

ROBERT EASTON

T A I - P A N

Screenplay

by

J O H N B R I L E Y

Property of:

DINO DE LAURENTIIS CORP.
1 Gulf + Western Plaza
New York, New York 10023

July 28, 1985

"TAI-PAN"

1 EXT. MODERN HONG KONG - DAY

1

The CAMERA SWEEPS in and out among the dazzling buildings of glass and chrome, teasing for a moment that this glittering expanse is all, then revealing more avenues of wondrous splendor, brilliant waves of building, incredible in number, size and opulence to any who have not seen them - yesterday... for the steel spines of further mercantile dreams climb into the sky each day... And as we read the legend "Hong Kong," we veer over the harbor that is the source, the mustard seed that has produced this astonishing display of all that is proud and bright and exciting in the thrusting, unruly world of modern commerce.

And, in the beautiful harbor, among the great steel ships with their radar and sonar and computer steering, we see the ancient sampans, the little junks moving across the waters as they have for decades, and the SOUNDS of the modern city FADE from the soundtrack and we begin to hear the SOUND of deep, regular breathing... and as we pull away from the harbor a smoky haze envelops the screen, the last fleeting image an ancient junk, and quiet Oriental MUSIC begins to provide a soft background to the deep, slow breathing...

2 EXT. CHINESE LANDSCAPE - DAY

2

... and we glimpse land through the swirling haze... but an ancient land - no glass, no chrome, no telegraphs... and we see PEASANTS drawing water, crude wooden wheels, and the haze folds again, and we glimpse -

3 INT. OPIUM DEN - DAY

3

- an OLD MAN smoking an opium pipe... and are aware it is his breathing we have been hearing. In the shadowy rose-colored haze of the opium den we see OTHER OLD MEN on the crude racks smoking in that lost world where life becomes easy, bearable, a soft, flowing dream...

And again the swirling haze encloses the image and when it begins to clear we see -

4 EXT. SOUTH CHINA SEA - DAY

4

- a distant Clipper ship in full sail, racing along off the shore of the ancient land. And we read:

China was once a forbidden land.
Death the penalty the Emperor
demanded for any who violated
her borders.

CLOSER on the Clipper. We see DIRK STRUAN (the TAI-PAN) give the wheel to a short, hunch-backed SEAMAN, then climb to the rigging, staring ahead with a calculation that is part daring, part sober assessment... like the

(CONTINUED)

4 CONTINUED:

4

Clipper he commands, his trim body has a beauty born of strength and suppleness. Both made for the sea and for each other. The legend has continued over:

But China is vast, and English privateers, drawn by the wonders of tea and silk and jade, tempted by visions of trade beyond the imagination, teased at her coast line, prospering by bribery and daring - - and the sale of opium...

By the early 19th Century they had established a precarious trading center in the river port of Canton...

The haze envelops STRUAN... and the Clipper - the deep breathing begins to FADE...

DISSOLVE TO:

5 EXT. CHINESE LANDSCAPE - DAWN

5

A slice of the sun rising over the broad river. Against its crimson arch we see silhouettes of three strangely designed craft moving TOWARDS CAMERA... the movement of oars in stately, measured rhythm... FADE IN the words:

"Canton, China, 10 March, 1839."

Accompanying the three boats, a little flotilla of smaller boats carrying UNIFORMED SOLDIERS.

6 EXT. PEARL RIVER/BUDDHA - DAY

6

As the strange procession approaches the city of Canton, we see Police boats, shouting orders, moving the river traffic to the shores.

The minute the junks and sampans are out of the way, their CREWS bow abjectly towards the Mandarin Boats. Many kneel, prostrating themselves - yanking their CHILDREN down to do the same... TITLES BEGIN.

The three craft CLOSER now, moving slowly on the vermillion river. We cannot make out the figures on them, but we see that they are three MANDARIN BOATS. In the foremost an elevated dais is covered by a huge silk umbrella, a stern, IMPOSING FIGURE sitting stoically beneath it. The two boats on either side just behind have smaller umbrellas, less imposing daises.

7 EXT. PEARL RIVER - DAY

7

Along the bank the river PEOPLE have appeared from all sides - excited, awed - but when the Mandarin Boat is opposite them - a sudden hush and they all bow

(CONTINUED)

7 CONTINUED:

7

deeply, or kneel. An enormous sense of numbers - on the river, in all sampans and houseboats.

THE FIRST MANDARIN BOAT

For the first time we clearly see the man on the dais: the Imperial High Commissioner, LIN TSE-HSU. The early morning light adds an air of mystery to the forcefulness of his face. He stares ahead with a god-like stoicism - an angry god. On the boats behind him, two tense and worried local mandarins, JIN QUA and KWANG KUO... TITLES CONT'N'G.

8 EXT. CANTON SETTLEMENT - DAY

8

Ahead on the river the flotilla is approaching a group of large buildings - the European 'Warehouses.' On little flagpoles we see an English flag, a Portuguese flag, an American flag. Lin's eyes narrow with a deeper severity as they come into his view.

The area is all fenced in - surrounded by the city of Canton, but each building has its own little landing stage, where even now CHINESE LABORERS are loading and unloading lorchas. In the grounds we see more CHINESE WORKMEN... and here and there a single EUROPEAN MERCHANT -- but all work stops now as they turn to watch the Mandarin Boats approach.

9 INT. WAREHOUSE/OFFICES - NOBLE HOUSE - DAY

9

DIRK STRUAN, the TAI-PAN, stands on the top of a huge pyramid of crates. On either side of him in the long, tall warehouses are huge bins, many of the lower ones filled with crates like the one he's standing on, but the top ones, up where he is inspecting, filled with bolts of silk. The TAI-PAN calls down to his two agents, the Portuguese VARGAS and the Chinese CHEN SHENG -

AN.Z.
TAI-PAN
I want all this silk taken out - !
Put it aboard the ships! - We'll store
this opium up here! --

(his foot stamps the
crates)

And when the others start to sell - we
buy!

VARGAS and CHEN, both older than TAI-PAN, more conservative, receive the orders with less than enthusiasm. WORKMEN all around in the warehouse, a VOICE cuts through their chatter -

VOICE (GORDON)

Tai-Pan - !

TAI-PAN is striding down the pyramid of crates - he pauses. A young Chinese, GORDON CHEN, is silhouetted against the light outside. He bows respectfully -

(CONTINUED)

9 CONTINUED:

9

GORDON

Honorable Tai-Pan... He's come.

The weight of it makes the TAI-PAN lift his eyes gravely to the river beyond.

10 EXT. LANDING STAGE/CANTON SETTLEMENT - DAY

10

A MASS of CHINESE WORKMEN are crowded near the shore as the Mandarin Boats approach - they are excited, frightened. Near the center of them TAI-PAN stands with another merchant, TILLMAN. Nearby, VARGAS, CHEN and GORDON.

As the boats near, the WORKMEN fall silent, bowing and prostrating themselves, leaving TAI-PAN and TILLMAN alone standing erect.

On the lead boat, LIN turns just slightly so his eyes fall on TAI-PAN - they are cold, haughty, an unrelenting anger. The wealth, the power, the awe that his presence inspires - and the implacable hostility of his mien - send a sense of danger along the waterfront like a breeze from the dead.

(TILLMAN)
(shaken -) a:
[a] My God -- they mean it this time...

The TAI-PAN is staring back at LIN. For a moment, across the water, it is just the two men. The TAI-PAN measuring the threat LIN seems to offer - he alone not overawed by it, but not taking it lightly either...

11 EXT. CANTON SETTLEMENT - NIGHT

11

All around the perimeter of the 'warehouse' settlement an ANGRY CROWD is gathered - shouting, cat-calling. Torches, an occasional firecracker. A line of IMPERIAL BANNERMEN cordon them off from the fence that isolates the warehouses - but they are faced in to the fence -- sealing the 'foreigners' in - not keeping the crowd out. A threatening, dangerous encirclement.

12 INT. TAI-PAN'S OFFICE/CANTON - NIGHT

12

Huge. Barrels of rum along one wall, ledgers, maps along another - paintings of his fleet of Clipper ships. It is lit by oil lamps now and filled with excited and nervous MERCHANTS - TILLMAN, COOPER, OTHERS - many hastily dressed. Some are already armed, GORDON passing out arms to the others. They are talking worriedly among themselves, staring out the windows at the menacing crowd below.

COOPER

My servants just disappeared. I didn't even know they were gone!

(CONTINUED)

12 CONTINUED:

12

ANOTHER MERCHANT

Mine marched out with the workers.
They let me know alright. What they
didn't let me know was that they took
all the food and water.

The door pushes open - forcefully. Faces turn - and all the conversations stop. Only the distant NOISE of the crowd outside.

In the doorway stands a merchant (BROCK) - powerful, a sense of barely-harnessed rage. His eyes rake the other merchants - then settle on TAI-PAN.

BROCK

Why be we gathered here?

a (TILLMAN)

That's my doing. I felt if we were
attacked, we could defend ourselves
best at Noble House.

3u

BROCK

Aye. What you could defend best is
Noble House! I have my own House to
defend. Say your piece, Struan, and
I be going back.

There is a murmur of response to this promise of defiant boldness, but the TAI-PAN is not surprised. He starts to open a drawer of his huge desk. His voice carries a slight Scottish burr.

TAI-PAN

Except for Brock, I have been dealing
with the Chinese longer than any here.
I learned early, the bigger the show,
the more bribe to be asked.

COOPER

The Hong merchants are terrified. Money
won't touch them. They say any who've
been found trading in opium will be
strangled.

The TAI-PAN smiles tautly -- and lifts from the drawer, a large bar of silver. While they stare, he puts another beside it... and another. Even BROCK is impressed.

TAI-PAN

A royal 'tribute' for a royal officer.
(he nods to CHEN against
the far wall)

Chen will present it tomorrow - he be
a master of the art. I advance it from
my treasure. I recommend we pay equal
shares.

(CONTINUED)

12 CONTINUED:

12

BROCK

You have most business. If the bribe
be in that kind of money I say it be
proportional.

TAI-PAN looks at him - a taunting note of 'superiority' in his eyes.

TAI-PAN

Done.

There's a sudden swell of SHOUTING and NOISE from outside - the MERCHANTS
turn to the windows.

GORDON

It's at the gate!

There is a surge around the gate - and the SOUND of thudding.

TAI-PAN

Downstairs! - We have to keep them
out of the building!

He's already heading for the door, the OTHERS clammering after.

13 EXT. NOBLE HOUSE/CANTON SETTLEMENT - NIGHT

13

A battering ram smashes open the gate - splitting the crossbar.

TAI-PAN, pistol in one hand, sword in another, stands at the top of the steps
of Noble House. BROCK beside him. The OTHER MERCHANTS are spread along the
porch, some inside with muskets at the window. They watch as --

The gates are shoved open -- and, led by RUNNERS with torches, a DETACHMENT
of MOUNTED BANNERMEN ride into the courtyard. Noisy, arrogant. In their
midst - a rickshaw. The BANNERMEN wheel and the rickshaw is pulled around to
face the MERCHANTS. In it are JIN QUA and KWANG KUO, the local Mandarins we
saw riding in the boats behind LIN.

TAI-PAN

(baffled)

Jin Qua -- ?

JIN QUA and KWANG KUO step from the rickshaw. JIN QUA does a little
acknowledgement to TAI-PAN, then reads aloud from a small scroll... he is
still some feet from the MERCHANTS.

JIN QUA

From the High Commissioner of his
Imperial Majesty and the Celestial
Court - these are orders. Quake and
tremble hereat. Resist not. Intensely
tremble.

(CONTINUED)

13 CONTINUED:

13

He looks up.

JIN QUA (cont'd)
He requires absolutely to see the
leader, the Tai-Pan.

A moment's stunned reaction from the MERCHANTS, eyes flit to the TAI-PAN.

BROCK
We're all Tai-Pans.

JIN QUA looks at him, makes a little bow, but then -

JIN QUA
One Tai-Pan is the Tai-Pan, Captain
Brock.

Brock's jaw tightens, but he does not answer. JIN QUA turns back slowly to TAI-PAN. One or two of the MERCHANTS counsel TAI-PAN in hushed but urgent tones.

COOPER
Don't go. No Westerner has ever been
in that city. He wants you dead - or
for a hostage.

TAI-PAN
You cannot ~~say~~ ^{lay} siege to British
citizens. We have no water - no
food.

JIN QUA just looks at him.

JIN QUA
He demands speech with the Tai-Pan.

The TAI-PAN stares at him...

14 INT. BUDDHIST TEMPLE/CANTON - NIGHT

14

Shadowed - some candlelight. We see the delicate profile, the extraordinary eyes of MAY-MAY... as she kneels before the Buddha.

AH GIP, her servant, pads hurriedly to her side, kneeling, her face to the floor.

AH GIP
(whispered)
Mass'r to go inside Canton.

The beautiful eyes turn on her - startled, incredulous. AH GIP faces her.

(CONTINUED)

14 CONTINUED:

14

 AH GIP (cont'd)
 To see Great Commissioner of Imperial
 Majesty.

And now the beautiful eyes are struck with terror.

15 EXT. BUDDHIST TEMPLE/CANTON - NIGHT

15

MAY-MAY runs from the Temple, her whole body taut with anxiety.

AH GIP has hurried out after her.

16 EXT. NOBLE HOUSE/CANTON SETTLEMENT - NIGHT

16

VARGAS, holding a lantern, peers out at the broken gate, the section of
 BANNERMEN GUARDS and CROWD he can see through it. He bolts the central door.

17 INT. STAIRWAY AND CORRIDOR - NOBLE HOUSE/CANTON - NIGHT

17

TAI-PAN is closing and locking the door to his office. VARGAS comes up the
 stairs - but stops when TAI-PAN turns to him.

 VARGAS
 Not one drop of drinking water - anyplace.
 And for food - not even crumbs to feed
 the mice.

TAI-PAN smiles.

 TAI-PAN
 What Lin doesn't know is that any sailor
 worth his salt has survived days at sea
 without water. It'll bother you tonight
 if you think about it. **ONLY**

VARGAS nods lugubriously.

 VARGAS
 I think it would be best if I slept
 down in the guards' room.

TAI-PAN nods agreement as VARGAS turns back down the stairs. The TAI-PAN
 also carries a lantern, and he moves along the corridor towards another
 door. As he nears it, we hear hurried FOOTSTEPS. TAI-PAN turns, drawing
 a knife from his boot.

A FIGURE runs from the stairs at the opposite end of the darkened hall and
 hurries along towards the light -- MAY-MAY. When she gets into the circle
 of light, she stops, looking at him - then kneeling with graceful ease and
 prostrating herself.

(CONTINUED)

17 CONTINUED:

17

MAY-MAY

... Kill me.

TAI-PAN

What the devil are you talking about,
May-may? Get up.

He pushes open the door - we see that it is a bedroom as large as his office.

MAY-MAY

Tai-Pan dies. I die.

TAI-PAN

The Tai-Pan is na' goin' to die! Get
off the floor. L

She starts to rise with reluctant obedience.

TAI-PAN (cont'd)

(sternly)

Did anyone see you come in the secret
door? L

She shakes her head 'no' - and he moves on into -

18 INT. BEDROOM - NOBLE HOUSE/CANTON - NIGHT

18

TAI-PAN puts the oil lamp on a table and goes to light a fire where kettles
are placed above a grille. MAY-MAY has followed - again she kneels.

MAY-MAY

No barbarian lives who sees Canton.

Her terror - from the beginning - has been so absolute TAI-PAN tries to reason
with her.

TAI-PAN

He sent for me.

MAY-MAY

Oh yes. Terrifical true. He kill
Tai-Pan and all barbarians leave China.
No more opium.

And TAI-PAN gives up reasoning - he indicates a door.

TAI-PAN

Will you go wash.

Numb with helplessness, MAY-MAY rises and heads towards the door.

MAY-MAY

I wash beautiful well - make jig-jig
with you for last time in my life.

(CONTINUED)

18 CONTINUED:

18

TAI-PAN
(sympathetically) *wuona*
May-may, I'm British, he would na' dare
to -- *L*

MAY-MAY
(wheeling on him - like
a cat!)
Your most fastest ships sail to England
and we do na' see them for nine months,
ten months - a year! Your body be
rotted and horrifical finished even
before your barbarian Queen know you
are dead!

The violence of it is a measure of her fear and it only makes TAI-PAN smile.

TAI-PAN
England has the *7* greatest fleet in all --

MAY-MAY
(the 'understanding'
mother)
Oh yes. I believe absolutely, but why
we never see one -- even one -- in China.
Because, Tai-Pan, even young barbarian
Queen know better than you. No man
can resist Celestial Emperor. Burn
opium - and do na' go.

TAI-PAN looks at her - gives up - and goes to stir the fire.

TAI-PAN
Go wash.

She turns from him dejectedly, goes to the door, then turns again. He glances
at her. Slowly she goes to her knees and puts her head to the floor.

MAY-MAY
May-may is your slave... but please to
grant her one favor for all her life.

She looks up at him - he's watching her, charmed by the pleading love in her
voice. A beat... then -

MAY-MAY (cont'd)
Kow-tow to him...

It is a second before TAI-PAN reacts.

DINNA TAI-PAN
I do na' kneel to any man!

(CONTINUED)

18 CONTINUED:

18

MAY-MAY

He's na' any man! He is messenger of
Celestial Emperor!

TAI-PAN

Na' my 'Celestial' Emperor.

MAY-MAY

(softly - meaning it)

Kill me.

DINNA

TAI-PAN

Lass, do na' be afraid. He'll na'...

st har? mi

MAY-MAY

Already he has killed hundreds - very
honorable merchants, mandarins - do na'
think one barbarian, who he very hotly
detests --

TAI-PAN has held up his hand -- cutting her off. He nods to the door again.

TAI-PAN

Go - go wash.

A second - then tears run from her eyes. She stares at him - lost - then she rises gracefully and turns, going through the door to her room.

19 EXT. STREETS OF CANTON - DAY

19

TAI-PAN is led through the teeming streets, a leather bag at his side. A
DETAIL of BANNERMEN stride on either side of him. Tall powerfully built
men.

As he is led along, TAI-PAN takes in the almost frightening density of the
population, the crudity of life in the early 19th Century, people sleeping
in doorways, animals, open sewers, someone smoking opium, diseases...

The sea of humanity that inspects him, does so with coldness or open
hostility. Some shout out and curse at him. Twice they pass carts elevated
on wooden platforms - in each cart the BODY of a MERCHANT - tied to a thick
crucifix - garroted. Each time the public lesson strikes at the TAI-PAN:
LIN is raising the stakes with savage cruelty.

20 EXT. TEMPLE CLOISTERS/CANTON - DAY

20

The BANNERMEN lead TAI-PAN along a colonnaded balcony - in the courtyard
below there are shouts and commotion. As he turns we see from HIS (TRAVELING)
POV, through the colonnades, that BANNERMEN are taking more carts out into
the streets - on each cart a garroted MERCHANT, some richly dressed.

Again, we see the impact of it strike at the TAI-PAN, shaking his confidence.

21 INT. TEMPLE CLOISTERS/CANTON - DAY

21

Huge colonnades, marble floor, extraordinary decorations of a civilization infinitely more refined than the teeming life of the streets we have just left -- and from cacophony... silence.

TWO BANNERMEN bring TAI-PAN forward towards the center of the immense room - through a ring of COURT UNDERLINGS and BANNERMEN GUARDS.

LIN sits in isolated splendor in the exact center of the colonnaded square. JIN QUA prostrate at one side of the square, KWANG KUO spread supplicatingly at the feet of LIN.

We hear KWANG offer some appeal in Chinese - evoking two words of deep, angry thunder from LIN. BANNERMEN GUARDS come forward and raise KWANG KUO to his knees even as he pleads desperately.

The ROYAL EXECUTIONER moves to KWANG, slipping a black hood over his head - then putting the cord of a garrot around his neck. KWANG falls silent - the whole room is silent. The cord is twisted. Hard, sure. There is a strangled choke, a gulp - and Kwang's figure slumps forward. The BANNERMEN GUARDS lift it and carry it off.

In the continuing silence, TAI-PAN'S GUARDS move him forward into the center area - facing LIN. It is only the two of them... and JIN QUA prostrate at the edge of the square. LIN stares at the tall TAI-PAN with an anger that none of the punishment administered so far has assuaged.

JIN QUA lifts his head to address TAI-PAN.

JIN QUA

Lin, Imperial High Commissioner of the Court of Heaven issues these commands: The Barbarians are to deliver every particle of opium in their possession. Not the smallest grain to be concealed. Let the said Barbarians enter into bond never hereafter to bring opium in their ships - or submit like pirates to the extreme penalty of the law.

TAI-PAN looks at LIN.

TAI-PAN

If the Imperial Court --

JIN QUA

Do not speak!

It is both an order and a terrified warning! TAI-PAN looks from him to LIN - realizing that he will be allowed no argument... A beat... and then the TAI-PAN kneels, not prostrating himself, but folding his hands and bowing his head.

JIN QUA stares in amazement. LIN himself is taken by surprise.

(CONTINUED)

21 CONTINUED:

21

(When he speaks Tai-Pan's words are meant to flatter, but they also contain his own romantic vision.)

TAI-PAN **W**
 China **/** is vast - it produces two things
 no one else in the world can produce -
 tea and **sk**. All nations desire **X** these
 two wonders of China's wisdom and skill.
 If we were allowed to trade freely
 through all the **r**atches of China we
 would -- **L**

PERMITTED

LIN has allowed the speech to this point but now he taps his finger once - twice - thrice - cutting it off. JIN QUA glances at him, then at TAI-PAN.

JIN QUA
 The Celestial Kingdom of Heaven will
 not be disordered by contact with Barbarians.
 Or Barbarian goods. Never.

TAI-PAN sighs... then to JIN QUA -

TAI-PAN **✓**
 If opium be surrendered there would
 need to be compensation - and, besides,
 the opium would fall into the hands of --

The Imperial High Commissioner's finger taps again.

JIN QUA
 There will be no compensation. The
 opium will be burned.

TAI-PAN lifts his head to LIN in stunned disbelief.

TAI-PAN
 We're talking about thousands of pounds
 of -- !

JIN QUA
 Quake and tremble at the Imperial Orders.
 Do not resist...

Again both an order and a terrified warning! TAI-PAN glances at LIN, then lowers his head again. His hand reaches into his leather bag. In the stillness of the room - without ever looking up - he places one silver bar, another - and another on the floor before him.

We see a stunned reaction at its worth from a GUARD, a COURT UNDERLING. Then TAI-PAN glances at JIN QUA to translate:

W TAI-PAN
 The humble merchants of the West know
 the Imperial Court has many expenses -- **L**

(CONTINUED)

21 CONTINUED:

21

But LIN has barked out a phrase in savage anger! - TAI-PAN turns to him, and LIN is leaning forward, addressing him directly for the first time - and JIN QUA hurriedly translates the rasping phrases:

JIN QUA

You try to bribe Imperial Commissioner!
Only because you kow-tow does he not
have you executed now - this minute!
Go! The opium will be burned! If you
or other merchants try again to bribe
any officer, you, the Tai-Pan, will be
executed and placed in the streets of
Canton for all to see!

TAI-PAN looks at LIN - and the gaze that is returned to him contains both
fury - and death...

22 EXT. CANTON SETTLEMENT - NIGHT

22

A huge fire blazes. We see COOLIES hauling more crates like the ones we saw
in Tai-Pan's warehouse to the fire to be burned...

23 EXT. PEARL RIVER/CANTON SETTLEMENT - DAY

23

Longboats bearing the MERCHANTS and their EUROPEAN WORKERS are moving from the
settlement down river - a DETACHMENT of BANNERMEN on the docks to 'see them
off' ... and the river lined with CHINAMEN hurling rotten eggs, vegetables
and abuse at them.

TAI-PAN is at the tiller of his longboat - VARGAS and some CLERK TYPES laboring
at the unaccustomed oars, ducking from the barrage of refuse. The boats in the
river join in - tossing dirty water, garbage pails at them - all screaming and
shouting curses.

