from the crowd. He smiles at Mulan.

HONGHUI

Thank you.

Mulan returns the smile.

INT. IMPERIAL STABLES - DAY

Well kept. Clean straw on the ground. Expensive horses in the stalls.

Gaius throws a sack over the back of a Roman horse.

Mulan comes up behind him. He senses her there.

GAIUS

So, you're giving up the big promotion for village life?

MULAN

It's where I belong.

Gaius turns to face her.

GAIUS

You're meant for so much more. Come with me. Think of the adventures we'd have. I'm always looking for a good sword to have by my side.

MULAN

My fighting days are behind me.

Gaius tucks a lock of hair behind her ear.

GAIUS

Then come with me for other reasons.

MULAN

I cannot. Even if I'd like to.

Unable to bear his nearness, Mulan moves away from him.

MULAN (CONT'D)

The Emperor has charged me with delivering this to you.

She picks up a bag. It JINGLES with coins. Gaius waves the money away.

GAIUS

The horses are enough.

MULAN

I made you a promise. I need to see you paid.

GAIUS

I didn't do this for the money.

MULAN

That's all I have to give you.

She sets the bag of money on the floor at his feet and walks away.

Lucius steps out of the shadows.

GAIUS

I don't want to hear it.

LUCIUS

I'm not going to say anything. I mean, I could say that you'll never meet a more fascinating woman and you're a fool to let her get away. But you know that, so I have no need to say it.

GAIUS

Little less talking, little more packing. I want to get on the road while there's still daylight. It's a long way to Constantinople.

LUCIUS

Sure.

He goes. Gaius picks up the bag of money. Stares at it thoughtfully.

EXT. THE ROAD - DAY

Mulan trudges alone down the dusty road. The CAPITOL CITY receding on the horizon.

HOOFBEATS behind her. Her heart fills with hope. Is Gaius coming for her?

She turns--

--it's a riderless horse. It's BLACK WIND.

The stallion trots up to her. Nuzzles her.

MULAN

Black Wind. You've come a long way, haven't you?

Black Wind WICKERS softly.

MULAN (CONT'D)

Let's go home.

She swings herself onto Black Wind's bare back. Wraps her hands in his mane and continues her journey.

EXT. OUTSIDE MULAN'S VILLAGE WALLS - DAY

Mulan, riding Black Wind, approaches the village walls.

CHILDREN rush out to meet her. VILLAGERS gather to welcome the hero home.

EXT. CENTRAL COURTYARD - MULAN'S VILLAGE - DAY

The village has been rebuilt. Few signs of the damage done by the Rouran raiders linger.

Mulan rides in as the Villagers CHEER her. Ask questions about the war. Welcome her home.

Mulan smiles. Clasps hands. Avoids the questions.

She spots Hop's father, the village Elder. She slides off Black Wind. Bows respectfully.

Mulan takes Hop's dog tag off her belt and presses it into Hop's father's hands.

MULAN

Your son brought great honor to
Northern Wei and to your family. He
died a valiant soldier. And my true
friend.

Tears leak from Hop's father's eyes as he bows, thanking Mulan for the news and the memento. He leaves her to grieve in private.

Mulan walks through the villagers as Black Wind trails her like an affectionate dog.

Finally, through the crowd, Mulan spots her mother standing alone. Her heart rises in her throat. Did her father not survive?

But seconds later, Hua Hu hobbles around a corner, leaning on a cane.

Eyes full of happy tears, Mulan rushes to her parents.

Fist to palm, she bows respectfully to them. But Hua Hu and Hua Wuwei wrap their arms around their daughter and pull her close.

EXT. YARD BEHIND MULAN'S PARENTS' HOUSE - DAY

The sun shines down on the magnolia tree, once more in full bloom.

Mulan, in her simple dress, hair down and flowing behind her, tosses a bundle of hay to Black Wind.

A shadow falls over her. Mulan looks up.

Gaius stands in the gateway. Mulan freezes, uncertain.

GAIUS

You can't stop stealing my horse,
can you?

MULAN

He followed me home.

GAIUS

Then he has better sense than I do.

MULAN

Well, we always knew that.

GAIUS

You always say the sweetest things.

MULAN

But that's what you like about me.

Gaius strides across the yard to her.

GAIUS

You're right. I do like you. Very
much.

Gaius gathers Mulan in his arms and kisses her deeply. It's
the kiss we've been waiting the entire movie for. And it's a
good one.

As they kiss, the pink magnolia petals swirl around them,
glittering in the sun.

FADE TO BLACK.