BROCK is at the tiller of his longboat. Unlike TAI-PAN, who simply keeps an
eye on the water ahead, and maintains a taut smile, BROCK occasionally hurls
back an insult, and his angry face reveals exactly what he thinks about the
humiliation.

Ahead he glimpses the burning crates of opium. He looks across the water at
TAI-PAN - his anger heightened by that sight. He mutters to the CHIEF CLERK,
who like VARGAS, labors at the oars.

BROCK

There be one pleasure in this - he
bought more opium than any of us - and
he loses more than any of us. If he
not be bankrupt, he be near it.

The Tai-Pan's face remains impervious to the abuse - there's even a tiny smile
that indicates he may be enjoying it.

24 EXT. DOCK/PEARL RIVER - DAY

24

LONG SHOT. The Merchant Longboats rowing down river - between hills now - the current carrying them with speed, the city far behind. We see Tai-Pan's longboat glide into a small dock. A donkey cart moves part way out to it, and a young Chinese (GORDON) leads two women (MAY-MAY and AH GIP) on to the boat.

25 EXT. LA PRAYA/MACAO - DAY

25

The Merchant Longboats approach the quai at Macao, the tiny Portuguese enclave at the very tip of the land where the river runs into the sea. A Clipper ship is moored off the point.

There are SHOUTS, and PEOPLE begin to run to the quai to meet the longboats.

Behind the small group of 'Mediterranean' buildings we see the sprawl of the Chinese settlement that has grown up around it.

26 INT./EXT. HOUSEBOAT WHOREHOUSE/MACAO - DAY

26

Berthed off the Macao quai. Painted chattering GIRLS are running to peer at the longboats as they head towards the quai.

ARISTOTLE QUANCE - artist and ageing dandy with the air of one of Conrad's lost souls - turns from a canvas he has mounted on the foredeck of the houseboat. Carrying his brushes, he moves along with the GIRLS to peer at the longboats, the NUDE GIRL he was painting slips a towel casually around herself and hurries after.

27 EXT. LA PRAYA/MACAO - DAY

27

Brock's boat is first to land. He's battered with questions. "What happened?" "Have they seized the warehouses?" "Is anyone hurt?" "Are the Bannermen coming here?" But BROCK ignores them all -- storming up the quai to the little town.

28 INT./EXT. HOUSEBOAT WHOREHOUSE/MACAO - DAY

28

FEATURING QUANCE as he looks from BROCK and the OTHER MERCHANTS to Tai-Pan's longboat... which has rowed on towards the Clipper.

29 INT. BAR/MACAO - DAY

29

A gathering, mostly MEN, but a few WOMEN - nervously questioning the returning MERCHANTS. Finally BROCK, who has gone to the bar and swigged heavily from a quickly poured glass of whiskey turns and pounds the bar with the whiskey bottle. It silences the room and brings all eyes to him.

(CONTINUED)

29 CONTINUED:

29

BROCK

The China trade be done!
 (stunned, frightened
 reaction)
 They burned the opium.

And now the reaction is stunned... almost a numb silence.

A VOICE

Will they attack us here?

BROCK

I don't think they give a damn about
 our houses in Macao - what they won't
 let us do is trade.

ANOTHER VOICE

Was - was there compensation?

BROCK

(acidly)

Struan did the talking - and we got
 nothing but our lives. And unless
 you want to risk piracy that's all
 we're going to get.

A THIRD VOICE

What about you, Brock!

BROCK

When I first sailed these waters I
 learned to keep my own counsel, and
 thank ye, I'll do that now - though
 I warn ye you'll na' bluff or bribe
 your way to trade. He's had half the
 merchants we dealt with strangled.
 The Houses be finished. And that includes
 Noble House.

And the chilling, malevolent finality of that puts a pall on the whole
 gathering.

30 EXT. CLIPPER SHIP - DAY

30

The TAI-PAN, his clothes still stained with refuse thrown at him, is at the
 wheel - domineering it, taking more from the cut of the sail than prudence
 dictates, finally giving vent to his anger. VARGAS, GORDON and MAY-MAY are
 at different spots around the quarter deck, all watching him, each reading
 his mood, afraid to speak. At last he looks at them, then -

TAI-PAN

We're not through. The 'Celestial'
 Emperor is in a dream of centuries -
 (more)

(CONTINUED)

30 CONTINUED:

30

THIS

TAI-PAN (cont'd)
 and because I love that and I am going
 to wake him up. I will go back to England
 and use every penny I have to convince
 Parliament that the country that crushed
 the arrogance of Napoleon canna' allow
 her merchants to be humiliated by a
 Medieval monarch. And we'll come back
 with Men O' War such as they've never
 dreamed existed!

It has been fierce, angry, categoric ... but now he looks down at them with
 a softer smile --

TAI-PAN (cont'd)
 And then Noble House will lead China
 gently into reality...

MAY-MAY
 (afraid for him)
 You are a fantastical dreamer yourself,
 Tai-Pan.

He smiles at her fearful doubt -

TAI-PAN
 And I have something more to show you.

The smile is smug -

CUT TO:

31 EXT. THE KNOLL/HONG KONG - DAY

31

TAI-PAN, GORDON and VARGAS struggle to the top of the knoll - all winded, but
 the TAI-PAN exuberant with it. As they stand puffing, he looks down at the
 bay, his arms sweeping across the view of it. It is barren - a great
 beautiful bay with only a tiny, tiny Chinese fishing village on one side of
 it.

u TAI-PAN
 Look at it. A sailor's dream... I was
 in the first ship I ever owned - a cast-
 off privateer I put back together with
 my own hands. And we were hit by the
 edge of a typhoon that stormed up the
 coast wrecking everything it touched.
 It was taking us apart board by board
 when it was my job to find this harbor...
 She saved me and my cargo...made me 'the'
 Tai-Pan -- even over Brock.

(CONTINUED)

31 CONTINUED:

31

The reminiscence over - he looks out over the bay, drinking it in.

TAI-PAN (cont'd)

I resolved then that one day she would
be England's.

GORDON

Never... !

It has come out half patriotic assertion, half an exclamation at its preposterousness. It is the latter Tai-Pan responds to.

TAI-PAN

(a smile)

Yes, Gordon - ~~Lin~~ has gone too far. Now
we are going to demand a piece of China
for England.

GORDON

No Emperor would allow it.

TAI-PAN

No Emperor has seen the guns of a British
Man O' War.

CUT TO:

32 EXT. MAN O' WAR/HONG KONG HARBOR - DAY

32

A THUNDEROUS BROADSIDE from three rows of cannon! The CAMERA PULLS BACK SWIFTLY on a beautifully trimmed Man O' War, CIRCLING to the huge British Ensign flying from her stern as ANOTHER VOLLEY of cannon fires... and the CAMERA PULLS SWIFTLY UP and OUT, placing her in -

THE HARBOR, HONG KONG

And as the THIRD VOLLEY roars from the cannon, we see the bay from the knoll. The Man O' War, the other ships in the harbor -

33 EXT. CEREMONIAL PLATFORM/HONG KONG - DAY

33

- and on the beach a British Flag is being raised on a platform draped in red, white and blue bunting. We move in CLOSER. A legend reads, "Two years later." A salute from a row of muskets held by BRITISH SAILORS echoes the salute from the Man O' War. When the volleys fade, a scratchy FANFARE from a NAVY TRUMPETER... and CAPTAIN GLESSING steps forward to read a proclamation to the assembled CROWD - SAILORS, MERCHANTS, WIVES, SOME CHILDREN -- many we've seen on Macao....

(CONTINUED)

GLESSING

Hostilities being ended by solemn agreement, I, Captain Glessing, Royal Navy, do hereby take possession from Ti-sen, Plenipotentiary of His Majesty, the Emperor of China -

(he nods to TI-SEN on the platform with him)

of this island, Hong Kong, on behalf of her Britannic Majesty, her heirs and assigns, without let or hindrance, on this day the 26th of January, year of our Lord, 1841. This soil is now English soil! God Save the Queen!

The CROWD cheers, NAVY PIPERS start up 'God Save The Queen,' most of the CROWD exuberantly joining in - but not BROCK - who stands with HIS WIFE near ~~TILLMAN and a beauteous high-breasted young woman (SHEVAUN)~~. BROCK is glaring at TAI-PAN who stands on the ground just below GLESSING, singing with joyous vigor.

BROCK

We sail and fight in these waters for years and when the Navy finally whips the Chinese, he gets the Government to take this -- this clump of rock for trophy!

(TILLMAN)

(amused)

[It looks the safest harbor I've seen in these waters, Tylet. *a: t.*

BROCK

It's not 'safe harbor' we be needing. We could have demanded trading rights in six Chinese cities - Shanghai, Nanking - God! - Instead we take this bloody rock. Well, by God, while I'm praying for it to sink, I mean to make the Government see sense!

The CHINESE from a small village on the island and the COOLIES who are servants for the celebration are roped off from the ceremony. They stare coldly as their island is claimed by others. GORDON is in the forefront of these. CHEN SHENG next to him.

CHEN

(quietly)

Do not worry. The day they hire the first coolie to work for them will be the day China begins to reclaim Hong Kong for her own.

And GORDON absorbs that.

35 EXT. CEREMONIAL PLATFORM/HONG KONG - DAY

35

The anthem has ended and TAI-PAN leaps up on the platform next to GLESSING, stilling the applause.

TAI-PAN **HWETS**

The Noble House - of which I be the immodest Tai-Pan -

(laughter, whistles)

wishes to invite all the merchants, their wives and ladies to a Grand Ball to be celebrated in two months when our building will be completed - (he points) - on that commanding knoll!

Cheers, applause.

TAI-PAN (cont'd)

And to honor the beauty that has come from Macao to gather with us today, I be giving a 1000 pound prize to the best-dressed lady at that Ball! --

(amazed, awed reaction)

To be judged by that incomparable artist Aristotle Quance!

More cheers. Laughter. QUANCE protests facetiously -

QUANCE

You are trying to ruin me, Tai-Pan!

More laughter.

TAI-PAN

And I'll wager any man here that a Noble House ship, Morning Cloud, will be the fast ship of commerce to anchor in this harbor - the envy of all the world.

BROCK

I ha'e 200 pounds says the White Witch will be unloading and have her opium stored in Canton before you see Morning Cloud on the horizon!

Again, awe at the sum - and amusement at the rivalry. Tai-Pan's good humor is edged with some of Brock's hostility.

BRAUK TAI-PAN

By God, Tyler, ye've been dipping into the rum before the Chaplain's blessed the feast. **LEVEN**

It brings laughter - but BROCK just stares at TAI-PAN...

36 EXT. A STRETCH OF OPEN SEA - DAY

36

A beautiful clipper ship slices through the water. We read her marking across the bow: "Morning Cloud."

37 EXT. DECK - MORNING CLOUD - DAY

37

CAPTAIN ORLOV - a hunchbacked near-dwarf (the sailor we saw in the opening sequence) - stands by the HELMSMAN, his small blue eyes measuring the stretch of each sail. Just behind him stands a tall, slender young man (CULUM) with red hair much the shade of the Tai-Pan's. He wears a black band on his arm.

ORLOV faces the stern, raises his telescope -- and smiles. He hands it to CULUM. CULUM peers off, adjusting the scope a little, searching for his target like a beginner. Finally, he holds --

HIS POV - distantly, another clipper.

CULUM

How far?

ORLOV

Two leagues - maybe three.

CULUM

How far is that?

ORLOV

(smiles at his ignorance -)

Enough to put bile in their blood.

CULUM lifts the eyepiece to look again.

38 EXT. OPEN SEA - DAY

38

FEATURING THE OTHER CLIPPER

We come along the bow, reading her marking "The White Witch." And then -

39 EXT. DECK - WHITE WITCH - DAY

39

- to the deck, where its young, muscular master, GORTH BROCK, senses he is fighting a losing fight.

GORTH

Hard on those lines!

(to the HELMSMEN)

A quarter starboard! Don't you see the wind shift!

He clambers up to the bridge - a streak of meanness in his manner keeps the men in grudging respect. The CAPTAIN of the ship, NAGREK, watches him with a touch of cautious amusement. He has ceded command on this trip to the

(CONTINUED)

39 CONTINUED:

39

owner's son - but he knows GORTH is a true seaman. He speaks of the ship ahead -

NAGREK

That Orlov is a wizard - when God gave him a hunchback, he put a compass in his head.

GORTH

My father beat Orlov - and by God one day I'll do it too!

NAGREK - mid-thirties, bronzed - smiles and glances back. A very pretty young girl, TESS BROCK, stands in the breeze at the stern rail. She responds to Nagrek's smile like a girl just touched by the excitement of her power over men.

40 EXT. DECK - MORNING CLOUD - DAY

40

FEATURING ORLOV

He has the eyepiece again - he lowers it calmly.

CULUM

Will we beat them?

ORLOV grins - and ushers the unsteady CULUM ahead of him.

ORLOV

Brock runs his ships by the whip, your father feeds best, pays best. They always lead us the first weeks out of England... but we always outrun 'em by the time we reach the China Sea. They'll not catch us.

41 INT. THE CAPTAIN'S CABIN - MORNING CLOUD - DAY

41

ORLOV spreads a map out on the table - it's an enlarged section of the China coast at the mouth of the Pearl River.

ORLOV

Here be your new home. Canton - that's where they kicked us out, but where we're back to trade. Macao - they let us live there. Women, families. And here be your father's Hong Kong, I think he's made a powerful mistake -- but who knows, the Tai-Pan has fantastic joss...

CULUM

'Joss?'

(CONTINUED)

41 CONTINUED:

41

ORLOV

Luck.

(then thoughtfully -)

It's Chinese - it really means --
'favored by God.'

CULUM has suddenly become somberly relective - melancholy.

CULUM

I'm not so sure that's true.

His tone makes ORLOV glance at the black armband.

42 EXT. SHORE OF HONG KONG - DAY

42

Bonfires! Firecrackers! Singing, dancing - SAILORS, OFFICERS, MERCHANTS, LADIES, YOUNG CHILDREN -- NAVY PIPERS, - rum, beer, a feast.

In the raucous gaiety we pick out TAI-PAN in shirt sleeves, staggering as he lifts the caber - cheers from the group around him - he lurches forward and tosses it! More cheers. TAI-PAN preens - then reaches for a schooner and drinks deeply.

It's obviously not his first - but it's a joyous high he's on. As he takes the mug down, his gaze is arrested by the sight of GLESSING and another NAVAL OFFICER (HORATIO) with a blonde girl of quiet beauty (MARY).

TAI-PAN

Ah, Mary - if your father came to China
to save souls he should never have produced
a daughter who could so easily drive men to
sin!

It's tipsy, teasing, a little flirtatious - and justified - because she looks both proper and alluringly feminine. GLESSING, who holds her arm, is amused rather than offended by the assessment, which he seconds with enthusiasm.

GLESSING

I'm in absolute agreement, Mr. Struan.

MARY smiles quietly at the flattery, but her eyes remain on TAI-PAN.

MARY

I notice I've never tempted you to fall
from Grace, Tai-Pan.

HORATIO

Mary!

He's her brother, and it's genuine shock - though good-spirited.

(CONTINUED)

42 CONTINUED:

42

TAI-PAN

Ah - that is only because, my dear Mary,
I defer ~~to~~ to the superior claim of Captain
Glessing.

Again teasing, he bows elaborately to GLESSING, then his eye is caught by
something else.

TAI-PAN

Ah! The 'Heart of Loch ~~Y~~ Lomond' - you
must excuse me.

And grabbing his coat from the sand, he strides off, his hands already moving
to the music.

GLESSING

He's an extraordinary man. -- Do you
know about his - his China 'lady?'

HORATIO

We've known 'all' about him since we
were children - and we owe him a great
deal.

GLESSING

Since your father's death, you mean?

MARY

And before -- long before...

She is still staring off at TAI-PAN, her words weighted.

43 EXT. ANOTHER PART OF THE BEACH/HONG KONG - DAY

43

BROCK is walking with ANOTHER ENGLISH MERCHANT - passing SAILORS playing
quoits, Indian wrestling.

ENGLISH MERCHANT

It looks like Tai-Pan's day.

BROCK

Aye. Today. Tomorrow be another story.

The MERCHANT looks at him quizzically.

BROCK (cont'd)

Do ya' not believe it cost him a fortune
to get his damn Hong Kong through Parliament.
And he lost a fortune when the opium be
burned. I be havin' a surprise of my
own for Mr. Dirk Struan - and then there
may be a new Tai-Pan.

(CONTINUED)

43 CONTINUED:

43

He says it with a firmness that cannot but impress the MERCHANT.

They have passed QUANCE, painting the presentation platform. He's heard the last expression 'there may be a new Tai-Pan' and he turns and stares after BROCK. He is turned back by -

(TILLMAN (o.s.))
[Are you waiting for the ceremony to complete your sketch, Mr. Quance?

TILLMAN has approached with the stunningly exotic SHEVAUN. He is American - Southern - and his voice is angry. QUANCE nods to him and SHEVAUN - we see the painting - the platform, ships in the b.g., figures around, but no-one on the platform.

QUANCE
I'm waiting for the highest bidder -
I'll put him center. Have you a taste
for being in history yourself, Mr. Tillman?

(TILLMAN)
[What I've a taste for, Mr. Quance, is
decence (then whispering viciously) ju
My niece has just told me you've induced
her to let you paint her nude! nj

It's ferocity is genuine and QUANCE looks at him askance. Then at SHEVAUN - she has flowing red hair, milk white skin, and breasts designed for dreams.

QUANCE
(unperturbed)
Since every white man in the Far East
not addicted to opium or sailors has
tried to seduce or marry your niece
at some time or other - I dare say you
can trust her to art.

SHEVAUN smiles - wiser than her uncle, amused by QUANCE.

SHEVAUN
I promise you, uncle, no man will see
it - except my future husband.

(TILLMAN)
[It's not the 'art' that concerns me,
it's the 'artist.' A man who lives in
a house of ill-repute, hiding from his
wife, is -- u!

SHEVAUN
Uncle, please!

(CONTINUED)

43 CONTINUED:

43

She alludes to the fact they are being approached by CAPTAIN GLESSING, HORATIO and MARY. She greets them -

SHEVAUN (cont'd)
Captain Glessing, Horatio -- Mary.

The two girls kiss demurely on the cheek - SHEVAUN flamboyant, extravagantly sensual - MARY beautiful, demure.

GLESSING
We've been enjoying a rather new side
of Mr. Struan.

It's arch - and they all turn to follow his gaze.

THEIR POV - TAI-PAN, in shirt-sleeves again, is dancing a Scottish reel with some SAILORS, SOME CHILDREN, and ONE OLDER LADY. It all has a lot more energy and fun than skill.

QUANCE
(thoughtfully -)
I've never seen him so happy...

CLOSER ON TAI-PAN

He is whirling with a YOUNG GIRL about 6, who's very good. We notice a couple of SAILOR BOYS who can't be more than 11 or 12. Finally TAI-PAN swings his YOUNG LADY around and flops in the sand -- a little too tipsy to keep up that kind of whirling.

TAI-PAN
Ayee - you got the best of me, ~~3~~ lass!

She looks at him very seriously - and it makes him smile, he pokes a finger gently in her stomach.

TAI-PAN (cont'd)
Y'know I've got a wee bruid at home like
you. Two bonny daughters, a bairn na' this
high, and a bean-pole of a 19 year old - at
~~1~~ least he was a weed of a bean-pole when
last I saw him.

(he tousels her hair)
One day I may give up this China and be a
proper laird in Scotland.

The YOUNG GIRL, still looking at him very seriously, just leans forward and kisses him on the cheek. TAI-PAN grins and hugs her - then scoots her back to the dancing -

TAI-PAN (cont'd)
Off you go - show the bloody Sassanachs
how it's done.

(CONTINUED)

43 CONTINUED:

43

The MERCHANT COOPER, holding a mug of ale, sprawls down next to TAI-PAN.

COOPER

The way Brock's been damning your island
you'd think it was covered with snakes -
(TAI-PAN grins - happily)
All the years out here together, you'd
think you two'd be friends.

TAI-PAN has his eye on BROCK through the crowd.

TAI-PAN

I was seven when I first went to sea,
Mr. Cooper. A powder monkey at Trafalgar.
The third mate was an 'old man' of 15 -
named Brock. At night he used to beat
us with a leather whip for sport...
(a taut smile)
I never knew Fate would give me such
sweet revenge. Every day he has to
acknowledge that he is beaten in the
only way that really matters by one of
his old lads...

A second and he turns from BROCK and smiles at COOPER - taking another
joyful swig from the mug.

44 EXT. SHORE/HONG KONG - NIGHT

44

Hours later. Some people are still eating at tables, some dancing quietly -
more are drunk ... some faulty FIREWORKS...

45 EXT. THE KNOLL/HONG KONG - NIGHT

45

The TAI-PAN approaching the very top of the knoll, trailed by a PIPER. He
carries two armfuls of twigs and brush and he looks happily determined. When
he reaches the top, he takes a deep breath - and then suddenly reacts with
tension. There is a rustle of wind - we hear the keening of the bagpipes,
a note of melancholy in the music now, deeper. TAI-PAN turns, frowning, wary.

46 EXT. SHORE/HONG KONG - NIGHT

46

RESUME THE CELEBRATION

MARY moves into a chair next to QUANCE - touching his shoulder and indicating
off - QUANCE follows her gaze, and we see a fire at the top of the knoll.
QUANCE taps Captain Glessing's arm and indicates his eyeglass. QUANCE takes
it and looks.

47 EXT. THE KNOLL/HONG KONG - NIGHT

47

HIS POV - CLOSE. TAI-PAN has constructed a large cross from two long branches - it's fixed in rock - and around it a fire of twigs has started to burn. He takes a brandy flask and pours it on the flames and they leap higher -- then he kneels before it.

48 EXT. SHORE/HONG KONG - NIGHT

48

QUANCE

(solemnly)

It's old Scottish lore - the burning of the cross can only be raised by the Chief of the Clan - and once raised, it pledges the clan to defend the land unto the very end of its days...

BROCK is down the table - and he too has raised an eyeglass to see, as have one or two others. Finally he lowers it -

MRS. BROCK

'The Burning of the Cross' - ?

BROCK

(smiling smugly)

Aye. At last I have something to celebrate.

49 EXT. THE KNOLL/HONG KONG - NIGHT

49

FEATURING TAI-PAN

Kneeling before the burning cross - but unexpectedly somber. In the b.g. the PIPER plays a keening, solemn lay.

TAI-PAN

Good sweet Christ - this island I have longed for suddenly ~~f~~els me with terror. The minute I raised your cross I knew she would be the death of me...

He glances down at the bay, the island - a dark beat, but then he faces the cross, and makes the pledge.

TAI-PAN (cont'd)

But I will defend her to my death - and so will all my clan.

Having given the pledge, he stares into the rising flames...

50 EXT. HONG KONG - DAWN

50

The sun rises over sea and island - amber-hued glory.

51 EXT. THE KNOLL/HONG KONG - DAWN

51

On the knoll, the TAI-PAN, awake we sense for a long time, strides along the side of the knoll, admiring the island, the harbor, like the laird he feels. He climbs to the very crown - and for a moment he glances at the rocks and charred remains of the cross. For an instant it sends a shadow across the sunrise of his spirit, but he shakes it off - and suddenly reacts --

From HIS POV we see a beautiful tall ship entering the rose-tinted crest of the harbor. He has a second's doubt, then --

) TAI-PAN
Morning Cloud -- !

And half-running, he starts down the long hill ...

52 EXT. THE HARBOR/HONG KONG - DAY

52

The bow of the Morning Cloud slicing the calm waters of the harbor, the shouts of ORLOV as the sails are reefed for anchoring.

53 EXT. KNOLL AND BEACH/HONG KONG - DAY

53

TAI-PAN

Nearing the bottom of the hill. He glances out again. Morning Cloud is anchored. Her sails being hauled. A cutter heading towards shore.

TAI-PAN runs on.

The cutter is nearing as TAI-PAN runs on to the beach. For a moment, he waves - then there's a cannon fired from along the shore which is still littered with debris and sleeping SAILORS from the celebrations. It turns Tai-Pan's eyes to the harbor mouth - another clipper - The White Witch - is entering the bay. TAI-PAN smiles at it, and turns back to the Morning Cloud's cutter again... and freezes...

TAI-PAN
Culum! - Culum!

In his surprise, his delight, he races out into the surf -

ON THE CUTTER - CULUM, equally deperate to greet his father, leaps over the side and half-swims, half-staggers to him.

D TAI-PAN 2 M
Culum - I dinna know! My God I be glad
to see ye!

CULUM clutches him tight - but then forces himself away.

(CONTINUED)

53 CONTINUED:

53

CULUM

(his voice forced -)

Don't, Father. For the love of God,
don't...

TAI-PAN

By God ~~I will tell the world~~ nothing
this nine months has made me happier
than the sight of thee!

He is clasping him again - but CULUM only stiffens... and TAI-PAN gradually reacts to his restraint, and just holds him - CULUM at last finds the strength to speak...

CULUM

Father -- the - the plague has struck
Glasgow again... Mother, my brother,
my sisters, Grandma -- By God's will,
they're all gone.

He has hardly been able to get it out, and now he shudders as tears rack his body. TAI-PAN holds him closer - numbly...

CULUM (cont'd)

You and I are all that is left...

Tears roll down Tai-Pan's stoic face. His sense that Fate has touched him - when and where he least expected it -

TAI-PAN

God - I knew it... this island I so
longed for... What price is it going
to take....?

FEATURING ORLOV - the cutter has beached off to one side. ORLOV waits as father and son compose themselves. As they turn and start towards shore, GORDON comes along the shore towards them.

TAI-PAN lifts his head and sees him. GORDON hesitates, even backs up a step, but TAI-PAN releases CULUM and approaches him -

TAI-PAN

Yes, Gordon - ?

GORDON

My apologies. I - I was asked by
Mr. Brock to present you with 200 pounds.

Bowing, he passes a purse. TAI-PAN glances out to sea - BROCK is in his cutter, heading out to the approaching White Witch. He turns back to GORDON - the bet, the joy of last evening, seem so irrelevant now, and other things so important.

(CONTINUED)

53 CONTINUED:

53

TAI-PAN

Thank ye, Gordon, thank ye, my son -

It's a phrase - one an older man might use to a younger man - but he touches Gordon's head affectionately, and GORDON is caught by it, tears well in his eyes - he looks at TAI-PAN, then bows and retreats.

CULUM watches it all - mystified...

54 EXT. WHITE WITCH/HONG KONG HARBOR - DAY

54

Later that day. BROCK and GORTH are getting into the ship's cutter - both in high spirits. TESS stands on the deck, looking down. NAGREK a few feet further along.

BROCK

It be a great day for our family, Tess!
- You remember that in your prayers!

TESS

I will, father.

The cutter pulls away across the harbor.

NAGREK watches the cutter for a moment - then turns to TESS. There is breathless tension between them - his aching masculinity, her nubile desire... fresh, searching.

NAGREK

Would you - would you join me for a /
farewell tankard, Miss Tess?

TESS

I - I ...

NAGREK

(a throat-dry smile -)

It may be our last chance for - for
such a civility! This afternoon your
m'am will come aboard.

TESS stares at him - suddenly realizing, as he does, that that will be the end between them. She lowers her head.

**BEFORE YOUR SWEET MOTHER
COMES ABOARD**

55 INT. CAPTAIN'S CABIN - MORNING CLOUD - DAY

55

CULUM is stepping out of his trousers. A CHINESE CREWMAN is pouring water in a wooden tub. TAI-PAN lounges in a chair, sipping from a tankard, watching CULUM, listening to him somberly. He, too, now wears a black armband.

(CONTINUED)

55 CONTINUED:

55

CULUM

It was little Winnie who got it first -
then Jamie --

(he pauses in melancholy
reflection)

It's funny, it was Winnie who got it
first - but she lived longest...

He shakes off the painful memory - then turns to the tub.

CULUM (cont'd)

Do I have to do this? I bathed before
I came out.

TAI-PAN

You mus' bath every week. Ye stink,
~~Culum~~

He gets up and moves to pick up Culum's clothes. Distantly, we HEAR a bosun's
whistle and some shouts on deck.

CULUM

Everyone stinks. That's why we wear
pomades. It's unhealthy bathing.

TAI-PAN

~~I~~ I donna stink. The Chinese donna stink. -
When did ye last wash these?

CULUM

(baffled -)

I never. It would ruin the cut.

TAI-PAN hands them to the CHINESE CREWMAN.

TAI-PAN

I'll get ye new ones. And you'll wash
them every week.

The CHINESE CREWMAN grimaces at the smell as he takes them out.

AFTER

TAI-PAN (cont'd)

And when you use the head, ye wipe your
arse w~~th~~ paper - and wash your hands.

CULUM

(astounded)

Why - ?

TAI-PAN

The Chinese think dung makes people
sick -

(CONTINUED)

55 CONTINUED:

55

CULUM

That's crazy. In London --

TAI-PAN

The Chinese ~~donna~~ smell, and they ~~donna~~ get sick in this heat like Europeans. Just because they ~~donna~~ make ~~gold~~ cannon, ~~donna~~ be fooled, they're a smart, wise people. And every ~~she~~ of mine runs ~~on~~ the rules they taught me.

CULUM

You make these heathens out to be --

TAI-PAN

And you'll drink tea like they do too, ~~no~~ ~~water~~.

(there's a RAP on the door -)

Aye - !

ORLOV opens the door.

ORLOV

Your guests be Mr. Brock and Mr. Gorth, sir.

TAI-PAN turns, surprised, as BROCK and GORTH stride into the cabin. CULUM rises awkwardly and puts a towel around himself. TAI-PAN nods to ORLOV reassuringly.

TAI-PAN

Thank ye, Captain Orlov.

It's dismissal. ORLOV leaves, eyeing the BROCKS distrustfully. TAI-PAN gestures them to chairs, but BROCK leans arrogantly against the bulkhead, surveying the cabin, TAI-PAN.

BROCK

(a glance at CULUM)

We'll not interrupt your China habits.

(then to TAI-PAN)

First, I tell ye I be sorry for what has happened to your family.

It is gruff, but has a note of sincerity. TAI-PAN bows. GORTH looks at CULUM. GORTH, powerful, dynamic - CULUM, slender, sensitive. GORTH does a little bow of condolence to him too, but it contains a half-smile of mockery.

BROCK

Ye've been busy with your agents in London - well, I've been busy this twelve months too. But in commerce, not chasing barren islands.

(CONTINUED)

55 CONTINUED:

55

TAI-PAN
 The boy's waiter is chilling, Mr. Brock.
 State your piece.

BROCK
 Gladly. Ye be bankrupt, Struan. Bankrupt.
 Gorth has come from London with a million
 200 thousand pounds of notes drawn against
 Noble House and your London bank. My
 agents bought up every last one of them -
 and they're due at month's end.

TAI-PAN is shaken - a little doubtful, but it is all possible.

BROCK (cont'd)
 And I be giving no credit - accepting
 no goods. When time's up I be taking
 over every ship in your fleet.

TAI-PAN
 I'd sink them first!

BROCK
 (laughs -)
You - sink a clipper? Never.
 (it's true, and TAI-PAN
 knows it)
 You have twenty three days as Tai-Pan.
 (he looks around the
 cabin possessively)
 Enjoy them if ye can.

He turns back to TAI-PAN - hatred. The he touches Gorth's arm.

BROCK (cont'd)
 We be off, Gorth -
 (a final shot -)
 Your joss has turned, Struan.

No sooner has the cabin door slammed than TAI-PAN rushes to his desk. He rifles through the correspondence Orlov has brought from England, finally breaking a seal on one fat envelope... as he surveys its long sheets of figures.

TAI-PAN
 Orlov - !

A second or two and ORLOV enters - TAI-PAN wheels to him.

TAI-PAN
 The money we needed to buy votes - did
 MacGregor tell you where it came from?

(CONTINUED)

55 CONTINUED:

55

ORLOV

Aye. The bank sold notes against future trade. He said you authorised it.

TAI-PAN

Notes to who?

ORLOV

(shrugs -)

In the market. I don't know. I don't think they know.

The documents sag in Tai-Pan's hands, his face ashen - then he drops them, smashing the bulkhead, knocking over a lantern, kicking a box with a fury that sends it flying across the room.

TAI-PAN

God blast him! If my joss be turned
he'll na[^]gain from it!

And he sends a chart and compass flying! CULUM just staring transfixed at his father's fury.

56 INT. TESS' CABIN - WHITE WITCH - DAY

56

TESS is pressed against the cabin door, NAGREK is caressing her neck, his eager hands moulding her willing body.

NAGREK

Tess... Tess... I love thee, I love
thee...

It weakens the already feeble bonds of resistance.

57 EXT. BROCK'S CUTTER/HONG KONG HARBOR - DAY

57

BROCK, GORTH. Returning to the White Witch...

BROCK

I want you in Macao tomorrow at dawn.
Don't give him a moment's hope.

GORTH

I'll be there. I've dreamt of being
ashore in China for months...

A hint of some dark pleasure implied - but unspoken.

58 EXT. THE DECK - WHITE WITCH - DAY

58

A bit later. BROCK and GORTH are being received aboard.

59 INT. TESS' CABIN - WHITE WITCH - DAY

59

TESS is pressed against the bulkhead near the bunk. The curtain is drawn on the porthole. NAGREK, his tunic off, is easing the strap of her bodice from her shoulder. She quivers, protesting through their kiss, but her hand only stays on his - she has not the will to pull it away.

And suddenly there is a distant SOUND of Brock's voice. NAGREK steps back in terror. He grabs his tunic - for a second TESS is too terrified to move.

60 INT. PASSAGEWAY - WHITE WITCH - DAY

60

BROCK and GORTH come down the companionway to the main cabin's passageway. The FIRST MATE and a CREWMAN with them.

BROCK

We'll take her into the Pearl to unload
on the noon tide, have the --

He stops - on seeing a flushed NAGREK come out of Tess' cabin.

NAGREK

Sir - you've returned. I - I was just
seeing if Miss Tess was alright.

BROCK simply moves down the passageway to him. Ice. He pushes past him - and opens the door to --

61 INT. TESS' CABIN - WHITE WITCH - DAY

61

TESS is pulling open the curtain on her porthole - she freezes, then straightens her dishevelled hair, brushes at her mouth -

BROCK simply stares into her terrified face --

62 INT. PASSAGEWAY - WHITE WITCH - DAY

62

BROCK comes out, closing the door slowly - he turns to NAGREK.

NAGREK

I was but checking, sir, I --

BROCK glances at the FIRST MATE and CREW, then softly --

BROCK

Go below. I don't want to be discussing
this around the crew.

An enraged GORTH turns and follows NAGREK along the passageway, past the breathless, silent FIRST MATE.

63 INT. HOLD - WHITE WITCH - DAY

63

Dark as night. The door pushes open. GORTH enters with a lantern - he places it on a hook as NAGREK and BROCK follow him in. The hold is filled with boxes of cargo.

NAGREK is petrified.

NAGREK

Mr. Brock, I didn't touch her. I didn't harm her by God.

BROCK picks up an iron claw.

BROCK

You're a dead man, Nagrek.

NAGREK

I did nothing, I swear to God, I were only --

The claw comes down hard on the wooden box, breaking it -

BROCK

You put your stinking hands under her shift!

NAGREK is desperate - he breaks for the door, but GORTH is there before him! He grabs NAGREK by the collar - an almost insane anger.

Weakened by his guilt and their wrath, NAGREK seems helpless - his hand reaches quickly towards his belt - and his knife. He gets it in his hand and the iron claw smashes into his wrist...

GORTH twists him and smashes him against the bulkhead.

NAGREK

No harm were done I swear - it were only play.

GORTH butts him - hard in the face. NAGREK is numbed, blood pouring from his smashed nose -- GORTH butts him again... And NAGREK sags unconscious. GORTH goes right down with him, keeping him from falling -- and then he picks up the fallen knife.

GORTH

(to BROCK)

Hold him - !

An angry as BROCK is, he senses something twisted -

BROCK

I just want him dead.

(CONTINUED)

63 CONTINUED:

63

GORTH

He'll be dead - but he's not going to
die a man.

Just out of shot, we see him pull down Nagrek's pants, the knife between his teeth. NAGREK is beginning to come to -- GORTH leans up and slaps his face, reviving him, and when NAGREK opens his eyes - GORTH moves down with deliberation, takes the knife from his teeth -- and cuts...

NAGREK screams in anguish...

64 EXT. LA PRAYA/MACAO - DAY

64

Boats at the quai. The tiny port coming to life. We glimpse one richly furnished Chinese lorch with a silk covered cabin area.

65 EXT. MAY-MAY'S HOUSE/MACAO - DAY

65

A bell is clanged and a MANSERVANT hurries across to a wooden door that leads to the street. He admits, VARGAS, CHEN and GORDON.

MANSERVANT

Mass'r Tai-Pan has come. He see you
very quick.

And he leads them towards the house.

66 INT. CHAPEL - MAY-MAY'S HOUSE/MACAO - DAY

66

A small, private chapel - very austere, Calvinist. TAI-PAN stands facing a side wall with one decoration: a painting of four children on the lawn of a Scottish Manor House - a small boy, two 'bonny daughters,' a young Culum. On SOUND, the soft, keening lament of a bagpipe. TAI-PAN studies each face, and there is water in his eyes.

A SOUND - and TAI-PAN turns his head.

MAY-MAY kneels in the doorway - in her arms, flowers of mourning. When she sees the pain in his face, it brings tears to hers. She bends forward, placing the flowers on the floor before her. Then, her voice choked with emotion:

MAY-MAY

For your very great loss, my heart is
full of sadness...

The truth of it touches TAI-PAN. He simply nods and she rises to go.

(CONTINUED)

66 CONTINUED:

66

TAI-PAN

May-may --

(she pauses and turns back
to him)I have much business today and I will
make certain arrangements. ~~You must~~
do exactly as I order.

I WAN'T YOU

MAY-MAY

Of course. Don't I always most times.

TAI-PAN must smile wistfully at this - it gives her license to say:

MAY-MAY (cont'd)

I burned incense for safe rebirth of
your Supreme Lady and her children.Again, the emotion, again it touches TAI-PAN. He is about to respond when
two chimes SOUND inside the house. MAY-MAY recognizes that this is business,
bows and pads away.

67 EXT. GARDEN - MAY-MAY'S HOUSE/MACAO - DAY

67

VARGAS, CHEN and GORDON rise as TAI-PAN enters, the two Chinese bowing deeply,
VARGAS meeting Tai-Pan's eyes.

VARGAS

We are deeply touched by your loss.

CHEN

My wife and my son and I,
(he has nodded to
GORDON)

beg to express our unworthy condolences.

GORDON waits for the Tai-Pan's eyes to fall on him.

GORDON

My mother spent the night in tears.

TAI-PAN

Give her my greetings - but I must tell
you of another loss.

VARGAS

I think we know. - Trouble is a vulture -
it comes in flocks. Gorth was here before
dawn - he has been everywhere.

TAI-PAN nods cynically, 'of course he would have been.'

(CONTINUED)

67 CONTINUED:

67

CHEN

Everywhere today I am told Noble House
must pay in silver. No credit. Unless
Tai-Pan produces a miracle the ships
will return without silk or tea.

TAI-PAN pauses broodily.

TAI-PAN **DIZNA**

The Tai-Pan's cargo ~~donna~~ contain miracles
today...

But then he proceeds with his usual authority.

TAI-PAN (cont'd)

You mus' keep the cargo of Morning Cloud
from Brock. Chen, use every friend you **ive got**
h Gordon, I want ye to come with me.

68 EXT. STREET/MACAO - DAY

68

TAI-PAN and GORDON ride in a rickshaw down a teeming street.

GORDON

It is hard to believe, Mr. Struan.

E TAI-PAN

At sea you learn that what is given can
be taken away, Gordon.

(he ruffles Gordon's
hair)

But **I** **donna** worry about me, lad. I was
a privateer before and by week's end
I'll take Morning Cloud from under
Brock's nose and be one again - and
I'll be back to haunt him.

It is certain and firm - the anger in his voice a threat, not bluster. It
rejuvenates GORDON.

GORDON

If I could help...

TAI-PAN

Aye. I was counting on it. **Have** you
heard of the pirate Wu Fang Choi?

Er

GORDON

Of course.

TAI-PAN

He's on Amoy. I'm sending you to --

(CONTINUED)

68 CONTINUED:

68

But suddenly a rough GANG of CHINESE have cut off the narrow street, one pulls the RICKSHAW DRIVER out of the stays, takes the handles and speeds down a narrow side street.

TAI-PAN draws a knife from his boot, and one from the back of his belt -- the rickshaw turns into an entryway - and stops. TAI-PAN leaps out - the CHINESE GANG keep their distance from his knives... but the deeply scarred LEADER steps forward and holds a note. TAI-PAN signals him to pass it to GORDON. GORDON reads it -

GORDON

'The Noble House is in need. These men
will lead you to a friend. Come secretly.' -
(he looks at the GANG)
Don't do it.

The TAI-PAN is assessing the GANG -

TAI-PAN

I have need of friends, Gordon - even
dangerous ones. Maybe my joss hasn't
turned ~~after~~ all.

He nods to the LEADER. As he goes off, he turns to GORDON -

KEEP QUIET

TAI-PAN (cont'd)

~~Be silent~~ for twelve hours. Then if
ye hear nothing, tell Orlov to bring
the ~~crew~~ of Morning Cloud and find me.

The SCARRED LEADER knocks once on a door in a wall - it opens - and he gestures TAI-PAN in.

69 EXT. GARDEN - CHINESE HOUSE/MACAO - DAY

69

An ELDERLY WOMAN dressed in black silk awaits TAI-PAN. She leads him silently to the house.

70 INT. CHINESE HOUSE/MACAO - DAY

70

The house is elegant, neat. The ELDERLY WOMAN signals quiet as she and TAI-PAN climb the inner stairs.

TAI-PAN follows the ELDERLY WOMAN into the room. She crosses to a wall, slides a panel very quietly to one side -- peers through a peephole. TAI-PAN moves her aside -- and then suddenly moves forward in startled incredulity.

HIS POV - MARY SINCLAIR lies on the bed, undressed. Her head rests on the arm of a sleeping JIN QUA.

TAI-PAN can hardly believe his eyes!

(CONTINUED)

70 CONTINUED:

70

MARY turns and gently wakens JIN QUA - she kisses him tenderly -- then claps her hands. A SERVANT GIRL enters - unperturbed by their nudity - and begins to dress JIN QUA whose jewel-sheathed, four-inch nails make that task impossible for him.

There is a sudden commotion in the garden - and TAI-PAN rushes to the window.

71 EXT. GARDEN - CHINESE HOUSE/MACAO - DAY

71

In the garden is an ornate sedan chair - and a large, noisy COMPANY of GUARDS.

72 INT. CHINESE HOUSE/MACAO - DAY

72

TAI-PAN feels trapped - the SOUND of a door closing softly behind him. He whirls, drawing the knife from his boot. MARY SINCLAIR has come through a hidden door in the wall. She wears a tantalizing gossamer robe that hides nothing.

MARY

Hello, Tai-Pan...

(he is speechless)

You need not worry - Jin Qua has gone down the other stairs.

TAI-PAN

I'm ~~na~~ worried... I'm disgusted.

He sheathes his knife. With a look, MARY dismisses the WOMAN.

MARY

Why - because I like to go to bed with Chinese? You are a strange one to feel that.

She has walked to a table with a crystal decanter, fingering the jade necklace she wears, tossing her long blonde hair, making the TAI-PAN note the soft lines of her body, the long legs.

TAI-PAN

You're a woman! - And a child!

MARY

Ha! - How old was May-may when you bought her? Fourteen. - I know.

(she faces him -)

I have followed your every move since I was fourteen.

It bears the tone of a long felt adoration. She offers the drink.

(CONTINUED)

72 CONTINUED:

72

TAI-PAN

I don't want your drink. Why have you done this?

MARY

(swallows his drink, then sips hers)

Because you need my help. -- And I had to prove to you I could deliver it... I would rather have tried to make you mine...

TAI-PAN sags in a chair - flummoxed.

TAI-PAN

By the sweet Jesus - I'm lost. This is ~~not~~ the Mary Sinclair I know.

MARY

It is. Mary Sinclair the innocent who loves church and singing and knitting is also me. We are all that way, Tai-Pan. Look at you - devil, smuggler, prince, murderer, husband, father, fornicator -- saint. Which is you?

TAI-PAN

I'm going to send you back to England!

MARY

You don't have the power - now. But Jin Qua can restore it -- and Jin Qua is my lover. He will have a price, but he will do it. - I owe you that.

She has implied she will pay the price.

TAI-PAN

You owe me nothing!

MARY

(referring to her own pain)

You've never been beaten --

(its sincerity stops him - she smiles)

You stopped my father beating me, but not my brother from 'comforting' me... May-may was more a virgin at fourteen than I was, Tai-Pan.

She lets the incestuous thought sink into his startled consciousness - then as softly:

(CONTINUED)

72 CONTINUED:

72

MARY (cont'd)
 Arrange to see Jin Qua. He's returning
 to Canton - he'll be waiting...

73 INT. HOUSEBOAT WHOREHOUSE/MACAO - NIGHT

73

MRS. FOTHERINGILL runs along the ramps from one houseboat to another. She is calling Quance's name, and behind her we can hear frightened female VOICES and the SOUNDS of a commotion.

MRS. FOTHERINGILL
 Aristotle! - Mr. Quance! Please come
 quick! - Mr. Quance!

She reaches a door and pounds on it -- then pushes into --

74 INT. QUANCE'S ROOM - HOUSEBOAT WHOREHOUSE/MACAO - NIGHT

74

It's on the very top deck - an easel, paintings and paint all over the place, a spread of open windows. QUANCE is in the large messy bed with TWO deliciously nubile young CHINESE GIRLS. He rouses himself with difficulty - to face the hysterical MRS. FOTHERINGILL, a 'madame' who looks like a minister's wife.

MRS. FOTHERINGILL
 Mr. Quance -- please, you must come
 quick! It's Gorth -- and he won't
 be stopped!

This prompts QUANCE to shake the sleep from his head. He scrambles awkwardly out of bed.

75 EXT. HOUSEBOAT WHOREHOUSE/MACAO - NIGHT

75

QUANCE, a patterned sarong tied around his bony figure, hurries down the plank, followed by MRS. FOTHERINGILL. They pass some GIRLS - a few crying, some cursing angrily - and some CHINESE CUSTOMERS. We HEAR the cries and moans of a girl - and the SOUND of a whip!

76 INT. HOUSEBOAT WHOREHOUSE/MACAO - NIGHT

76

QUANCE turns to a door and pounds furiously on it. The beating goes on. He grabs a binding chain and slams it against the door. Again... and the door is slowly opened.

GORTH stands in it. He is nude, his body covered with sweat - a flog dangling from one hand. We just glimpse a NAKED GIRL, tied to a corner of the four-poster bed, her blood-streaked body sagged... little dying MOANS.

(CONTINUED)

76 CONTINUED:

76

Gorth's eyes seem vague, lost... gradually they focus.

GORTH

Ohh -- you. What do you want?

QUANCE

Get your clothes - get out of here.

He has glanced at the NAKED GIRL. GORTH turns -- and reacts as though just seeing her. He turns back, a sick smile -

QUANCE pushes GORTH in. MRS. FOTHERINGILL and SOME GIRLS rush in, untying the beaten GIRL from the bedpost. GORTH slips on trousers as QUANCE stands over him -

MRS. FOTHERINGILL

I don't want you back here!

GORTH insolently fumbles in his pocket - he takes out gold coins.

GORTH

That's for her.

(another bunch of coins)

That's for keeping your mouth shut.

QUANCE

You should be beaten like that yourself.

GORTH

(a derisive smile -)

The Tai-Pan's time is coming to an end.

When it does, I'll look for you.

He stands and veers arrogantly out - turning to MRS. FOTHERINGILL, glancing off at the GIRL.

GORTH (cont'd)

Why do you worry, you only pick them
off the street anyway. I'll be back.

77 EXT. PEARL RIVER/CANTON SETTLEMENT - DUSK

77

TAI-PAN being rowed up-river by a CHINESE CREW. Along the river bank they pass THREE BLACK-GARBED FIGURES hanged together on a crude gibbet.

The boat TAI-PAN is in passes the 'foreign' warehouses. Some lights, activity. TAI-PAN is in the canvas covered 'cabin.' Beyond the piers, he looks out cautiously, his cloak obscuring his face.

78 EXT. TRIBUTARY TO PEARL RIVER - NIGHT

78

He is now entering forbidden areas of the city.

(CONTINUED)

78 CONTINUED:

78

A Police Barge passes. The CREW LEADER mutters something. TAI-PAN slides lower below the gunnel.

79 EXT. CHINESE WAREHOUSE/CANTON - NIGHT

79

The boat TAI-PAN is in edges cautiously down a small sidewater, the CREW tense, looking everywhere for trouble.

80 INT. CHINESE WAREHOUSE/CANTON - NIGHT

80

TAI-PAN sits at a small table in the corner of the warehouse, JIN QUA across from him. A Chinese meal before them.

JIN QUA

Please - eat.

TAI-PAN picks at his food, glancing about the huge, rickety warehouse. In the darkness, only penetrated by a lantern or two, CHINESE GUARDS watch them from a distance.

JIN QUA (cont'd)

A friend says you want to see me, Tai-Pan?

TAI-PAN

We have done much trade, Jin Qua. Many years. Many troubles. Many favors.

JIN QUA

Trade stops now. I hear the one-eye Devil Brock has Tai-Pan by the throat.

TAI-PAN

Chow number one good.

JIN QUA smiles at his evasion - then soberly -

JIN QUA

Men say Tai-Pan's Supreme Lady and many chill are dead. Bad joss - I'm sorry.

TAI-PAN

Yes - bad joss...

JIN QUA

You only have one proper boy?

TAI-PAN

Now, only one.

(CONTINUED)

80 CONTINUED:

80

JIN QUA

Never mind. You are plenty young.
May-may will give you strong boy chillos.

TAI-PAN smiles at that.

TAI-PAN

And you, Jin Qua - how many boy chillos?

JIN QUA

Seventeen. Oldest born when I am sixteen.

He preens a little. TAI-PAN smiles - the pleasure of it for both provides an opening for delicate matters.

TAI-PAN

I am told the Imperial Commissioner,
Jin, has returned to the province.

JIN QUA

(nods soberly)

Yingtak. ... The Manchus conquered China many centuries ago, but here in South we remain Mings in our hearts. To defy the Emperor can be a way to honor.

TAI-PAN

A rather dangerous one.

JIN QUA

Not as long as the British have Men O' War.

And suddenly he claps his hands, and a CHINESE GUARD comes out of the shadows and pries open a crate near TAI-PAN - he lifts a silver bar from it. It registers with TAI-PAN.

JIN QUA

Forty lac dollars - all silver.

TAI-PAN tries - unsuccessfully - to mask his astonishment.

TAI-PAN

Forty lac... That would take Brock off my throat and then some. - If anyone knew it was here --

He glances around - now he knows the reason for the meeting place, the GUARDS.

JIN QUA

I borrowed it. This two days. Very dangerous. Very difficult. If Tai-Pan wants to borrow it from me - I believe Tai-Pan will pay.

(CONTINUED)

80 CONTINUED:

80

TAI-PAN
 ↓cautiously↓
 What favor in return - ?

^
 JIN QUA
 Interest - plus a 'squeeze.' Big squeeze.
 (TAI-PAN nods - of course)
 Noble House buys only from Jin Qua and
 Jin Qua's sons for ten years.

TAI-PAN hesitates.

TAI-PAN
 If Jin Qua sell at market price.

JIN QUA
 Market price, plus ten percent.

TAI-PAN
 ... Five.

JIN QUA
 Eight.

TAI-PAN
 Five.

JIN QUA
 ... Seven.

TAI-PAN
Five.

JIN QUA
 Seven.

TAI-PAN pauses -- then accepts.

JIN QUA (cont'd)
 You sell Jin Qua five lac dollars land
 in Hong Kong.

(TAI-PAN reacts, JIN QUA
 smiles -)
 Hong Kong plan is wise. You sell to
 Jin Qua in the name of your improper
 boy chillo, Gordon Chen.

TAI-PAN looks up at him - taken aback by this association, JIN QUA and GORDON.
 In the shadows, we see CLOSE that one of the obscure figures watching them
 is GORDON.

TAI-PAN
 If that is your wish.

I

(CONTINUED)

80 CONTINUED:

80

JIN QUA nods, and places a small box on the table. Out of it he takes two coins -- then places them in front of TAI-PAN... and splits them. They have been broken. He pushes one half of each towards TAI-PAN.

JIN QUA

When someone - anyone - brings you
the half you do not have, you do him -
or her - the favor they ask.

TAI-PAN

(alarmed at that -)
What favor?

JIN QUA shrugs - any favor. TAI-PAN pauses. JIN QUA is firm.

JIN QUA

Can do?

TAI-PAN

(a deep breath -)

Can...

JIN QUA rises. Where all was calm, now all is hurry.

JIN QUA

Tomorrow night, I will send the bullion
to your warehouse to be shipped to Morning
Cloud - but you know danger. From your
enemies - and others. I will send my
safest men - but forty lacs silver would
make rich many, many Chinese families
for generations -- and you are but a
barbarian.

He folds his hands, and bows.

JIN QUA (cont'd)

I leave you to enjoy your meal.

And he goes off into the darkness. TWO FIGURES falling in behind him. TAI-PAN starts to turn back to his dinner, but one of the REMAINING GUARDS catches his eye. More accustomed now to the darkness, he sees that it is GORDON...

Slowly TAI-PAN rises and moves to him. When he is right before him, GORDON bows.

TAI-PAN

What are you to Jin Qua, Gordon?

GORDON

What Tai-Pan is to the English, Jin Qua
is to the Chinese. I respect both.

(CONTINUED)

80 CONTINUED:

80

TAI-PAN

May-may has told me there are secret
 groups, Mings - pledged to the overthrow
 of the Manchus.

GORDON

I have heard.

TAI-PAN

Is this one of them?

GORDON

No, Tai-Pan. Some are friends, but
 they are only helping Jin Qua help the
 Tai-Pan.

TAI-PAN holds his gaze sternly for a moment - an inkling of doubt, but then
 he accepts it. He smiles -

TAI-PAN

Thank ye, Gordon. And thank Jin Qua -
 tell him his news made me too excited
 to enjoy the delicacies he offered.
 Another time.

And he strides towards the wharf exit, looking at the crates of silver as he
 goes. ONE of the OTHER GUARDS looks at GORDON weightedly. GORDON glances
 back with severity that kills any inclination to speak...

81 INT. BEDROOM - NOBLE HOUSE/CANTON - NIGHT

81

A chopstick holds a prawn to Tai-Pan's face.

MAY-MAY'S VOICE

Eat. They make you very potent.

TAI-PAN swallows as he smiles. MAY-MAY eats the head of the prawn as she
 prepares another. She wears a clinging silk robe - her luxuriant black
 hair framed in crescents adorned with jade... her skin a white so soft as to
 be almost translucent.

MAY-MAY

It is fantastic true - prawns are very
 important for your vigor.

She offers him another - he takes it - again, she eats the head.

TAI-PAN

~~Damn it, that may be~~ - but do you ha'e
 to eat the heads.

(CONTINUED)

81 CONTINUED:

81

MAY-MAY

Aye, by God, do you na' ken they're
the best part, laddie!

A second, then she laughs so much at his reaction to her mimicking him -
she chokes on her prawns.

TAI-PAN

That **I**ll teach ye.

Charmed, he leans to kiss her - but she pulls back.

MAY-MAY

Ah - by God, I've given ye too many
already!

And again, she laughs at her own joke until she chokes. Then, holding his
neck so he is close to her, she takes up another prawn - and says seriously:

MAY-MAY (cont'd)

One more. I want you to be fantastic
good.

(after he has taken it -)

That lump of dogmeat Brock is breaking
you by huge monies owed. Is it true?

TAI-PAN sits up.

TAI-PAN

Maybe.

MAY-MAY

It is terrifical simple to solve this
business. Kill Brock. It is time now.

TAI-PAN

That's one way. I've thought of it.

MAY-MAY

One way, another way, you will find a
way.

TAI-PAN

What makes you so sure?

MAY-MAY

You do not want to lose me.

TAI-PAN

Ha! I paid for you - too much.

(CONTINUED)

81 CONTINUED:

81

MAY-MAY

(she stands angrily)

Ayeeee yah! You're na' the only man
in China. Jin Qua could have sold me
easy to Manchu Prince, even to the Emperor -
for a thousand taels, I was Jin Qua's
gift to you for China trade.

She has walked across the room to the large silk-canopied bed. A fire burns
near the pillows where they have been eating, its shadows play upon her
figure, her delicate beauty. She begins to undo her robe and in one of her
mercurial changes -

MAY-MAY (cont'd)

You will beat Brock beacuse I please
you too much. -

Now come to me. Tai-Pan.

82 EXT. CHINESE WAREHOUSE/CANTON - NIGHT

82

A lorcha, red-painted eye on the bow, is slipped into the old warehouse dock.
COOLIES are loading the silver crates into it - watched by GORDON and THREE
GUARDS. All are wary, searching the darkness around them, expecting
discovery - and trouble.

83 INT. BEDROOM - NOBLE HOUSE/CANTON - NIGHT

83

TAI-PAN lies on the bed. He looks across the room at MAY-MAY. She is
crouched, her black hair flowing over the white of her body, as she wipes
herself with a towel - then she wets another from a kettle perched over the
fire. She takes this second towel to the bed. TAI-PAN holds his hands out
for it.

MAY-MAY

No. It gives me pleasure and it is my
duty.

And she rubs his body - all of it - with the wet towel gently, affectionately.
For a moment in silence, then -

MAY-MAY

Your custom is man have only one wife,
heya?

TAI-PAN

Aye.

MAY-MAY

Chinese custom better. Many wives.

(CONTINUED)

83 CONTINUED:

83

Finished now, she turns and lies in the crook of his arm.

MAY-MAY

How soon will you marry? What is your custom?

TAI-PAN

I ~~donna~~ think I'll marry again.

MAY-MAY

You should. A Scottish or English. But first you should marry me.

TAI-PAN

(holding her)

Aye. Perhaps I should...

MAY-MAY

(exactly the same tone)

Aye. Perhaps you should...

He smiles languidly at it... And then there is the chiming of a clock... TAI-PAN leans up -- the clock reads 5.

TAI-PAN

Come ~~ass~~. It is time.

84 EXT. LANDING STAGE/CANTON SETTLEMENT - DAWN

84

The lorcha with the red painted eye on the bow is approaching the pier.

At the doors of the warehouse, TAI-PAN, MAY-MAY and AH GIP are slipping out, the women dressed as coolies, TAI-PAN as a Chinese workman. He reaches down, smudges his hands with dirt, then smears them on May-May's face.

MAY-MAY

This filthy dirt destroys my perfection. You owe me fifty cash to repair.

TAI-PAN

Take it out of your allowance.

He bustles them on to the pier. As TAI-PAN helps MAY-MAY aboard, he comes face-to-face with CAPTAIN WUNG, who holds off AH GIP from clambering aboard.

WUNG

Wat for two girl chilllos, heya. No can.

TAI-PAN

You name - wat?

(CONTINUED)

84 CONTINUED:

84

WUNG

Wung.

TAI-PAN

Girl ~~chill~~os mine. Cast off, Wung.

And he pulls AH GIP aboard and leads her and MAY-MAY along the gangway to the lower deck.

WUNG glares after him in anger -- his eyes catch May-may's tiny feet -- he looks up at the padded figure...

85 INT. CABIN - WUNG'S LORCHA -- DAY

85

TAI-PAN opens the door to the slovenly cabin - TWO CREW lounge arrogantly on the bunks. TAI-PAN signals them aloft -

Sullenly, they go out, but one inspects MAY-MAY with brazen interest. TAI-PAN closes the door after them, then turns to MAY-MAY.

TAI-PAN

When I go out, ~~check~~ this door. Only open it to me.

And he goes out -

86 INT. THE LOWER GANGWAY - WUNG'S LORCHA - DAY

86

WUNG - carrying a lantern - is coming to the cabin.

TAI-PAN

Go to hold - now.

WUNG obviously has something else in mind, but he obeys.

87 INT. HOLD - WUNG'S LORCHA - DAY

87

WUNG leads TAI-PAN in -- TAI-PAN looks at the piled crates.

TAI-PAN

Wat's in boxes, heya?

WUNG looks at him askance.

WUNG

All same wat Jin Wua say.

TAI-PAN moves to a crate, pries it open with a crowbar - and lifts a heavy bar of silver. WUNG reacts to the sight of it. TAI-PAN glances at him -

(CONTINUED)

87 CONTINUED:

87

TAI-PAN

How much men know?

WUNG

Me only. - All know - ayeyah!

He slashes a finger across his throat. TAI-PAN agrees. He replaces the silver and signals him aloft.

TAI-PAN

Up on deck.

88 EXT. WUNG'S LORCHA/PEARL RIVER - DAY

88

The Boat moves slowly - lanterns still lit, other traffic visible. WUNG is assembling the EIGHT-MAN CREW. TAI-PAN picks up a belaying pin with his left hand. Then to WUNG -

TAI-PAN

Say all knives, all boom-boom on deck,
plenty quick.

WUNG

Ayee! No can! Plenty pirates in river.
Plenty -

TAI-PAN smashes him, slamming him to the deck. The CREW threaten angrily, but TAI-PAN faces them, shifting the belaying pin to his right hand - then again, to the amazed WUNG -

TAI-PAN

All knives, all boom-boom on deck,
quick.

Staring at TAI-PAN in stunned anger, WUNG repeats it in Chinese. Sullenly, protestingly, the knives go down.

TAI-PAN nods WUNG over to the others, and then signals them to turn around. Their backs to him, he starts to search them. The first one is clean. On the second, he finds a small pistol. In one move he lifts it and smashes it against the man's head. The MAN falls... a moment's stunned silence, 'what kind of madman is this!' then along the line two knives and two guns clatter to the deck, WUNG drops a fighting hatchet...

TAI-PAN starts hurling them into the river when -

WUNG

You crazy man, see!

He points off the stern. TAI-PAN looks - an all-black lorcha is following them - crew in black too.

(CONTINUED)

88 CONTINUED:

88

WUNG

Wat for hit me? Wat for take guns?
Plenty bad.

TAI-PAN looks fore and aft - then his eyes fall on a lantern sitting next to a powder keg -- and for a moment his eyes hold them -

89 INT. CABIN - WUNG'S LORCHA - DAY

89

AH GIP cowers in a bunk. TAI-PAN is giving MAY-MAY a gun, as he straps a fighting iron to his wrist.

TAI-PAN

You keep that.

A crude fireplace of bricks - dried fish, earthenware jars. TAI-PAN moves to it.

MAY-MAY

What for guns?

TAI-PAN

Guns!

He removes the top of a jar - sniffs. He throws a ladle full of one on the fire - it burns.

MAY-MAY

I am a civilizationed fright-filled
old woman - of great beauty I agree,
but no guns.

He tries another jar - it flames high and quick. He grabs that.

TAI-PAN

If anyone but ~~me~~ comes into the cabin -
kill him.

MAY-MAY

You crazy even for barbarian, Tai-Pan!

He's gone. And she's terrified.

90 EXT. WUNG'S LORCHA/PEARL RIVER - DAY

90

TAI-PAN is on the poop with WUNG and the HELMSMAN. He is putting gunpowder in a torn piece of canvas. He ties it around a steel arrow, then, dips the arrow in the earthen jar -- all the time WUNG is watching the shadowing lorcha.

(CONTINUED)

90 CONTINUED:

90

WUNG

(terrified)

River clear now - he attacks sure thing.

TAI-PAN stands - we see that he has prepared four arrows. He takes up the steel bow.

TAI-PAN

He come windward side, when I say, tiller hard lee, savvy!

The following lorcha has run up its foresail, it's closing fast.

WUNG

You plenty crazy!

IN

TAI-PAN

Tai-Pan ~~is~~ plenty sea battles, savvy - do what Tai-Pan say.

TAI-PAN dips an arrow into the open lantern side - it flares. He holds it up and aims at the fast-closing lorcha.

The flaming arrow flies across the sky into the main sail of the pursuing lorcha - cries of alarm from the ATTACKERS -- but the arrow strikes the canvas and its flame goes out.

The attacking lorcha is very near. TAI-PAN ignites another arrow in the lantern. A steel arrow strikes into the bulkhead near him!

TAI-PAN

Tiller! - Now!

WUNG yells, the HELMSMAN swings the tiller. TAI-PAN fires - the arrow soars towards the flapping foresail of the attacking lorcha, pierces and lodges in it. It explodes - and the sail starts to burn.

Despite the shouting scramble to douse the fire, the pursuing lorcha has swung on a collision course with Wung's lorcha, its battering ram threatening to pierce Wung's hull - some of the ATTACKING CREW ready board. Boarding lines fly out and begin to pull the boats together.

TAI-PAN runs to the point of potential collision, swinging his fighting iron ready to fight. But an unassailable array of black-suited PIRATES leap to Wung's lorcha - and face TAI-PAN. He prepares to die fighting.

VOICE (SCRAGGER) O.S.

Ahoy, Tai-Pan - permission to come aboard!

And a roar of laughter -- as SCRAGGER jumps on board. He wears a patched British Naval Officer's blouse - but he has long, wild hair, a scruffy beard, golden earrings, gold in his teeth.

(CONTINUED)

90 CONTINUED:

90

SCRAGGER

Cap'n Scragger, late o' London Town,
come for a word in your ear, M'Lord
Struan.

TAI-PAN doesn't know what to make of him, but he has no doubt he's after the
bullion. But SCRAGGER only grins at him.

SCRAGGER (cont'd)

A flag of truce, mate - your cabin or
mine?

TAI-PAN is baffled - but he gestures below - then a thought of May-may and
what the pirates will do with her.

TAI-PAN

On second thought, Captain Scragger.
Yours.

SCRAGGER has already taken a step down into the gangway -- but he shrugs and
with a smile beckons TAI-PAN to board his boat.

SCRAGGER

Leave the fighting iron, mate.

TAI-PAN hesitates, but then releases it from his wrist -

91 INT. CABIN - SCRAGGER'S LORCHA - DAY

91

Garish, lush, dirty, SCRAGGER pushes a tankard across the table. TAI-PAN
clutches his hand. CLOSE SHOT - a ring of white scars.

SCRAGGER

That's right, fifteen years transportation -
for striking one muck-pissed second mate.

TAI-PAN

You were lucky you weren't hanged.

SCRAGGER

Turned out that way.

(he drinks from his tankard)

Chained below decks we were. Nine months
passage. A hundred of us lived...

It's solemn, but then he breaks into a smile again.

SCRAGGER (cont'd)

But we mutinied in Sydney, broke our
chains and killed every duck-fornicating
crewman we set our hands on... Then I
(more)

(CONTINUED)

91 CONTINUED:

91

SCRAGGER (cont'd)
 accidentally found me a ship.
 (he looks up at TAI-PAN)
 And here I be, Tai-Pan.

He reaches across to a shelf - and puts a crumpled piece of paper on the table between them. TAI-PAN frowns -- and opens it. Half a coin. Jin Qua's 'debt!' He stares at SCRAGGER -

SCRAGGER (cont'd)
 How do you think that old highwayman
 Jin Qua laid his dirty mitts on forty
 lac o' bullion so fast, matey? You've
 ten lac aboard came from me.

He claps his hands - a command. He looks at TAI-PAN with a sobriety that explains his success.

SCRAGGER (cont'd)
 I'm gallows bait, mate. I'll never see
 England again --
 (then the flashing smile)
 but, God's blood, I've got three wives,
 all the food I can eat, and --

The door is opened. A PIRATE admits TWO BOYS, five and six, both dressed richly in green brocade jackets, and pants, soft black boots. They are obviously of mixed parentage - Chinese, English. And SCRAGGER turns serious again -

SCRAGGER (cont'd)
 These are my nippers, Tai-Pan.

He shoves the half-coin all the way across the table.

SCRAGGER (cont'd)
 They're to be sent to England. Raised
 as toffs - best schools, lodgings,
 Cambridge or Oxford when they're old
 enough. Then you bring 'em back to
 your Hong Kong and I'll see.

TAI-PAN
 That's not one favor - that's many!

SCRAGGER
 (fiercely)
 Many! Few! That's what I ask! I'll
 take my ten lac silver back! - And the
 other thirty with it - right now! If
 it weren't for the nippers you'd be in
 the bottom of the Pearl River -- Across
 the years, you remember that, matey.

(CONTINUED)

91 CONTINUED:

91

It's an argument TAI-PAN has to concede. Once established, SCRAGGER turns back to the BOYS.

SCRAGGER

This be your Da' now. You do as he says.

Tears well in the BOYS' eyes, but they turn obediently to TAI-PAN.

A moment.

SCRAGGER

Come 'ere!

The TWO BOYS turn and run to him, throwing their arms around him. He hugs them, his own eyes closed tight...

92 EXT. DECK - WUNG'S LORCHA - DAY

92

MAY-MAY is on deck with AH GIP -- she has her gun raised, but lowers it, staring unbelievably as TAI-PAN crosses from the black lorcha with the TWO BOYS.

TAI-PAN

What the devil are you doing on deck!

MAY-MAY

You think I deaf - dumb! God rotting
black pirate take Tai-Pan, he take
May-may!

She glares at SCRAGGER. TAI-PAN has to smile. He holds out the TWO BOYS to her.

TAI-PAN

Take these two below - and lock the
cabin door. Be careful you don't shoot
your toe off!

DINNA

He bends to pick up his fighting iron. The BLACK PIRATES have already leapt back aboard the black lorcha - it begins to drift away, its sails hoisted fast, catching the wind. SCRAGGER mounts the poop. He waves - a touch of melancholy in his voice.

SCRAGGER

Good to talk to a bloke, Tai-Pan, but
time I was flitting back to the shadows.
Say hello to London Bridge for me...
You owe me a sail...

And the black ship veers away to the shadows near the bank, rough Chinese singing suddenly coming from it - SCRAGGER'S VOICE loudest. TAI-PAN stares

(CONTINUED)

92 CONTINUED:

92

after it a moment, and then turns --

And is face-to-face with WUNG - pointing May-may's pistol at him. Without a second's break, TAI-PAN ducks, swinging the fighting iron. WUNG fires - but the fighting iron smashes into his face.

TAI-PAN staggers, blood rushing from his neck - he see MAY-MAY being held by a CREWMAN. Across the deck ANOTHER CREWMAN has a musket raised at TAI-PAN. The CREWMAN fires, the musket explodes, the MAN staggers, blinded -- TAI-PAN is across the deck - pitching him into the river, then swinging back with his fighting iron to catch a 3RD CREWMAN as he charges. A 4TH jumps on Tai-Pan's back, but TAI-PAN lurches back fiercely, smashing him against a mast. He whirls on him, picking him up bodily, and hurls him into the river. He turns again, swinging the fighting iron and a 5TH and 6TH CREWMAN dive off the front of the boat.

TAI-PAN swings to the stern. A CREWMAN lowers himself off the stern -- only the CREWMAN holding MAY-MAY and the groaning, wounded WUNG are left. The CREWMAN holding MAY-MAY puts a powerful hand to her neck and starts to squeeze. TAI-PAN is stopped.

A second's stand-off - and suddenly AH GIP leaps from the darkness and plunges a knife in the crewman's back! The CREWMAN winces, twisting, eyes bulging... and slowly collapses. AH GIP stares down at him -- and then crumples. MAY-MAY turns, baffled, to stare at the two of them.

MAY-MAY

The worthless whore is a good slave,
Tai-Pan...

WUNG, covered with blood, his wounds hideous, has pulled himself upright. He still holds the pistol. He aims it at TAI-PAN and tries to speak - but only a strangled gargle comes out.

MAY-MAY screams at the sight of him -- and that scream turns Wung's eye as he fires... the bullet hits the wood past TAI-PAN... and WUNG slumps to his death...

93 EXT. WUNG'S LORCHA/PEARL RIVER - SUNSET

93

Wung's lorcha sails down river, TAI-PAN is at the tiller. MAY-MAY comes to him with a mug. She has washed - the padded jacket removed, her hair braided. Beautiful, fragile.

MAY-MAY

I make fire. And I make tea. Ah Gip
and the boys they sleep.

TAI-PAN

I didn't know you could make tea, much
less light a fire.

(CONTINUED)

93 CONTINUED:

93

She has leaned against the bulkhead, looking at him...

MAY-MAY

You have fantastical joss, Tai-Pan. You've got old one-eye Brock, now, but would be very wise to give offering to sea god for what he did.

TAI-PAN

It would be plenty bad. I've told ye a thousand times, there are ~~no~~ gods but God.

MAY-MAY

True. But please, please, Tai-Pan. I said a prayer already to One God. But dinna forget that we're in China and it is a Chinese River. And how for do I know the Lord Jesus, who was barbarian, likes Chinese, heya?

TAI-PAN

He does. And He's not a barbarian.

MAY-MAY

I know. Oh yes, Tai-Pan, I know absolutely. But I'm only a two-year Christian, so He will forgive me, and you have so many silver now.

TAI-PAN looks at her - she has been so shaken. He grins, shaking his head - and relents. She rushes to him, clinging.

MAY-MAY

It's alright, Tai-Pan. Lord Jesus knows we need fantastical plenty help.

94 EXT. WUNG'S LORCHA/PEARL RIVER - NIGHT

94

LATER - FEATURING a silver bar, wrapped in canvas with Chinese writing on it. MAY-MAY carries it like incense before her as she moves to a spot on the deck just below the poop. She holds it out over the water as TAI-PAN watches.

MAY-MAY

(solemnly)

Oh Great, Wise and Powerful Sea God, in return for this enormous gift, worth at least a thousand taels, please bring us safe to barbarian ship called Morning Cloud and thence to island of Hong Kong wat the barbarians have stolen from us.

(CONTINUED)

94 CONTINUED:

94

Her eyes are closed.

TAI-PAN

I dinna think much of that prayer!

MAY-MAY

It's most important to tell truth in prayer!

Her eyes are still closed. She pauses a moment - then deftly removes the silver brick from the canvas, letting the canvas fall ceremoniously into the water, while she slips the brick into the folds of her blouse. -- TAI-PAN sees it all. She opens her eyes, sighs, then turns and clambers back up to the poop...

TAI-PAN

That's a cheat by God. You dinna drop the silver!

DIDNA

MAY-MAY

(whispering)

Sssssh! You dinna think I'd throw all that silver in the river, do you? God's blood, am I mad?

TAI-PAN

Then why go through -- ? **WETH UHT**

MAY-MAY

Sssssh! He hear you. I swear to God, Tai-Pan, I dinna understand you at all. Wat for do gods need real silver, heya? To buy real clothes? Gods are gods. What am I an Empress that I can throw silver away?

TAI-PAN

(whispering! - like her)

But I ~~st~~ ill dinna understand why you think the sea god'll answer your prayers when you've tricked him!

MAY-MAY

Will you na' say such things! It's na' real silver a God want! Merely idea. Alright, never mind, he got idea. I swear to God barbarians are strange people.

TAI-PAN stammers to reply, then, giving up --

TAI-PAN

... Aye - reckon.

(CONTINUED)

94 CONTINUED:

94

Satisfied, she stares out at the river, then moves around and settles herself on the hatchway, clasping her hands around his legs.

Without her seeing it, he smiles down at her.

MAY-MAY

How many men are there like you in your country, Tai-Pan?

TAI-PAN

About twenty million.

MAY-MAY

... I dinna believe you, laddie.

TAI-PAN reaches down and touches her head. She nestles into him.

MAY-MAY (cont'd)

You're fantastical good for me, Tai-Pan.

He looks down at the top of her head - a wry smile, 'who's good for whom'...

95 EXT. SHORE/HONG KONG - DAY

95

FEATURING ARISTOTLE QUANCE - bright, cheerful, walking with a cane that adds an ornamental flourish to his dandyism.

QUANCE

It's like a horse race. They can't wait till the auction this afternoon. Every stable has its coursers at the ready.

He strides along with TAI-PAN - passing stacks of lumber, nails, bolts, building frames... WORKMEN putting things in order - ready to start. TAI-PAN is glancing off with a frown -

TAI-PAN

How long has that been going on?

HIS POV - On the sand CULUM, GORTH, HORATIO and a COUPLE of YOUNG NAVAL OFFICERS are Indian wrestling. The REVEREND MAUS is referee and grandstand. He cheers as GORTH easily beats a determined CULUM. GORTH helps CULUM to his feet, and puts a friendly arm around him - though the throw has been harder than need be.

QUANCE

Young men choose their own friends - that's one of the hardest lessons of being a parent.

TAI-PAN

You would know. ^{w w (archly)} o :

(CONTINUED)

95 CONTINUED:

95

QUANCE

I may not have performed like a parent
- but I have suffered as one.

(he glances at the BOYS
again, then -)

For 50 quid I'll tell you something -
worth your knowing.

TAI-PAN looks at him impatiently - but nods assent.

QUANCE (cont'd)

You notice Captain Glessing's not among
'em.

TAI-PAN

I assumed he was with the surveyors
getting ready for the auction.

QUANCE

Aye, that he is. But as honor to you,
he's made your Culum auctioneer.

TAI-PAN

Has he. I didna think the man had that
much stomach.

QUANCE

Well you were wrong, but now there's
not a soul on the island who believes
you won't bid. -- And there's not a
soul who believes you can pay for a
tupenny lot either. It puts Glessing
in a hard position.

He stares at the TAI-PAN, and TAI-PAN understands... A beat -

TAI-PAN

a: (as he pays him) **f**
I'd be grateful, Aristotle, if you put
it about that I'm having a 'tea' at my
tents before the auction - and I'm
particularly inviting Mr. Bröck. **f**

Quance's eyes light at the mystery in that.

QUANCE

My pleasure. - By-the-way as a certain
lady was 'sitting' for me I learned she's
in a flux for you - absolute lovesick.

TAI-PAN

(sceptically)

And what lady be that?

WOULD THAT BE?

(CONTINUED)

95 CONTINUED:

95

QUANCE

I'm sworn not to say, lad - but by the Instrument of Jove, Magnificent! Now that you're eligible again, you've taken on a certain charm, even if you are a bankrupt.

TAI-PAN smiles at the 'generous' assessment - he glances back again at the YOUNG MEN. CULUM and GORTH stand side-by-side. It's a sight that troubles TAI-PAN.

96 INT. CAPTAIN'S CABIN - MORNING CLOUD - DAY

96

MAY-MAY is supervising as AH GIP tries to feed SCRAGGER'S TWO BOYS. They are plainly ill-at-ease in the neat, clean cabin.

MAY-MAY

Tai-Pan, these two boy chillos won't eat! Ah Gip fix number one chow for Emperor! Look at them - !

The BOYS try to smile at TAI-PAN but they're obviously uncomfortable and desperately homesick. TAI-PAN has been conferring with ORLOV - he sends him out the door before him.

TAI-PAN

(sympathetically)

They're boys. They'll get hungry - and they'll eat. Just dunna ~~be~~ cross with them.

DINNA GET

He starts to go out -- but MAY-MAY beats him to the door.

MAY-MAY

Do you na' think I make number one momma for chilo...?

She's preening proudly -

TAI-PAN

Aye, when you're toothless I may get a good price for you as a nursemaid.

She slashes at him - and misses - as he ducks out grinning.

97 EXT. BEACH - NOBLE HOUSE ENCLAVE/HONG KONG - DAY

97

CHINESE SERVANTS serve tea. LADIES, NAVAL OFFICERS, MERCHANTMEN present, a BAND playing light music.

FEATURING GORTH - he is introducing CULUM to his MOTHER.

(CONTINUED)

GORTH

And this be Culum Struan, mother -
(a touch of mockery)
the heir to the Noble House.

CULUM smiles self-consciously - it's a new idea to him.

CULUM

I hardly think of myself as that. My
pleasure, m'am.

He nods to BROCK.

BROCK

Still it be true, lad. I hear you're
a God-fearin' lad, and I'm pleased to
meet thee, proper, though I'm no friend
to your father.

MRS. BROCK

Tyler - !

BROCK

Well it's best the boy know the truth -
and that I expect the auction today to
be done fair.

CULUM

It will be. I assure you.

His righteousness. GORTH turns, TESS has come to join them.

GORTH

And this be my sister, Tess - Culum
Struan.

TESS, mired in unhappiness, turns and suddenly sees a dawn unconceived. She
stares into the sensitive, complex eyes of CULUM and all that aches and longs
in her suddenly finds a heart-stopping focus. And part of this impact comes
from the fact that in the slightly untamed innocence of her sensual face
CULUM has, as instantly, found a home for desires he was only dimly aware he
possessed.

CULUM

It... it is my honor, Miss.

GORTH

(the first small hint
of using Culum)

The Tai-Pan asked my father to bring
along the sight drafts he holds against
Noble House - has he decided not to bid?

(CONTINUED)

97 CONTINUED:

97

CULUM drags his eyes reluctantly from TESS.

CULUM

I - I don't know - I know he wants the knoll badly. But I hope he will not bid.

GORTH exchanges a smug glance with BROCK, but CULUM misses it for Tess' use of her fan has ensnared mind and will.

98 INT./EXT. TAI-PAN'S TENT/HONG KONG - DAY

98

LATER -- Through its silken entrance, GORDON leads THREE CHINESE SERVANTS who carry bowls of huge prawns and champagne. They are offered to BROCK, MRS. BROCK and TESS who sit facing TAI-PAN and CULUM. GORTH stands behind his father. OTHERS hover around - sipping tea, chatting - hoping to catch the action. We see GLESSING, MARY, HORATIO, SHEVAUN, TILLMAN, QUANCE...

BROCK

Champagne - ! Well, you always had a style about thee, Struan - even in defeat.

TAI-PAN

I wonder if you'd do me the courtesy, ~~Tyler~~, to let me see the sight drafts you say ye hold against Noble House.

BRAWK

BROCK

I don't say. They be here - before your own eyes.

He hands them to VARGAS to pass. TAI-PAN waves them aside.

TAI-PAN

Will you check them against the ledger, Mr. Vargas?

BROCK

One million two hundred thousand, Mr. Vargas, make sure you add them right. - The prawns be right tasty, Dirk, you can tell your cook, he'll have a job with the new owners.

TAI-PAN

I'll pass the message. Now, Tyler, if you'd just sign this ~~receipt~~ for me.

BROCK

He passes a pad bearing a large receipt via CHEN SHENG.

BROCK

And what be that for?

(CONTINUED)

98 CONTINUED:

98

VARGAS (o.s.)

All correct, Mr. Struan.

TAI-PAN

I've decided to pay in cash - I assume that's acceptable.

BROCK

Don't ye pull one of your --

TAI-PAN

Captain Orlov - please.

BROCK turns - all eyes turn - to ORLOV who stands with some CREW at a small tent next to Tai-Pan's. On ORLOV'S order, the CREW collapses the tent backwards revaealing stacks of several hundred glittering bricks of silver. A stunned open-mouthed reaction - ! GLESSING, HORATIO, QUANCE, SHEVAUN, a SEAMAN... and finally BROCK.

TAI-PAN

It's all been weighed, but there's a scale if you wish to check the amount.

~~E~~
With BROCK still breathless, TAI-PAN takes the sight drafts from VARGAS, passes a cheroot to him, one for himself -- he lights the sight drafts, then uses them to light Vargas' cigar, then his own. He drops the burning sight drafts to the sand, looking across at BROCK who at last has found his voice -- he stands, red faced, raging -

BROCK

God rot you to hell, Struan! - Gorth! - get thy bully boys ashore and on the double. Armed! Every heathen pirate in Asia will be on our necks!

He turns, searching out GLESSING - finds him.

BROCK (cont'd)

Captain Glessing, I be asking your Marines to guard this till I get it safely aboard a clipper.

GLESSING

Aye, Mr. Brock. My pleasure, sir.

BROCK turns back to TAI-PAN, who puffs in calm amusement at Brock's violent consternation. BROCK grabs his coin purse and hurls it at Tai-Pan's feet - his fury cold and feral.

BROCK

Buy thyself a coffin.

It is deadly - and its tone brings as awed a hush as the sight of the silver did. He turns and storms away.

(CONTINUED)

98 CONTINUED:

98

TAI-PAN stares after him a moment -- then CULUM moves to the purse - some gold coins have spilled from it. He stands over them - not understanding the depth of hatred between the two men, or quite what his father has done - but finally he bends to pick up the purse and coins - then runs after the BROCKS.

99 EXT. SHORE/HONG KONG - DAY

99

TESS turns and sees CULUM running after. She pulls at HER MOTHER'S arm.

CULUM

Mr. Brock! - Mr. Brock!

BROCK turns. CULUM pants up to them. A glance at TESS.

BROCK raises his finger like a knife.

BROCK

Let me tell ye this! You do that auction fair - or no man'll save thee - not thy father, not anyone! And I'll have that knoll!

(pointing off to it)

If he tries to outbid me, I'll use his own silver to drive him back to bankruptcy. Tell him that! Brock and Sons will be the Tai-Pans!

And he turns on his heel, leaving the despairing CULUM. TESS is hurried off by HER MOTHER -- but looks back in anguish.

100 EXT. LANDSALE SITE/HONG KONG SHORE - DAY

100

A raised platform for the AUCTIONEER and CLERKS. Stands for refreshments. PEOPLE milling about - weary.

CULUM - the auctioneer - is very nervous, very tense. After conferring with the busy CLERKS, he pounds the gavel --

CULUM

(tensely -)

And the last lot - 112 B.

And TAI-PAN turns from conversation and rises from one side of the GROUP - BROCK from the other!

TAI-PAN

(storming)

What do you mean, the ~~last~~ ^{last} lot!
What about the knoll!

(CONTINUED)

100 CONTINUED:

100

BROCK is as furious - but now he's a little confused.

BROCK

Aye! The knoll!

CULUM

The knoll... has already been purchased.

BROCK lets out a roar! TAI-PAN marches to the podium, pushing people aside, like he is going to kill his son. His red-faced anger so deep, so unusual, it creates a hush --

AC TAI-PAN
Purchased by whom!?

CULUM

By me... For the Church.

(a buzz of startled
reaction)

Captain Glessing agreed the deed. One
pound a year. A church will be built
on the knoll -- it will belong to all.

TAI-PAN
You knew that land was mine!!

~~FOR ME~~
FOR NOBLE HOUSE

CULUM

... The knoll belongs to the House of
God.

The contrast with 'Noble' House lies in the tone. Tai-Pan's fury is so deep, it seems he will leap to the podium!

TAI-PAN
You dare to cross me - on ~~this~~!!

Even BROCK hesitates, convinced that TAI-PAN is going to do something savage to CULUM. Father and son stare at each other, CULUM visibly shaking. -- But finally TAI-PAN whirls around and storms out of the GROUP. BROCK musters a sneering laugh.

QUANCE

Shut up, Brock.

He is the only man in the group who has the courage or the immunity to dare such a remark. BROCK glares at him.

BROCK

Aye, that I will, Aristotle. -

(he turns to CULUM, his
own anger spilling out
now)

Thy days are numbered, lad. Ye know
how to make enemies on all sides.

(CONTINUED)

100 CONTINUED:

100

And he turns and storms out. CULUM is shaking, trembling. He looks at TESS who is pulled away by HER MOTHER.

CULUM

(repeating -)

The last lot is lot 112 B. The bids
will open at 100 pounds.

And he licks his lips to fight the shaking fear that is in him.

FEATURING TAI-PAN striding angrily away, VARGAS and CHEN SHENG at his side.

TAI-PAN

Tell Culum I want him on his knoll at
dawn.

VARGAS

But, Mr. Struan, I'm sure he only --

TAI-PAN

I want him ~~him~~ alone!

CHEN SHEN

Honorable Tai-Pan, the boy --

TAI-PAN

Tell him to come alone!

And he strides away as they falter in despair.

101 EXT. THE KNOLL/HONG KONG - DAY

101

CULUM struggles up to the top of the knoll - winded - fearful, but resigned. He lifts his head and pauses --

TAI-PAN stands on the knoll - facing him. He is near the pile of rocks which holds the remains of the cross he burned, a knife in his belt - and at his feet, two coiled fighting irons. He stares at CULUM penetratingly, then glances off -

TAI-PAN

The view's extraordinary, do you na' ^{3?}
agree?

CULUM

If the church --

TAI-PAN

I know all about the church! - Have [^] you
heard about Brock? [✓]

EJ

(CONTINUED)

101 CONTINUED:

101

CULUM

(his mind on Tess -)

No. - What?

TAI-PAN

Pirated last night. They tried to board him to get the silver. ~~They beat them off~~, but he lost his Captain - Nagrek. He was so cut up, Brock buried him at sea without even waiting for Reverend Maus.

BRAWK

He turns to CULUM - who is still catching his breath.

CULUM

I'm sorry. I never met him.

TAI-PAN

No. He's not ~~been~~ ashore, but he was a good man. But that is the way to die - a captain defending his ship.

CULUM looks at him - the two fighting irons.

CULUM

Is this my ship - is that what you mean?

TAI-PAN

D'it?

It's challenging, CULUM is clearly afraid, but -

CULUM

I'm not afraid of you. You can kill me, but you'll hang for it.

TAI-PAN

You think I'd ~~kill~~ ye?

CULUM

When I came here you were God to me. Now, I think you be the Devil... I know you are a murderer - and worse.

TAI-PAN looks at him flatly - then shrugs. .

TAI-PAN

Come here.

As he walks across the knoll - on a little ledge just beneath it a table-cloth is spread - food and a bottle of wine. CULUM stares at it in surprise. TAI-PAN smiles.

(CONTINUED)

101 CONTINUED:

101

TAI-PAN

Sit down.

CULUM

I be alright - standing.

TAI-PAN shrugs, he sits, pouring two glasses of wine. Below them we see the harbor, we HEAR the builders distantly at work.

TAI-PAN

It's a grand view. I 'burned the cross' up there.

He glances at the stub in the rock. Then he turns back to CULUM, sighs - and peers off towards China.

TAI-PAN (cont'd)

There's a wondrous ~~land~~ out there. Culum. A strange, silent world - that stretches for ~~leagues~~ and ~~leagues~~ like an unsailed sea... And more people than we could ~~ever~~ dream of.

CULUM

They hate us.

TAI-PAN

Some do. Many don't. They don't know us - nor we them. -- I started ~~sailing~~ her shores when I was five years younger than you are now. I've seen all the bad you've seen, but I've tasted its ~~mysteries~~ and ~~reaches~~ to ~~me~~ I feel I was meant to bring them to us - and us to them...

The sincerity of it - the vision itself mollifies Culum's belligerence temporarily, even makes him a little repentant.

CULUM

About the church. I want you --

TAI-PAN

(handing him a glass)

OH It was the only way. With all that silver Brock would have slaughtered us. I couldn't ~~have~~ stopped it, the knoll was a matter of face.

Amazed. CULUM numbly takes the glass.

CULUM

Then you weren't angry - ?

(CONTINUED)

101 CONTINUED:

101

TAI-PAN ^A

Oh, aye, I was -- at first.

(a smile, he hands him
a chicken leg) ^{ul}But then I saw [/]it was the only solution.
It saved me and it gave you face. You
defied the Tai-Pan. It will give ye
power you never dreamed.CULUM takes the chicken leg absently, he sits, still stunned by his father's
'acting,' his cool Machiavellian acceptance.

CULUM

But you lost face.

TAI-PAN

(a grin)

Aye. But I've enough and to spare.

(he drinks, then -)

- Now, why be I the Devil?

CULUM

(sick with it)

You trade in opium. You smuggle.
You've done it for years.

TAI-PAN looks at him in open amazement.

TAI-PAN

Aye. What did you think I ded?

CULUM

I thought you traded. Goods from England
for tea from China.TAI-PAN ^{ALLOW}^e
The Emperor will na let us sell 'goods'
from England! He demands silver for
his tea -- and if we paid in silver it
would bankrupt England in a year. We
sell opium to the Chinese for their
silver, and give it back to them for
tea! That's how the China trade works. ^A

CULUM

(abhorred -)

Opium... for tea!He throws the chicken aside and stands, glaring at his father. TAI-PAN is
baffled by this 'innocence.'

(CONTINUED)

101 CONTINUED:

101

TAI-PAN
Aye. Why not? 'I didn't invent opium -
nor the trade!

CULUM
(pointed, bitter -)
Aye. You didn't invent adultery either
but that doesn't make it right.

And now there is pain as well as disgust in Culum's voice.

TAI-PAN
Culum, you --

CULUM
How old is Gordon?

TAI-PAN
(a confused shrug -)
19 - 20...?

CULUM
He's exactly my age. And he's your
son also.

TAI-PAN tries to think of a way through this thicket of Victorian righteousness, but before he can find the words -

CULUM (cont'd)
And you sold his mother to Chen Sheng
when you tired of her and bought yourself
a new mistress!

TAI-PAN
I did not sell her! I - I gave her
away with a dowry. She became Chen's
third wife and he was grateful for her
and the dowry - and she is respected.

CULUM sneers at that.

CULUM
(disdainfully)
And then you bought a new, younger woman.

TAI-PAN
(squirming)
Culum, I've na' been living in Throgmorton
Street. This is the custom here.

CULUM
(the coup-de-grace -)
Brock has one wife.

(CONTINUED)

101 CONTINUED:

101

TAI-PAN seems stopped - but then with defensive righteousness of his own: -

TAI-PAN

Brock's wife is here - always has been -
your mother spent one year in Macao and
went home, never to return!

Silence. It makes some impact on CULUM but not much.

TAI-PAN

(trying for peace -)

Culum, I want you to take over from me,
and uh know now you can uh do it. I need
to be in London to stop Brock's uh maneuvers...
And I want to be your friend.

It's heartfelt. He goes to fill Culum's glass, but CULUM holds it back.

CULUM

You are my father. There is nothing I
can do about that. But I choose my
friends.

And he stares at TAI-PAN coldly... and TAI-PAN is pierced for the first time
in his adult life.

102 EXT. TAI-PAN'S HOUSE/HONG KONG - DAY

102

Establishing. A large house, only half-completed - WORKMEN still swarm around
it. From its elevated position we see other houses rising like it.

103 INT. PRIVATE QUARTERS - TAI-PAN'S HOUSE/HONG KONG - DAY

103

What is finished is grand - a mixture of Western and Oriental. AH GIP is
serving tea - as TAI-PAN scans a note.

uh TAI-PAN

Culum refuses to come to the house.

He stands, pacing angrily. MAY-MAY lectures him.

MAY-MAY

His mother, your Supreme Lady, was
God-fearing woman, he needs much time
to understand more refined civilization.

TAI-PAN

I've given him time! And all he's done
is become Gorth's puppy. And I can
(more)

DOG na

(CONTINUED)

103 CONTINUED:

103

TAI-PAN (cont'd) [^]
 talk to him. There's no-one in the world
 I want more as a friend - but he opens
 his self-righteous mouth and all I want
 to do is put [?]my fist down it!

^P MAY-MAY
 You are a great sinner, Tai-Pan, you
 should --

A servant, LIN DIN, knocks and enters --

LIN DIN
 Mass'er. Missee and Mass'er come see
 you. Can?

MAY-MAY
 You expect guest?

TAI-PAN
 No.

He turns irritably - and starts for the door.

104 INT. LIVING ROOM - TAI-PAN'S HOUSE/HONG KONG - DAY

104

FEATURING SHEVAUN - her hair in long ringlets, a deeply decollete green velvet dress. a bonnet of green, a sunshade of startling orange. He uncle, WILF TILLMAN, is with her.

(TILLMAN)
 (embarrassed)
 [Sorry to arrive uninvited, Struan, but
 Shevaun insisted.]
 I

TAI-PAN is surprised - but his eyes cannot help but devour her.

SHEVAUN
 It's an old American custom to wish a
 new house well.

TAI-PAN
 You're both very welcome.

SHEVAUN
 We cannot stay - but we've bought some
 gifts for the house. To bring luck -

She gestures to a table - where a small loaf of bread sits, a tiny container of salt, a bottle of wine, and leaning against the table a wrapped picture -

(CONTINUED)

104 CONTINUED:

104

SHEVAUN (cont'd)

- some bread, baked by my own hands, some salt, wine... and (of the picture) something I found in the market in Macao.

TAI-PAN

I'm very grateful. It's most unexpected.

SHEVAUN

And now that we've done our duty - we'll be off.

TAI-PAN

You must stay for ~~some~~ sherry.

A WEE DROP O'

He signals to LIN DIN -- but SHEVAUN stops him.

SHEVAUN

No. Uncle's right - we've intruded enough.

A reference to the SOUND of the builders at work. TAI-PAN moves to kiss her hand - he takes it, and holds it.

TAI-PAN

I look forward to seeing you at the Ball.

SHEVAUN

I'm told the men are placing bets on the winner of your 'prize.'

WAIR TAI-PAN
Hm. Were it not partial of me to do so, I can assure you where my money would be.

And he kisses

105 INT. PRIVATE QUARTERS - TAI-PAN'S HOUSE/HONG KONG - DAY

105

CLOSE SHOT MAY-MAY - raging.

MAY-MAY

Ayee-yah! That maggoty-drawers dung heap doxy's after you to marriage!

She's standing, glaring across the table.

TAI-PAN
'Marry,' not marriage. And how do you know, you dinna even see her.

DIDNA

(CONTINUED)

105 CONTINUED:

105

MAY-MAY

Ha! Wat for should I work over plans of
house godrotting hour after hour? To
see - and not have seen!

(she glares at him - ha!

Then mimicking him -)

Kiss the hand, huh! - Wat for you no
kiss my hand, heya! Wat for you linger
with cow eyes? Ayeeee-yah! Mens!

She picks up her tea-cup and slams it down.

e TAI-PAN
'Men' - not mens.

MAY-MAY

Men!

(she flounces, imitating
Shevaun's walk)

'I'm told mens are placing bets on winner
of your 'prize'.'

(she is lifting her breasts
and wagging her backside -)

And you stands there and eat up her
bosoms!

(lifting them, she places
hers right at his face)

Wat for my bosoms you no stare at, heya!

TAI-PAN

May-May, I do, I ---

LIN DIN knocks and enters - carrying the picture, stripped of its wrapping.

LIN DIN

Mass'er, where you want thisee?

He holds it up, a little embarrassed. It is Shevaun - reclining, seductive,
au natural!

MAY-MAY

Ayeeee-yah!

She hurls a tea-cup at it! TAI-PAN rises and moves quickly to the picture.
She hurls another tea-cup!

TAI-PAN

Alright, ~~ass~~! Two's fine -
(she's raised another one)
but three's extravagant!

The cup flies! She's cursing loudly in Chinese! He picks up the picture -
LIN DIN holds open the door. She picks up the tea-pot.

(CONTINUED)

105 CONTINUED:

105

TAI-PAN **exo**
 May-may! It cost the earth! It's from
 England!

The tea-pot flies. He's out the door - it crashes!

106 INT./EXT. TAI-PAN'S HOUSE/HONG KONG - NIGHT

106

THE BALL. We pick it up with TAI-PAN whirling MARY SINCLAIR in his arms...
 an ORCHESTRA plus bagpipes, NAVAL OFFICERS, a RUSSIAN ARCHDUKE, an IRISH SEA
 CAPTAIN, PORTUGUESE, FRENCH, AMERICAN... and LADIES... MARY as stunning as
 any. TAI-PAN flushed and boisterous, almost like the night of the Proclamation.

JAIR

TAI-PAN
 (of the FOREIGN OFFICERS)
 Look at them! - French, Russian, Americans,
 Germans - they were all forbidden China -
 but now they can land here, trade here,
 it's a glorious night, Mary Sinclair?

MARY
 (admiring him, enjoying
 his pleasure)
 They all thought you mad - even I had
 my doubts.

TAI-PAN **me**
 It had to be. In my 'China' bones I
 knew it was my Fate to make it be -
 no matter what.

hw
 MARY
 (teasingly)
 It may have its price.

She indicates where CULUM is standing with TESS, both lost in each other -
 GORTH and a NAVAL OFFICER with them, joking, but CULUM and TESS clearly deaf
 to any but each other.

MARY (cont'd)
 I tell you out here, miles from 'home,'
 more happens between a boy and a girl
 at one Ball like this than in a year of
 normal life.

TAI-PAN
 How would you know? Th~~is~~ is your home.

MARY weighs that reflectively.

(CONTINUED)

106 CONTINUED:

106

MARY

Perhaps... When the fleet returns to India, Captain Glessing is staying on as Commander of the Harbor. He's 'asked for my hand'...

(wistfully)

It may only be the Ball -- but I'm sorely tempted.

TAI-PAN

He's a fine man.

MARY

(sadly -)

Yes. But do you think the Mary you know would be a 'fine' wife for him?

TAI-PAN

... If ye marry him proper - he would be a ~~b~~lessed man... whatever the past.

He has said it from belief, and his sincerity brings tears rushing to her eyes. She moves closer to him, hiding them from the world.

FEATURING VARGAS AND QUANCE - They are watching SHEVAUN, dancing with the ARCHDUKE who is in a brilliant Cossack's tunic. Her dress is an emerald mist, its bodice apparently unsupported.

VARGAS

By God she doesn't give you much choice when it comes to judging.

QUANCE

Oh, Manuel, you're like the rest - you're all transfixed by her tits - true, they're impeccable - but the contest is for the best-dressed, not the most undressed.

FEATURING CULUM AND TESS

Dancing together - needing no-one else, wanting no-one else.

FEATURING BROCK, GORTH, MRS. BROCK

Watching them. GORTH is smiling shrewdly, MRS. BROCK anxious but pleased.

GORTH

I think we could have a marriage.

BROCK

You be mad!

(CONTINUED)

GORTH

Mad? I've been encouraging it every way I could. --

(shrewdly)

They need not 'marry' - but to be engaged...

MRS. BROCK

They should marry. She loves him I know. And he her. It is enough to overcome whatever she might have done.

She means the 'mistake' with Nagrek. As they speak we INTERCUT with CULUM and TESS.

GORTH

(appeasing her)

Either way. The Tai-Pan wants to go back to England. - He's going to leave Culum in charge. We can eat him alive. -- Before the Tai-Pan knows what's happened, it'll be Brock-Struan and Sons.

BROCK is fired by that thought - but he has his doubts.

BROCK

How can you be so sure -- how have you got so close to Culum?

GORTH

I told him our fathers may hate - but it be unChristian for us to do the same. Instead of destroying each other we should be friends. -

(he smiles wickedly at his father)

And Culum be a right religious lad.

MRS. BROCK

And he be right!

GORTH and BROCK glance at her -- but they understand each other.

BROCK looks from TESS and CULUM to TAI-PAN, now dancing with SHEVAUN. And a slow smile of pleasure crosses Brock's face.

BROCK

Struan has always had fantastic joss, but in the end God be giving me thee, Gorth - and him only Culum. Thee be my joss...

GORTH is pleased by that praise.

107 EXT. THE HARBOR/HONG KONG - NIGHT

107

LONG SHOT. Shooting towards the island. The MUSIC from the ball comes across the still waters, the lights of Tai-Pan's house, the Japanese lanterns... the lights of some ships moored in the harbor.....then CUTTING ACROSS the shot, the bow of a Chinese Junk.

FEATURING LIN - on the deck of the junk, staring off at the celebration of the barbarians. As he watches, the cold hate in his eyes is a promise that their joy will be short-lived....

108 INT. PRIVATE QUARTERS - TAI-PAN'S HOUSE/HONG KONG - NIGHT

108

The SOUND of the music continuing from the last shot as AH GIP leads TAI-PAN into his private sitting room.

AH GIP
Supreme Lady say you sit.

TAI-PAN obeys impatiently -- but the rustle of silk turns him.

TAI-PAN
May-may, you sent for me at a very --

He stops. She stands in the doorway - a radiant smile on her face. She is in a hideous multi-colored, bejewelled European dress, bustled skirt, a feathered hat on her head -- even her beauty made grotesque. She twirls - awkwardly.

TAI-PAN
God's blood -- !

But he has no sooner uttered it, than he knows it's a mistake. She stares at him in numb pain.

TAI-PAN (cont'd)
I - I mean it's - it's very nice.

She stares at him - pale beneath her absurd make-up. She sways, whimpering - then turns and runs.

TAI-PAN chases after her...

She flings closed their bedroom door. He bangs, yelling her name - then puts his shoulder to it, and bursts it open. She throws herself to the floor, kow-towing to him.

MAY-MAY
Forgive me, master, forgive me.

She claws frantically at the carpet with her nails. TAI-PAN goes to lift her.

TAI-PAN
Come. - We're going to the ball.

(CONTINUED)

108 CONTINUED:

108

She stands, staring at him with a tear-stained face, and wildly starts to tear at her clothes, evading his grasp, shrieking, crying. He lurches after her. She holds him off.

MAY-MAY

Wait! - I fix. I fix.

And she walks majestically to her dressing table, little sobs shaking her body. But when she is there she suddenly picks up the stiletto she uses for embroidery - TAI-PAN just manages to reach her! - grabbing her arm, throwing her on the bed, as she fights him wildly.

2 2 TAI-PAN
Stop it! - Stop it!

And he slaps her with the flat of his hand - hard. She stares at him stunned - her eyes still wild, but hurt, helpless.

e TAI-PAN (cont'd)
Dress in your own clothes. - Come to e
the Ball. I want you to meet my friends.

She stares at him, startled by that incredible remark.

MAY-MAY

No. I dinna mean to come. Only for
you to see.

She tears at the already-shredded clothes again. TAI-PAN grabs her hand.

TAI-PAN

Stop - !

She turns, burying her head in the bed. AH GIP comes beside him.

AH GIP

Please, you goa, Mass'er. Alright now.
Never mind, Ah Gip can.

TAI-PAN rises - carrying the stiletto... AH GIP nods, reassuring him she will manage. Reluctantly, he moves towards the door -

TAI-PAN LL e
Watch her close. I send Ah Sam to help.

And with a glance back at MAY-MAY he goes out.

109 INT./EXT. TAI-PAN'S HOUSE/HONG KONG - NIGHT

109

THE BALL - FEATURING SHEVAUN - dancing with GORTH.

TAI-PAN is watching glumly. QUANCE comes to his side.

(CONTINUED)

109 CONTINUED:

109

QUANCE

Tai-Pan, my dear fellow, it is time
for the judging.

guid TAI-PAN
Very good, Aristotle.

As they start to walk to the bandstand -

QUANCE

You were the life of the party - what's
happened?

TAI-PAN

May-may. She's lost face with me.

QUANCE

(sympathetically)

'Tis the Chinese curse. You'll have to
beat her. You must play the man.

TAI-PAN

Aye, but --

A WOMAN'S VOICE

Mister Quance!

QUANCE turns startled - transfixed - !

All eyes are turned to its source - a tall, big-boned Irishwoman, MRS. QUANCE.

QUANCE

(struck dead -)

Glory be - 'Tis herself, my blessed lady.

She strides towards him - as the COMPANY parts for her.

MRS. QUANCE

You were due back in England three years
ago Mr. Quance!

(she nods to the IRISH

SEA CAPTAIN)

It was only by the grace of St. Patrick
that I found passage to this immortal
lair.

QUANCE mumbles weakly, he already looks a quarter of himself.

MRS. QUANCE (cont'd)

Now take my hand for 'tis time for you
to say goodnight - and we be on our way.

(CONTINUED)

109 CONTINUED:

109

She takes his hand - and the grip is not to be denied.

TAI-PAN
Mrs. Quance, Aristotle has a task --

MRS. QUANCE
We be on our way. Say good night, me boy.

And she leads the lugubrious QUANCE away.

QUANCE
(squeakily -)
Good night, Tai-Pan. Remember, beat her...

TAI-PAN watches him go in real sympathy. After they are out the door there is general laughter.

TAI-PAN
(smiling -)
We're without a judge!

ZERGEYEV, the Russian Archduke, steps forwards -

ZERGEYEV
As a stranger, first in Hong Kong, may I have the honor, Tai-Pan?

TAI-PAN sighs in relief and gestures to the bandstand.

TAI-PAN
The Czar's fleet to the rescue. *yii*

He accompanies ZERGEYEV as they march to the bandstand.

ZERGEYEV
(sotto voice)
Whom shall I choose? Shevaun for you, the Portuguese for me, or Mary Sinclair because she's the most intriguing.

TAI-PAN
(a quiet smile)
It's your choice, my friend.

And he hands him a bag of gold - and leaves him - signalling to the ORCHESTRA. A FANFARE. ZERGEYEV - debonair, confident - mounts the stand as all eyes fall on him.

He holds the bag of gold aloft. A quiet DRUM ROLL adds to the suspense. We see MARY, SHEVAUN... and OTHERS nearly as beautiful.

(CONTINUED)

109 CONTINUED:

109

Finally, ZERGEYEV pauses... then steps down, his eyes on the floor. He walks in the direction where SHEVAUN and MARY stand... but just before he reaches them, he stops -- and turns to TESS.

She is in white brocade over cascading petticoats, the tiniest, girlish waist -- not the most beautiful, or the best dressed, but a picture of promising youth.

ZERGEYEV

I believe this belongs to you, Miss Brock.

And he places the bag of gold at her feet. A second's silence -

TESS flushed, staggered -- and then applause. A wise, discreet choice! CULUM bends and picks up the bag. She turns to him, glowing, tearful, her eyes only for him.

TAI-PAN applauds with the others... but his eyes are troubled...

110 EXT. THE HARBOR/HONG KONG - NIGHT

110

The MUSIC of the last dance comes across the water... we PAN SLIGHTLY to see the Chinese Junk that bears Lin sailing away from the lights of the harbor...

111 INT. PRIVATE QUARTERS - TAI-PAN'S HOUSE/HONG KONG - NIGHT

111

The ball over, TAI-PAN comes in, undoing his tie, troubled by thoughts of Culum and May-may --- he stops.

MAY-MAY, in a silk gown that makes her pallid face look both beautiful and tragic, faces him.

MAY-MAY

This slave begs her master to sell her.

TAI-PAN

You're not a slave, and you canna be sold or bought.

MAY-MAY

Please to sell. To anyone. To whorehouse, to another slave.

TAI-PAN

You're not for sale!

And he starts around her, but she throws herself to the floor.kow-towing.

MAY-MAY

This slave have no face before her lord and owner. She canna live here.

(CONTINUED)

111 CONTINUED:

111

Get [?]up!

TAI-PAN

And he pulls her up, but she obeys obediently. He tries -

TAI-PAN (cont'd)
 You have ^v ~~not~~ ^{off} ~~offended~~ ^{me}. You surprised
 me. European clothes do ^{not} ~~not~~ ^{suit} ~~suit~~ you.
 - But I don't own you. If you dinna
 want to stay, you're free to ^{leave}.

MAY-MAY

Please to sell. Until an owner sell,
 a slave canna go.

TAI-PAN looks at her - lovely, endearing - but she is in tragic despair -
 the suddenly.

TAI-PAN
 By God you are a miserable slave!

He grabs her arm, dragging her to the bedroom.

TAI-PAN (cont'd)
 I've a mind to ~~sell~~ ^{put} you into the Street
 of Blue Lanterns! Though ~~who~~ ^{what} would wanta
 buy a dirty baggage like you, I dinna
 ken! I paid good silver for you and
 I was cheated by God!

He has hauled her into the bedroom, he flings her on an ottoman.

TAI-PAN (cont'd)
 Am I not good to you?! Eh!? Generous?!
^u

MAY-MAY

(crying, terrified -)
 Yes, lord.

He takes the two long willows from a flower vase.

TAI-PAN
 You thieving, miserable slave, I'm going
 to whip you till my arm hurts!

He turns to her - she's shaking with fear, tears pouring.

TAI-PAN (cont'd)
Lie down there!

She lies on the ottoman, her backside up, her voice pathetic.

(CONTINUED)

111 CONTINUED:

111

MAY-MAY

Please lord, no whip too hard - I'm
three months with child.

That almost stops TAI-PAN - he stares as it sinks in - clearly wanting to take her in his arms -- but he glimpses AH GIP and LIN DIN peeking at the door, and he knows he must not.

TAI-PAN

You dare to get clothes made behind my
back!

(he starts whipping - carefully)

You dare wear them without my approval,
by God!!

He measures another couple of blows. He grabs the brandy decanter and gulps - sees AH GIP and LIN DIN - and throws the decanter showily against the wall - smashing it.

AH GIP and LIN DIN are appalled - and impressed.

TAI-PAN goes back to the whipping - missing once - hitting leather hard for effect.

TAI-PAN

You're a worthless dirty slave! How I
put up with ye these years I dinna ken!

And finally he stops... then he goes to the bed and sits on it!

TAI-PAN (cont'd)

Stop your wailing! - Come remove my shoes!

Sobbing, rubbing her bruised behind, MAY-MAY runs and kneels before him.

TAI-PAN (cont'd)

(sternly)

Is it true? You be with child?

She nods tearfully, pulling at his shoes. He suppresses an affectionate smile, then -

TAI-PAN (cont'd)

Go wash yourself! - then bring me tea,
you motherless wretch! Quickly!

She pulls off his shoes... and runs from the room.

112 INT. PRIVATE QUARTERS - TAI-PAN'S HOUSE/HONG KONG - NIGHT

112

LATER - FEATURING A SHAKING TEA-CUP

(CONTINUED)

112 CONTINUED:

112

MAY-MAY - freshly washed, in a robe - stands over TAI-PAN with a cup of tea. He is in bed.

He takes the cup from her shaking hands, her eyes are still red, sobs escape from her despite the struggle to keep them back. He looks up at her, severely -

↓ TAI-PAN
Perhaps, as you're with a child, I may
give you another chance. But it better
be a son!

MAY-MAY
Oh yes. Please, please forgive.

It starts the tears again. He twists and turns out the lantern. A moment. She just stands in the dark, crying -- softly...

TAI-PAN
(sharply -)
Get into bed. I'm cold.

She takes off her robe quickly, and crawls in -- lying next to him, close but not touching him with her arms. He turns... then puts his arms around her. At last his voice softens.

TAI-PAN
(great generosity -)
In time - I ~~may be~~ **MIGHT** forgive thee, Tess.

She nestles quickly into his arms, giving vent to tears of a different kind.

113 EXT. TERRACE - TAI-PAN'S HOUSE/HONG KONG - NIGHT

113

Inside, we see SERVANTS cleaning up from the ball - lanterns, candlelight. A few YOUNG OFFICERS are still lingering, smoking, some being served coffee. The CAMERA PANS slightly to CULUM and TESS, locked in passionate embrace - they are startled by FOOTSTEPS.

In the shadows a figure - his eyes staring at them in seething rage.... Then, he steps into the light - GORTH. And he's smiling.

CULUM
Gorth - thank God. I - I want to ask
your father for Tess' hand.

He is straightening his tie, his shirt - embarrassed but feeling out of danger. TESS, knowing her brother, is staring at him with fear. He nods to her - pleasantly.

(CONTINUED)

113 CONTINUED:

113

GORTH

Go back inside, Tess. We should be leaving.

And now she is afraid. She clutches Culum's hand in farewell, then goes back into the house. When she is gone, GORTH smiles at CULUM.

GORTH

You look all hot and bothered... I know just what you need.

CULUM tries to return the lecherous smile with 'manly' camaraderie - but he is clearly embarrassed by the suggestion.

114 EXT. THE HARBOR/HONG - DAY

114

We see the fleet leaving the harbor.

115 EXT. NAVAL BUILDING/HONG KONG - DAY

115

On shore - GLESSING and HORATIO salute. MARY standing by GLESSING'S side, waving as are some OTHERS near the rising Naval Building.

116 EXT. DECK - WHITE WITCH/HONG KONG HARBOR - DAY

116

BROCK and GORTH stand on the deck watching the fleet leave.

GORTH

It'll be a time before we see them again.

BROCK

Aye - but when they return it'll be to take us off this blasted rock, that I promise you.

117 EXT. MAINLAND SHORELINE - DAY

117

The fleet sailing distantly....the CAMERA PULLS BACK to reveal LIN watching from horseback....and the CAMERA PULLS BACK again to reveal a huge MOUNTED TROOP OF BANNERMEN behind him.

118 INT. CAPTAIN'S CABIN - MORNING CLOUD - DAY

118

TAI-PAN is pouring BROCK a glass of whiskey, one for himself.

TAI-PAN

(frostily)

Your boy an' mine be like old shipmates.

(CONTINUED)

118 CONTINUED:

118

BROCK

Yus' they be. But 'tis about Tess I
come to see thee.

TAI-PAN eyes him wearily - dreading what he knows must come.

BROCK (cont'd)

Your boy wants to marry her. I be against
it - but the girl and her mother, they
talked me to accepting it.

TAI-PAN lowers his glass, his fist clenched.

TAI-PAN *u*

Somehow I thought *o?* they would!

BROCK

(angrily)

Her dowry 'll be the richest in Asia!
- They be married next year.

TAI-PAN *^*

I'll see you in hell first!
e

BROCK smiles cynically - and drinks. It's his hand at last.

BROCK

That be later, Dirk. First they be
marrying.

TAI-PAN

I know what's in your mind - and Gorth's
- but I'll *o?* let you break Noble House
through a girl's skirts.
u er Ar

Smiling, BROCK glances around the cabin possessively.

BROCK

It be joss, Dirk... You've heard of joss.

TAI-PAN

Much as I despise you, I never *- r ?* thought -- !

He is cut off by a peremptory RAP on the door.

TAI-PAN (cont'd)

What!? *hwst*

ORLOV pushes open the door -

ORLOV

It be Vargas, sir.

(CONTINUED)

118 CONTINUED:

118

And VARGAS hurries in, as distraught as ORLOV.

VARGAS

Lin has moved a thousand Bannermen into the Tiger Fort. They've cut us off from Canton. He's seized Jin Qua and burned the warehouses.

BROCK

You and your blasted island - !

TAI-PAN stares back at him, stunned, but already thinking.

119 INT. NAVAL BUILDING/HONG KONG - NIGHT

119

Lanterns. The building only partially completed, but the powerful have gathered there under the impact of the news. TAI-PAN, BROCK, GLESSING, TILLMAN, COOPER, OTHER MERCHANTS... GORTH and CULUM more or less silent witnesses.

(TILLMAN)

[The best they've got is river junks - we can always defend the island with our own clipper's. a:]

BROCK

Aye - we can hide like monkeys in a zoo. But he's finished trade. No Chinamen will dare come here, and we canna go there. Another triumph for Mr. Struan's strategy.

TAI-PAN

What we must do is take the Tiger Fort and open the river - or Brock be right. would

GLESSING

How? The fleet won't return for six months, seven months!

TAI-PAN

That's what Lin thinks. So he won't be expecting us to attack.

GLESSING

If you moved your clippers anywhere near the Tiger Fort they'd be blown out of the water - and he puts chains across the river - fore and aft - and you'd be trapped. Target practice.

(CONTINUED)

119 CONTINUED:

119

TAI-PAN

Forget the clippers. With lorchas we can take the channel around French Island and come in above the Fort. Its guns only fire downriver. Once you're past them, they're helpless.

Incredulity!

GORTH

You lie!

(a breathless silence -)

I mean, it can't be.

His eyes appeal to the others, but it has given TAI-PAN the chance he has been waiting for. His voice is death -

TAI-PAN

Say I ~~lie~~ again - an' you will na ~~live~~ to see another sunset.

GORTH knows he's in the wrong, but his manhood is challenged, and he starts to step belligerently towards TAI-PAN. But BROCK grabs his arm, whirling him - slapping his face, pushing him back, muttering in a taut, hoarse voice -

BROCK

He'll kill you...

For a moment it silences GORTH. BROCK turns to the others -

BROCK

(a nod to TAI-PAN)

He's right. The guns can but fire downriver.

A moment's embarrassed silence... then GLESSING goes on -

GLESSING

But how do we get around French Island without them being warned?

TAI-PAN

(veiled, confident)

~~I~~ leave that to me...

120 INT. CAPTAIN'S CABIN - MORNING CLOUD - NIGHT

120

FEATURING GORDON. In the shadowy glow of the cabin lantern we can see the wheels of Gordon's mind turn as TAI-PAN gambles on his assumptions -

(CONTINUED)

120 CONTINUED:

120

TAI-PAN

... It is the only way to save Jin Qua -
to avenge the Mings from the Manchu
humiliation... We would need guidance
through the channel - and absolute
secrecy. In pain of death.

It is an appeal for the aid of the secret societies - and TAI-PAN is convinced now he is making it to the right man...

121 EXT. FRENCH ISLAND CHANNEL - DAY

121

A lead lorcha glides stealthily along the channel. A CHINESE MAN in black pajamas is at the helm. More FIGURES in black pajamas run along the bank side. On the lorcha we see TAI-PAN, GLESSING, ORLOV and CULUM near the bow, the rear and below decks are packed with MERCHANT SAILORS, BRITISH SAILORS... and behind them in the curving channel we see a line of similarly packed lorchas following.

As they near the entrance to the river, they pull into shore where the FIGURES in black pajamas grapple them to the side of the channel. The TAI-PAN leaps off - GORDON, clad in black pajamas, is there to greet him. For a second TAI-PAN glances at the pajamas and into Gordon's eyes - that instant of ambiguous revelation over, they move quickly to business.

GORDON

They've moored an armed junk just off the river entrance. You won't get a lorcha near while it's there.

The low outline of the Tiger Fort is visible across and down river. We see the junk moored before it. TAI-PAN ponders it a moment, then calls quietly to the lorcha.

TAI-PAN

Orlov - Culum....!

He turns back to GORDON.

TAI-PAN (cont'd)

Brock has got a two-master with a cannon. He's leading a group directly at the Fort, they're going to put on a show and draw their fire.

GORDON

Will that be our signal to attack?

TAI-PAN

Where will you be?

hw

(CONTINUED)

121 CONTINUED:

121

GORDON

My people are across the river. My friends and I will cross in a sampan -- Chinamen on the river, it will worry no one. But you should bring the lorchas out only one or two at a time.

TAI-PAN assesses the prospects, the Fort, the land approaches to it, the junk moored off it, he glances at ORLOV and CULUM who have come up beside them, then to GORDON -

TAI-PAN

No - you take your signal to attack when something happens to that junk.

M

CUT TO:

122 EXT. BROCK'S LORCHA/TIGER FORT - DAY

122

BROCK and GORTH are tacking, bringing the two-master towards the fort. There are only CREWMEN aboard and the four or five lorchas behind them are lightly manned - but the two-master sports a huge British Ensign from its stern, and the lorchas all fly British Standards. A defiant - if hollow - show.

123 EXT. TIGER FORT - DAY

123

LIN stands at the observation post with the BANNERMAN COMMANDER. He frowns at the approaching flotilla... and can't quite believe his eyes. He glances up river.

From HIS POV we see a sampan with some CHINEMEN pulling in to the near shore... and one lorcha, with TWO CHINESE CREW, in the river, another coming from the French Island Channel. A peaceful scene.

LIN turns back, still frowning at the approaching British.

124 EXT. LEADING LORCHAS/TIGER FORT - DAY

124

CLOSE SHOT - THE FIRST LORCHA - A CHINAMAN at the helm, ANOTHER working the sails -- but TAI-PAN, GLESSING and the packed SAILORS and SEAMEN all crouching below the gunnel.

CLOSE SHOT -- THE SECOND LORCHA - A CHINAMAN at the helm, ANOTHER on the sails -- but only CULUM and ORLOV hiding below the gunnel.

125 EXT. BROCK'S LOTCHA/TIGER FORT - DAY

125

FEATURING BROCK - down river - on the two-master.

(CONTINUED)

125 CONTINUED:

125

BROCK
 (of the Fort)
 They're a long time firing. I hope their
 gunners are so bad as their cannon.

126 EXT. TIGER FORT - DAY

126

FEATURING LIN - watching the brazen flotilla approach. We PAN SLIGHTLY and see five or six lorchas now in the river behind him.

LIN turns to the CHIEF BANNERMAN - an icy nod.

The CHINESE CANNON of the fort fire!

127 EXT. BROCK'S LORCHA/TIGER FORT - DAY

127

FEATURING BROCK as the cannonballs splash into the water around him. A lorch behind them is hit.

BROCK
 Fire the blasted thing!

A SEAMAN fires their sole cannon. BROCK wheels to GORTH on the tiller.

BROCK
 Now bring her around! Don't hold one
 heading for more than a minute!

GORTH swings the tiller, enjoying the danger, the challenge.

128 EXT. TIGER FORT - DAY

128

FEATURING LIN - another salvo is loosed at the defiant British, but one of the GUN CREWS is already having trouble with their cannon. In the b.g. we see more lorchas on the river.

IN THE FORT - the cannonading has roused the encampment. TROOPS are mounting horses, OTHERS putting on armor - no sense of urgency, but orders being shouted, detachments assembling.

129 EXT. LEADING LORCHAS/TIGER FORT - DAY

129

FEATURING TAI-PAN - now at the tiller of the lead lorch. TWO CHINAMEN ostensibly his only crew, but GLESSING and the SAILORS still lying in hiding --- but the lorch is now towing the second lorch whose sails are reefed -- we can see ORLOV at the tiller.

WIDE SHOT - The two lorchas are moving down river near the Junk off the Fort's landing stage.

(CONTINUED)

129 CONTINUED:

129

FEATURING THE SECOND LORCHA -- CULUM is in the hold. He's igniting a large heap of cloth - as it springs to light we see barrels of gun powder packed around the cloth. He runs up on deck and with the TWO CHINAMEN CREW leaps to Tai-Pan's lorcha.

TAI-PAN

Orlov - !

ORLOV leaves the tiller and runs along the lorcha, leaping aboard Tai-Pan's lorcha... CULUM lets go of the two ropes.

TAI-PAN swings the first lorcha out into the river, but as he does --

TAI-PAN

There's an undertow - it's going to veer away!

He's staring off at the other lorcha - flames now coming out of the hold, but it is moving out in the river - away from the Junk. CULUM watches - desperate for a moment, then he jumps in the river and swims for the other lorcha.

TAI-PAN

Don't! - Come back! - Culum!

130 EXT. BROCK'S LORCHA/TIGER FORT - DAY

130

FEATURING BROCK - down river, below the Fort - the TWO-MASTER is tacking sharply, cannonballs falling near it, GORTH still enjoying it, but sweat pouring from him in the effort now, the CREW tired. A cannonball strikes their rigging.

BROCK

Where the blazes is Struan! We were to draw the fire - not fight alone!

They have sailed close to the Fort.

131 EXT. LEADING LORCHAS-TIGER FORT - DAY

131

FEATURING THE SECOND LORCHA - up river, above the Fort - CULUM is now at the tiller, directing it right into the Junk, flames spout from the hold -- the GUARDS on the Junk have spotted the threat - shouting, firing their muskets.

TAI-PAN

Jump! - Jump!

He swings the tiller about, taking the first lorcha closer.

Some gunfire from the Junk is directed at it now. GLESSING half stands, glimpses the situation, and -

(CONTINUED)

131 CONTINUED:

131

GLESSING

Engage the enemy!

And the SAILORS and SEAMEN rise in the lorchas - firing at the Junk. ON THE JUNK - Panic at the approach of the burning lorchas, stunned surprise at the array of English suddenly rising from the other lorchas.

FEATURING CULUM - shots crash into the wood near him as he rips his shirt off and uses it to lash the tiller on course. Flames and smoke pour from the hold now. At last he has the tiller secured and he runs to the stern and leaps off...

As he swims towards the first lorchas, TAI-PAN watches tensely. ORLOV just behind him.

ORLOV

(muttering)

By God, he's his father's son...

ANOTHER ANGLE - the flaming lorchas crashes into the Junk - and explosions splinter it - and secondary explosions smash through the Junk - flames break out in it - as it begins to sink amidst further explosions.

132 EXT. TIGER FORT - DAY

132

FEATURING LIN - at the observation post - turned, staring disbelievingly at the exploding Junk. The array of 'innocent' lorchas are all pouring in towards the landing stage.

133 EXT. LEADING LORCHA/TIGER FORT - DAY

133

FEATURING TAI-PAN as he and ORLOV lift CULUM from the river.

TAI-PAN

ARE (proudly)
You be crazy!

AS A LOON

[LOOK UP
SCOTTISH
SIMILES]

CULUM

(unrelentingly cold)

I didn't want it said I didn't do my share.

TAI-PAN

What is it you want from me, Culum - to be some other man?!

Gunfire and smoke all around them.

CULUM

I want your permission to marry Tess.

(CONTINUED)

133 CONTINUED:

133

TAI-PAN

(a beat -)

That'll not satisfy ye. But if we live
through this, ye have it - though it be
against my will.

It's given in anger, but it produces a beam on Culum's face.

134 EXT. TIGER FORT - DAY

134

The BANNERMEN have mounted and are headed for the danger at the landing stage --- when, over the walls behind, flood hordes of shouting BLACK-PAJAMA-CLAD CHINESE! Led by GORDON.

Chaos! - Amid the shouted orders, some BANNERMEN break to engage the CHINESE, some go on towards the landing stage.

FEATURING TAI-PAN - leading the first band of SAILORS and SEAMEN on to the shore - he fights his way towards the Fort Buildings.

135 EXT. BROCK'S LORCHA/TIGER FORT - DAY

135

FEATURING BROCK - below the Fort - the SOUNDS of explosions and fighting carry across the water.

BROCK

By God, they're ashore! - Do no more
tack, Gorth - then come right in at
it. We want our hand in this!

A cannonball splashes near them - but it is only one.

136 INT./EXT. BATTLEMENT - TIGER FORT - DAY

136

TAI-PAN fights TWO BANNERMEN along a slanting corridor that rises to the top of the Fort. He has a sword and a pistol - but he only threatens with the pistol. He disposes of ONE BANNERMAN, but in doing so, over-extends and is almost run through by the OTHER - the man is only inches from him and TAI-PAN fires. The BANNERMAN is jolted back - his chest gushing with blood. TAI-PAN turns towards the rise again, but FOUR BANNERMAN come into the corridor - TAI-PAN turns back and starts to dart down a side corridor, but THREE BANNERMEN are running up it. He aims the pistol at them, but it doesn't stop them - he clicks it - nothing. It's not a total surprise. He swings back into the main corridor - only a wall to retreat to. He backs against it -- a look approaching incredulity on his face.

TAI-PAN

... I'm going to die...

(CONTINUED)

136 CONTINUED:

136

This is the expected, unexpected moment. And the BANNERMEN close. TAI-PAN hurls the gun - and starts to defend himself -- when there is a CRASH from the side corridor -- another from the top... and GORDON and OTHER BLACK-PAJAMED CHINESE break down toward the BANNERMEN from the top - from the sound of ORLOV'S CURSING and the fire of pistols, it is a group of seamen who've broken in the side corridor.

TAI-PAN continues to fight - until first one, then all the BANNERMEN kneel in surrender.

The CHINESE tie their hands swiftly. ORLOV glances at TAI-PAN then the corridor leading up... and starts up it.

ORLOV

If we get Lin - they'll all surrender!

TAI-PAN is leaning against the wall - not yet recovered from the feeling that his death was upon him.

ORLOV

Sir - !

He's waiting at the top. It snaps TAI-PAN out of it - and he moves up the corridor, past the CHINESE.

↓ TAI-PAN

Thank ye, Gordon.

GORDON looks after him - knowing he has been shaken.

137 EXT. TIGER FORT - DAY

137

The fighting going on - but the BANNERMEN cornered now.

BROCK and GORTH bring the two-master alongside. BROCK leads the CREW off.

BROCK

Come on, - just be sure you watch your backs!

GORTH stays on board - holding a musket - a half-amused smile on his face as he surveys the field of battle. His eyes finally stop. HIS POV: VARGAS is leading TWO BANNERMEN at pistol point along a buttress towards a point where a GROUP of CAPTURED BANNERMEN are roped in. Calmly, GORTH raises his musket. He fires. VARGAS falls. In the chaos of the fighting it goes unremarked. ... GORTH lowers his musket without change of expression.

TAI-PAN, ORLOV and TWO SEAMEN leave a tunnel, cross a bit of green and approach the Command Post. FOUR BANNERMEN GUARDS protect the entrance, but the approach has taken them by surprise. TAI-PAN carries two pistols now. He fires both --- before the BANNERMEN can raise their muskets -- and the lock on the Command door is shattered. The BANNERMEN look at it - TAI-PAN has stopped, turned his pistols on them. They slowly kneel in surrender.

TAI-PAN pushes into the Command Post. An empty hallway ... he strides along it. A door. He kicks it open - the pistols ready.

LIN sits in a chair behind a wooden desk. Looking at TAI-PAN with a resignation that is full of pain... he slowly rises. TAI-PAN moves on into the room... and his eye is suddenly caught -- in a small side room JIN QUA is on his knees, threadbare, his neck in a huge wooden stock.

TAI-PAN looks back at LIN. - Lin's eyes reveal no remorse - only the pain of defeat and humiliation, but borne with a front of dignity.

FEATURING JIN QUA - in splendid raiment - as he approaches a table in the half-completed building where CAPTAIN GLESSING sits in full formal attire, HORATIO on his right, ANOTHER NAVAL OFFICER behind. TAI-PAN, BROCK, TILLMAN - all dressed rather formally too - watch at one side.

JIN QUA places a document on the table before GLESSING.

JIN QUA

The Emperor sends his many regrets for recent incidents. In His Generosity foreigners will always be respected in the Inner Kongdom. Devil, Lin, Imperial High Commissioner, who prompted all trouble, will be beheaded for acting without Imperial Order. -- Merchants of Canton will pay for all property destroyed. Captured Bannermen will be punished when they are released.

He bows. There are taut smiles all around -- and one quite private glance of understanding between JIN QUA and TAI-PAN.

GORTH, drinking in a large room, raucously celebrating with some of BROCK'S SEAMEN. GIRLS pour over them -

GORTH

By God it were a glorious victory!

THICK-SET SAILOR

(regretfully)

Aye. But it were the Tai-Pan's.

GORTH is going to respond, but MRS. FOTHERINGILL enters - he looks up at her. She's disgusted with herself.

(CONTINUED)

140 CONTINUED:

140

GORTH

Did ye do it?

MRS. FOTHERINGILL

Yes - but it was a sin.

GORTH

Ah, well, you be used to sin!

And he tosses her a bag of money - and dismisses her.

GORTH (cont'd)

We won, but we could have been ruined.
Justifying his Hong Kong now will send
our 'Tai-Pan' back to England all the
quicker... and then I'll be left with
me darlin' Culum.

He laughs, they all laugh with him.

THICK-SET SAILOR

Tess'll handle 'im!

GORTH

(hotly -)

Never by God! - He think he be marrying
Tess -- but he'll never!

He grabs one of the willing GIRLS, running his hands over her, twisting her arm suddenly, hurting, then grinning.

GORTH (cont'd)

Culum is a bit hot in the groins
(laughter)
- and he bain't be used to honest
drinking - I've fixed him with the most
poxed whore in all Macao.
(he grins at them)
He's at it - right now. By time he
finishes he won't be fit for any woman.

141 INT. ROOM - HOUSEBOAT WHOREHOUSE/MACAO - NIGHT

141

Unlit. CULUM - his eyes fighting to steady the room - is standing in a corner. He's half-dressed and vaguely waving something off with one hand while clasping a small locket that's around his neck.

CULUM

(fighting his tongue
too)

No - no - iss alright. You're lovely.

(CONTINUED)

141 CONTINUED:

141

We see the WHORE - a rather voluptuous face, but pockmarked even under the make-up - but she is on her knees, moving at CULUM, fondling him we feel out of shot, trying to earn her way.

CULUM (cont'd)

Iss - iss jus' when I felt this locket...
if you could just see her you'd under-
stand... I can't...

WHORE

Plenty good, Mass'er. Me can do special...
make you wanta jig-jig. No more charge.

CULUM

No, no - lissen, I'm gonna pay, all
same. Chriss, if I jus' doan get sick...

And he holds on to the wall... pulling free of her grasp at last and
lurching out across the weaving gangways.

142 INT. BEDROOM - MAY-MAY'S HOUSE/MACAO - DAY

142

MAY-MAY is in bed - looking ravishing, but ghastly pale. She is eating
half-heartedly from a tray.

MAY-MAY

I dinna understand you at all, Tai-Pan.
You are shock when I tell you about
ordinary things.

no? TAI-PAN
Sex is na' ordinary!

He's at a desk, finishing a letter.

MAY-MAY

You dinna get shocked about food! Why
so crazy, eh? Heya, all Mass'er in
world do jig-jig like you, you dinna know?

Giving up, he turns to her, rises and goes to the bed.

u TAI-PAN
Yes I knew.

(a smile -)
I think what's put you in bed is you
eat too many prawns.

She feeds him a prawn - as he sticks the letter in his pocket.

(CONTINUED)

142 CONTINUED:

142

MAY-MAY

You are na' mad at me for coming back
to old house.

TUN HAVE
TAI-PAN

If you want the baby here in Macao

THAT'S FINE.

He shrugs.

MAY-MAY

Maybe next month no sick. We go back
to Hong Kong. Meantime I have present
for you.

(pleased, she rings a bell)
I plan for later, but when your old
mother gets sick, I think time for
present now.

The door opens - a pretty young girl (YIN-HSI) enters, flowers in her hair,
very, very young but a lovely body.

MAY-MAY

This is Yin-Hsi, I bought her for your
birthday.

hw
You what - ?

TAI-PAN

MAY-MAY

Your birthday in three months, I be very
heavy with child. It was difficult to
decide bestest choice, but she is bestest,
and because I sick, I give her now, and
you dinna ha'e to wait.

TAI-PAN

I -- Good God, May-may! You dinna buy
girls as birthday presents!

E ^ e

MAY-MAY

(crushed -)

You dinna like her...!

And she begins to cry.

TAI-PAN

Of course I like her - but --

YIN-HSI has run to the bed, clutching May-may's hand, drying her tears
solicitously.

(CONTINUED)

142 CONTINUED:

142

MAY-MAY

(sympathetically to YIN-HSI -)
I tell you barbarians very strange people!
Never mind. Sometimes they shout when
very pleased.

(to TAI-PAN)

Look, Tai-Pan, how pretty she is. What
you want to do when I all fat, go jig-jig
in dirty old whorehouse?

He doesn't know what to fight, her tears or her argument.

TAI-PAN

No, of course I don't. And she's very
pretty but --

MAY-MAY

(sniffling, closing her eyes)
Then that's settled, then.

TAI-PAN

It's not settled!

MAY-MAY

It is by God! I paid huge monies for
her, and she's bestest! I canna send
her away or she loses all face and must
hang herself.

TAI-PAN

Don't be ridiculous!

ri'ɔɪkəɪs

MAY-MAY

(crying hopelessly at his
stupidity)
Everyone knows I buy her! You send her
away, her face is finished! Fantastical
finished! She'll hang herself, truly.

TAI-PAN

(a sigh of resignation -)
Alright! - We'll keep her for a s~~i~~ter
for y^{ul} Now stop crying. None of this
is good for -- ^{ul} L YER

AH GIP knocks and enters.

AH GIP

Mass'er, Mass'er Culum outside. He looks
plentifu sour.

TAI-PAN stiffens -- but it brings MAY-MAY back to the alert.

(CONTINUED)

142 CONTINUED:

142

MAY-MAY

Now you sad again.

TAI-PAN

Gorth has got him in his power - I've
 tried. But there seems no way...

He shakes his head - grimly. And she reads his mind.

MAY-MAY

It is not good killing son of one-eye
 Devil. You risk vengeance of insane
 barbarian law wat demands eye for eye,
 whoever has eye which is crazy mad!

She is getting up, YIN HSI helping her.

TAI-PAN

No, don't -

MAY-MAY

I walk with you very careful. Please
 dinna argue, you make me more sick.

He can't win. Holding her arm, they move from the bedroom to -

143 INT. CORRIDOR - MAY-MAY'S HOUSE/MACAO

143

MAY-MAY

My counsel is a fantastical quick marriage,
 Culum to Tess.

TAI-PAN

That's out of the question! I've nothing
 against Tess, but with a little time
 he'll find another girl.

MAY-MAY

I agree very heatedly, Tai-Pan. But I
 seems to memory that barbarian custom -
 which for once follows wise Chinese
 custom - the girl comes to house of
husband, heya? So sooner Brock girl
 marries, sooner Gorth lose controls
 over simple Culum.

TAI-PAN

(sceptically)
 ... I'm not so sure. Married, Gorth
 will --

(CONTINUED)

143 CONTINUED:

143

MAY-MAY

By God I am. - What for is your son
sick crazy in the head? He needs to
bed her fantastical bad. - No, dinna
give me arguments! That's wat's making
him crazy sick. He's frantic hot. So
he listen with tongue hanging out to
every word that crazy Gorth say.

TAI-PAN is beginning to listen! They have reached the living area as we see
CULUM pacing in the walled garden beyond. MAY-MAY holds TAI-PAN back.

MAY-MAY

(nodding to CULUM)

Please Tai-Pan, let him have girl. Then
will he spend hour after godrot hour
listening to brother Gorth? By God no!
He spends every minute in bed playing
bosums and exhausting himself making
babies and he detest interruptions from
you or from Gorth -- heya?

She fixes him with the look of the Prophet.

144 EXT. GARDEN - MAY-MAY'S HOUSE/MACAO - DAY

144

CULUM turns as TAI-PAN enters the garden - the wind blows his hair - TAI-PAN
smiles at it.

TAI-PAN

We're coming into the season of storms,
you'll have to tie your hair in pretails
like I do *he N.Z.*

Annoyed CULUM straightens his hair, and faces TAI-PAN sternly.

CULUM

I've been talking to Orlov. He believes
tea would grow in India - they have the
same rains, the same heat.

TAI-PAN

Aye. ² Probably. But the Chinese will not
let you take seeds - or plants. It's an
Imperial Edict. And death - that one.

CULUM

With enough squeeze and a little daring
we could get hundreds of plants.

The TAI-PAN looks at him - half-pleasure, half-taunting.

(CONTINUED)

144 CONTINUED:

144

3 TAI-PAN
Are you suggesting we bribe and smuggle
and steal?

CULUM blushes -- but keeps to his point.

CULUM
I'd rather do that than live by smuggling
opium.

TAI-PAN
Have you discussed this with Gorth?

CULUM
Not yet.

TAI-PAN
I want you to promise, Culum, that
whatever happens you will join
Noble House with Brock's.

CULUM
If you leave me in charge I must do what
I think best.

It's provocative and arrogant in a way that only sons can be with their
fathers. TAI-PAN sighs, then -

TAI-PAN
I'm sending you to Hong Kong at once.
You'll go in Morning Cloud - and I'm
putting Orlov under your orders, for
this trip you'll be master.

CULUM
Is it so important?

TAI-PAN
To me, yes. Lotus Cloud is preparing
for London, I'm giving you a letter for
Captain Collings. He's to make up a
cabin for Scragger's two boys. And one
for Mrs. Quance.

CULUM
Aristotle's wife - ?

TAI-PAN
(almost straight-faced)
Aye. It seems Quance gave her the slip
again - it's thought she boarded the Russian
she's headed for Alaska. They're due back
(more)

(CONTINUED)

144 CONTINUED:

144

FOR

TAI-PAN (cont'd) So
 in Singapore in another 18 months. ^ I'm
 sending her there -- with a small allowance
 -- while she waits.

hw
 It's a lie and they both know it.

CULUM

I saw Aristotle in --

TAI-PAN holds his finger up sharply - cutting him off. He hands CULUM the letter. CULUM sighs -- another 'sin.'

CULUM (cont'd)

Yes, father. - Do I have time to say
 goodbye to Tess?

TAI-PAN

Aye. You can catch the noon tide...
 It seems a crime Brock insists on you
 two waiting a year to marry.

CULUM is a little surprised at this apparent shift.

CULUM

It is. But he won't bend.

TAI-PAN

Have you not considered taking your
 lives into your own hands, since you're
 set on doing it?

CULUM

(a beat -)

Elope?

TAI-PAN

No - it be a bad idea. I suppose Brock
 would be furious. And perhaps Gorth.
 (he turns to go, then
 turns back off-handedly)
 It's not necessary, but explain to Orlov
 I'm making you absolute master because
 the debt to Scragger is family - it falls
 to you if anything be happening to me.

mz

CULUM nods - and we can see the wheels working in his head, 'Absolute Master.'

145 EXT. PORCH - MAY-MAY'S HOUSE/MACAO - DAY

145

MAY-MAY comes out -- and TAI-PAN is surprised by an exclamation from behind

(CONTINUED)

145 CONTINUED:

145

him - MAY-MAY has been listening from behind a screen.

MAY-MAY

Ayeeyah! By God, Tai-Pan, you are
godrotting clever Devil. That boy be
in bed jig-jigging with Tess by time
Morning Cloud see harbor at Hong Kong!

TAI-PAN

Will ye stop ~~listening~~ when you shouldn't
be!

MAY-MAY

Ole crazy Gorth, he be crazy to kill you
now!

TAI-PAN

(deadly -)

Aye. So I figure...

MAY-MAY

(excitedly)

Tomorrow we go to Hong Kong - nevermind
I be all right! I bet you fifty cash
we have to buy rice for newlyweds.

And TAI-PAN must smile at her pleasure.

146 EXT. DECK - MORNING CLOUD - DAY

146

Sunlight. In the soft breeze, ORLOV reads fatalistically from the Bible.

ORLOV

Any by the powers invested in me, I
therefore pronounce you man and wife.

CULUM and TESS stand before him - radiant, certain. They turn to each other
slowly - and kiss with the innocence and commitment that is the special
treasure of the young. Here and there, HARDENED SAILORS smile at it - but
not ORLOV.

ORLOV (cont'd)

And may God have mercy on us all when
your father hears of it.

147 INT. BEDROOM - TAI-PAN'S HOUSE/HONG KONG - SUNSET

147

Wind rising outside. DR. GONZALES in attendance. AH GIP and YIN-HSI are
padding around nervously assisting him as he administers to MAY-MAY - all in
obvious anxiety. Something is wrong.

148 INT. KITCHEN - TAI-PAN'S HOUSE/HONG KONG - TWILIGHT

148

Though newly built, this 'native' section of the house is already a disordered, cramped place where THREE or FOUR OLDER WOMEN are always at work - peeling, boiling water, scrubbing the utensils - the anxiety of the bedroom carrying over to their actions here.

TAI-PAN sits by a beaded back door that flutters in the wind - distant thunder - his chair leaning against the wall, staring into a cup of tea - out of place in this part of the house, but accepted on this occasion. He looks up alertly as we HEAR cries of pain from deep in the house that ride even above the storm outside.

149 EXT. WOODED HILLTOP/HONG KONG - NIGHT

149

The wind fierce - a CRACK of wood - a great SCREAM over it - and a giant tree topples in the storm.

150 EXT. A DOCK/HONG KONG - NIGHT

150

DR. GONZALES rides in a rickshaw towards a dock where we see the silhouette of TAI-PAN -- near the end of the dock, staring at the angry sea. Lights from buildings along the shore.

GONZALES gets out of the rickshaw and approaches him.

The TAI-PAN turns to GONZALES - he does not speak, but his eyes search the Doctor's face for an answer.

DR. GONZALES

She's alright. Weak - but alright...

I'm sorry about the baby.

(clearly TAI-PAN is too)

It was a boy... but he had no chance.

TAI-PAN turns out to the windswept waters of the harbor...staring into space, the distant lightning.

DR. GONZALES (cont'd)

She would like to see you.

151 INT. BEDROOM - TAI-PAN'S HOUSE/HONG KONG - NIGHT

151

MAY-MAY is trying to look cheerful.

MAY-MAY

Bad joss to lose baby, Tai-Pan. Old mother very sorry.

TAI-PAN is trying just as hard.

(CONTINUED)

151 CONTINUED:

151

TAI-PAN

"Old mother' is na to worry. She has
good joss, how else did she get the
Tai-Pan.

MAY-MAY

(in kind)

Ah, dinna scare me with all my past
disasters. It is na' fair, laddie.

He smiles at that; she touches his hand, her face suddenly sober.

MAY-MAY

I want your son terrifical bad, 'Mr. Struan.'

TAI-PAN

I know... I know, ~~ass~~.

MAY-MAY

Anyway, I won fifty cash from you - when
I get rested I think how to spend it.

She suddenly looks very tired.

TAI-PAN

Aye. I bet you will -

(he kisses her)

Sleep, ~~ass~~. If you hurry up and get
better I'll give you a hundred taels of
silver.

MAY-MAY

You give me huge face, Tai-Pan. Nevermind.
Old mother going to make you fantastical
happy.

She closes her eyes, smiling - and he goes quietly.

152 NEW MERCHANT'S BAR/HONG KONG - NIGHT

152

TAI-PAN is playing cards with TILLMAN COOPER and some OTHER MERCHANTS. His
mood is still solemn and subdued. The SOUND of the storm outside. And
suddenly there is a CRASH - and GORTH storms into the entrance - a cat o'nine
tails in his hand. In rage, he makes straight for TAI-PAN.

GORTH

You planned it! You tol' Orlov t'marry
'em!

He has lurched across the room at TAI-PAN. TAI-PAN has risen.

(CONTINUED)

152 CONTINUED:

152

GORTH (cont'd)

Our Tess wedded to that pox-ridden bastard!

And he slashes with the cat - its iron tails cutting Tai-Pan's face. In a move TAI-PAN knocks the table aside and grabs the handle of the cat with one hand, and Gorth's neck with the other. TILLMAN and OTHERS pull them apart.

At the bar a MAN looks at the fight and hurries purposefully from the building. The CHINESE WAITERS stare - one whispers to another.

GORTH

Let me go, for Chrissake! He knowed!
Culum be poxed!

TAI-PAN

Culum's not poxed!

GORTH

He be! Everyone knows. He beed in the
houseboat in Macao, I paid for it myself!

TAI-PAN picks up the cat. A knife comes from his boot.

TAI-PAN

Let him go, Tads.

TILLMAN moves forward. WAITERS are dousing a fire from a knocked over candelabra.

(TILLMAN)

[This is no place to fight.]

A pause - Tai-Pan's eyes narrow at GORTH.

TAI-PAN

Tomorrow at dawn...

GORTH

You be a dead man.

TAI-PAN

(to TILLMAN)

Hire a junk. I want witnesses and a
fair fight.

(to GORTH)

I pick fighting irons.

For a second it shakes GORTH - then he spits at TAI-PAN. TAI-PAN only stares at him, then turns and starts to leave the bar... For a moment Gorth's eyes follow him, enraged, unnerved by his composure.

And then he lunges after him, grabbing a carving knife from a table and striking -

(CONTINUED)

152 CONTINUED:

152

[Tai-Pan - !] (TILLMAN)

TAI-PAN wheels and ducks, he avoids the knife but the weight of Gorth's lunge carries them both to the floor - GORTH on top, both men powerful, quick as cats. GORTH lifts the knife to strike again, but TAI-PAN grabs his wrist with both hands -- holding him off firmly.

TAI-PAN
 2 2 (taunting)
 Tomorrow...

GORTH smashes at Tai-Pan's face with his left hand and tries to strike again, but TAI-PAN twists and rolls to avoid the left hand, but still clings to the wrist with the knife... and in the sudden strike, roll and twist, the knife is turned into Gorth's chest - and the weight of TAI-PAN'S body pushes it deep.

GORTH gasps! - a sudden sucking in of breath that is almost a twisted laugh at Fate... he breathes short, quick breaths - staring at TAI-PAN, wide-eyed, quivering... TAI-PAN lifts his own body, realizing what has happened, not really wanting it to happen this way. Blood seeps from Gorth's mouth.

GORTH
 ... Your... blasted... joss... Someday
 ... someday...it's going to...tu...

He almost gets the word 'turn' out before he dies. TAI-PAN stares up at TILLMAN and COOPER.

And again the door pushes open. BROCK stands in the doorway - the MAN who left the bar standing behind him.

BROCK stares at the scene before him.

TAI-PAN slowly rises.

(TILLMAN)
 (to BROCK)
 [It was an accident - we all saw it.]

COOPER
 Gorth went for him with a knife.

BROCK - his face stone white - simply looks at the figure of his dead son... then he looks up at TAI-PAN.

BROCK
 You killed my son - now I'm going to
 kill you!

TILLMAN and the others chorus in - "No, it was an accident." "Gorth whipped him with a cat" --- but BROCK shuts them all up.

(CONTINUED)

152 CONTINUED:

152

BROCK

Be still!!! - He killed my son!

He turns to TAI-PAN again. His finger stabbing like Jehovah's.

BROCK (cont'd)

I want you on your precious knoll what
was to be! Now! This moment when I
know it be God's will!

He turns and starts out - the TAI-PAN breathes deeply, resignedly, and starts to follow - TILLMAN and the others, still protesting quietly start to come. As BROCK goes out the door, he barks to the MAN who brought him -

BROCK

Get fighting irons.

153 EXT. THE KNOLL/HONG KONG - NIGHT

153

BROCK straps a fighting iron to his wrist. He stands in a little area before the half-finished church. The TAI-PAN has removed his coat and is securing a fighting iron to his wrist. TILLMAN, COOPER, the OTHER MERCHANTS and ONE or TWO STRAGGLERS stand about watching. A torch is lodged in the scaffolding of the church - the storm blowing about them causing it to flare and flicker in the wind.

The two men face each other:

BROCK

... Thee planned elopement, didn't thee?

TAI-PAN

Aye.

BROCK

To kill my Gorth...?

TAI-PAN

Gorth chose his Fate... We all do.

we, BRAWK

It is laden with his own sense of Fate, with the ill-fortune of Gorth's death in that manner, but it strikes a note in BROCK too. They both know that in her unpredictable way, Fate is about to deal their final hands. BROCK takes a step forward, the fighting iron swinging slightly - taunting -

BROCK

Your island be done - 'Tai-Pan.' A Royal
Commission be coming - we're getting off
this blasted rock. That be my doing!
That's why I wanted you here.

TAI-PAN shifts his weight as BROCK continues to advance.

(CONTINUED)

153 CONTINUED:

BROCK (cont'd)

I should ha' killed thee years ago -
now by God,

(he swings!)

I do it!

But TAI-PAN has shifted and it misses - but the fight has begun! In the church - out on the knoll - they lash at each other - two giants, equally skilled, equally intent. BROCK catches Tai-Pan's side, and almost smashes his head as TAI-PAN reels from the blow.

TAI-PAN bloodies Brock's left shoulder -

And as they battle, the raging wind begins to swell - branches are flung across them as they fight, a portion of the church rips off. Rain begins to whip them.

BROCK sends TAI-PAN reeling across the broken frames of the church - and as TAI-PAN scrambles to his feet, BROCK turns seaward, facing the now raging storm. TAI-PAN stares -

~~It~~ ~~be~~ u TAI-PAN
It be typhoon!

154 EXT. THE HARBOR/HONG KONG - NIGHT

154

THEIR POV - looking down at the harbor - the ships are turned into the wind - the sky scudding, furious - clouds tearing across the sky.

155 EXT. THE KNOLL/HONG KONG - NIGHT

155

Two of the MERCHANTS and a STRAGGLER start to run down the hill toward the town, but BROCK turns back to TAI-PAN as though spurred by the storm.

As the fight rages in the rising storm TAI-PAN slowly gains advantage - BROCK winded, bleeding from the blow on the shoulder - and another on the thigh - and at last TAI-PAN feints, draws him into a wild swing and brings his fighting iron crashing into Brock's stomach from below.

BROCK falls behind the structures of the breaking church. He's completely helpless -- and suddenly terrified as a huge beam starts to fall across him. TAI-PAN lurches forward, grappling the beam. TILLMAN and COOPER rush in to help. As they inch the beam away the bloodied, exhausted BROCK shakes his head at TAI-PAN -

BROCK

(breathlessly)

You... be... fool -- as long... as I
breath... ye'll na'... be safe.

The TAI-PAN only reacts with a taut cynical smile, then a fierce WHINE lifts his head.

(CONTINUED)

155 CONTINUED:

155

TAI-PAN

It's striking!

And he and the others dive for cover as a black gust of howling dust-laden wind covers them from view! THUNDER! LIGHTNING!

156 EXT. NAVAL BUILDING/HONG KONG - NIGHT

156

- CULUM and TESS struggle towards the Naval Building with GLESSING - as they're pulled into the door with the help of a NAVAL OFFICER, the flag pole crashes against the building, narrowly missing them.

157 EXT. THE HARBOR/HONG KONG - NIGHT

157

- A ship's anchor line breaks in the raging sea. We see the ships crash to shore, smashing several sampans!

158 INT. BEDROOM - TAI-PAN'S HOUSE/HONG KONG - NIGHT

158

- MAY-MAY is hurled against the door of her bedroom, AH GIP and YIN HSI, grappling with her and supporting her at the same time as glass shatters about them.

AH GIP

(yelling against the wind)

No, Missee, you mus' not go!

MAY-MAY

Brock will na' fight fair - let me!

Let me!

She struggles to stand, but their hands and shattering CRASH in the house force her to the floor again.

159 INT. SINCLAIR'S LIVING ROOM/HONG KONG - NIGHT

159

- MARY SINCLAIR shelters on a mat in the corner of a small living room (her house), the door flies open, the wind ripping through the house, tossing furniture, smashing windows. HORATIO gropes and half crawls through the doorway.

MARY

(shouting - relieved)

Thank God! I thought you might be in the harbor!

HORATIO, drenched with the rain, crawls along the wall a few feet from her, staring at her with half-crazed eyes.

(CONTINUED)

159 CONTINUED:

159

HORATIO

I beat it out of her! - Chi, your dear
maid! You're a whore of the Chinese!
Glessing will never marry you!

MARY stares at him, his manic pleasure, the tragedy it means for her.

160 EXT. SHORE/HONG KONG - NIGHT

160

- Thatch and bamboo houses for the Chinese laborers placed along the harbor are ripped and torn by the storm, hurling BODIES into the air. Giant waves crashing into the beach.

161 EXT. THE KNOLL/HONG KONG - NIGHT

161

- On the knoll the rain lashes at the church building, but the sky is beginning to lighten. Slowly, TAI-PAN lifts his head... a splash of moonlight pierces the black, turbulent sky.

TAI-PAN

It's the eye! We're going into the
eye of the storm.

And he stands - BROCK still lies inertly against the base of the church, breathing, but not looking like he's going to move. TILLMAN and COOPER shake the debris from themselves and move to help him as TAI-PAN goes around towards the front of the church.

COOPER

We'd better get down as quickly as we
can.

THE FRONT OF THE CHURCH - TAI-PAN lurches into the broken moonlight. Below him we get a glimpse of the bay - the naval ships, the merchantmen safe - only the one ship crashed into the shore.

TILLMAN, COOPER and TWO OTHER MERCHANTS carry BROCK on some wooden planks.

BRAWK
TAI-PAN

Look at it, Tyler! - it's safe even in
a typhoon! See ~~how~~ ^{how} at your Commission
says about that!

No acknowledgement from BROCK. The pain in his body overcoming for the moment even his hatred of Struan. The others start down the path with him.

(TILLMAN)
(to TAI-PAN)

[There's another injured back there.
We'd better get them down.

(CONTINUED)

161 CONTINUED:

161

TAI-PAN nods, and starts to turn back - but his eye is caught by the pile of rocks with the cross he burned. - Lightning has split the pile open, toppling the foot of the cross, charring the rock black.

TAI-PAN is shaken by it. He slowly looks around at the troubled sky, feeling as it did on that first night, the premonition of death....

TAI-PAN

Good God... not now... not now...

He tries to shake it off, looking again down at the harbor. The wind no more than a rustle.

MERCHANT'S VOICE

He's dead. Something must have caught him on the back of the head.

TAI-PAN turns. TWO MERCHANTS have dragged a MAN to the front of the church. TAI-PAN looks at them - older, slight men - and the BODY.

TAI-PAN

We'll take him down.

And he moves across and lifts the BODY across his shoulders. As he starts down, he looks once again at the split and charred pile of rocks.

162 INT. BEDROOM - TAI-PAN'S HOUSE/HONG KONG - NIGHT

162

Shutters broken, glass everywhere, furniture tossed and smashed. In the eerie silence, MAY-MAY, AH GIP and YIN-HSI pull themselves up from their huddled pile by the door.

YIN-HSI

(warily)

So quiet, Supreme Lady.

MAY-MAY

It is the calm. I mus' find Tai-Pan.

AH GIP

No, Missee. Best stay here, he come.

MAY-MAY

Maybe he canna' come. I have terrifical bad feeling - we mus' find him.

It is laden with somber premonition and she is already pushing over the debris to go out -- AH GIP resignedly hurries to help her.

AH GIP

Missee - Missee...

163 INT. SINCLAIR'S LIVING ROOM/HONG KONG - NIGHT

163

HORATIO lies unconscious beneath a pile of rubble. He is still breathing. MARY stands over him. She looks at him pensively... the open door, and then she walks out, fatalistically, into the silent night.

164 EXT. MORNING CLOUD/HONG KONG - NIGHT

164

ORLOV and a CREWMAN are hurriedly hacking through tangled rope to free the wheel - the FIRST MATE struggles up to him.

FIRST MATE

Sir - ?

ORLOV

(as he works)

Lower the cutter! - Put a line from the stern and swing her all the way around. It'll strike dead opposite when she hits again. Hurry!

165 INT. NAVAL BUILDING/HONG KONG - NIGHT

165

Debris everywhere, collapsed beams, shattered masonry -- PEOPLE trying to recover in the choking dust. CULUM is twisting a tourniquet on the leg of GLESSING who lies on the floor in the midst of a pile of rubble. An INJURED SAILOR is trying to help.

CULUM

Has it stopped?

INJURED SAILOR

Yes... yes... it's hardly a trickle.

TESS staggers erect behind them... CULUM turns to her -

CULUM

Get the tongs! Bring me coal from that fire!

TESS is confused and frightened. She looks from CULUM to GLESSING, and from HER POV we see that fallen masonry has cut Glessing's leg off above the ankle. TESS clasps her mouth in horror.

CULUM

Get the tongs! You can be sick later!

TESS staggers to a brick stove set against the wall. CULUM looks up as MARY approaches through the chaos -

MARY

Culum - ! Have you seen --

(CONTINUED)

165 CONTINUED:

165

And she sees GLESSING - sees his wound. For a second it takes her breath, then she kneels by his head. He closes his eyes, in pain and desperation, but clings to her when she holds him.

TESS has brought the glowing coal in tongs. CULUM takes it - and nods to MARY. She clasps GLESSING hard as CULUM bends to his task.

166 EXT. HONG KONG - NIGHT

166

TAI-PAN lowers the BODY near a new building going up.

TAI-PAN
(to the MERCHANTS) *FB712*
' Take shelter here. There isn't much
time. I've got to get to my house.
ma

And he runs off into the darkness, the wind beginning to rise.

167 INT. SINCLAIR'S LIVING ROOM/HONG KONG - NIGHT

167

The wind stirring. HORATIO begins to come to consciousness. He lifts himself, staring at the spot where Mary was. He stumbles towards the door.

168 EXT. THE KNOLL/HONG KONG - NIGHT

168

MAY-MAY struggles to the top, helped by AH GIP. She looks desperately at the empty church, the ruins.

MAY-MAY
Tai-Pan! - Tai-Pan!

She stands - lost - heaving for breath in her sickly state. The wind beginning to whistle about the knoll.

MAY-MAY
Why Kuo say they come here?

169 INT. PRIVATE QUARTERS-TAI-PAN'S HOUSE/HONG KONG - NIGHT

169

TAI-PAN pushes through the debris.

TAI-PAN
May-may!

YIN-HSI raises her head from a pile of pillows.

YIN-HSI
Supreme Lady hear you fight one-eye
Devil - she goes to you.

(CONTINUED)

169 CONTINUED:

169

TAI-PAN

On the knoll!?

YIN-HSI nods fearfully - and TAI-PAN runs out.

170 EXT. THE KNOLL/HONG KONG - NIGHT

170

The wind sharp now. MAY-MAY sits, recovering a little, on a part of the church.

She doesn't know what to do.

AH GIP

Supreme Lady!

MAY-MAY turns - AH GIP is pointing to a splash of blood on a piece of wood.

MAY-MAY

Ai-yee! He is deaded, I know! We mus' find him!

She stands and starts to hurry down -- AH GIP moving to her side, awkwardly trying to assist.

ON THE HILLSIDE - TAI-PAN is running up - a lightning flash - and he spots MAY-MAY and AH GIP ahead of him near the knoll.

TAI-PAN

May-may - ! Stay! Stay! Go back!

But MAY-MAY has heard his voice, seen him now - and she breaks free from AH GIP and runs to him.

TWO SHOT - as they run to each other - and meet - she lunging into his arms.

MAY-MAY

By God, Tai-Pan, I'm fright-filled to death for you. Dinna leave me... dinna leave me!

He holds her tight - her words sending the chill knife of his own premonition into his heart again. His eyes take in the rising wind, the black sky, their almost hopeless exposure.

TAI-PAN

Never, ~~ass~~. I'll never ~~leave thee~~... *yuh*
(he picks her up)

MAY-MAY

I knew ole one-eye Devil could na' kill thee. Where shall we hide?

(CONTINUED)

170 CONTINUED:

170

TAI-PAN is already moving towards the knoll.

TAI-PAN ^u
No hidin' from a typhoon. You ride her
out - or you do na' ^{3R}.

AH GIP stands loyally waiting, TAI-PAN moves past her.

TAI-PAN (cont'd) ^a
Come. The church ~~be~~ ^{is} our best chance.

The wind howling now. TAI-PAN pushes aside some debris and finds a spot by the corner of a wall. He lowers MAY-MAY into it - but she still has her arms around his neck, and she keeps them there, so he must stay bent over her. The storm is growing ever stronger, the beams are shaking, but it is just the two of them....

MAY-MAY
I am much trouble to ye, am I na'?

TAI-PAN
Aye. That [?] you are.

MAY-MAY
But do ye na' love me, laddie?

It's teasing, and he smiles, but his answer overlaid with an inevitable seriousness now.

TAI-PAN
You are my Supreme ~~lady~~ ⁺.

It's tone stops her pulse - a beat...

MAY-MAY
Oh, laddie, you mus' laugh when you
say that, or you break my heart.

Tai-Pan's expression doesn't change.

TAI-PAN
'Tis no ~~laughin'~~ ⁺ matter.

A second as she searches his eyes, then tears spout from hers, and she clings to him.

A piece of roof is torn from the building!

171 EXT. THE HARBOR/HONG KONG - NIGHT

171

- The bow of the Morning Cloud - lashed by waves - but faced into the sea.

172 EXT. STREET/HONG KONG - NIGHT

172

- A new building, scaffolding all around it, is collapsed by the storm, falling in a heap of rubble and flying brick.

- A tree crashes across a road in the howling wind, smashing a small kiosk near its base. In CLOSE SHOT we see HORATIO in the middle of the road, pinned by the tree, his rain-lashed face staring in bug-eyed death into the black night.

173 INT. NAVAL BUILDING/HONG KONG - NIGHT

173

- In the Naval Building, MARY holds Glessing's head as they huddle against a wall, he glances up at her, his face harrowed by pain. She puts her cheek against his, loving him, with his imperfection, the more because of hers.

174 EXT. HONG KONG - NIGHT

174

- The storm - high, spectacular - a swirling, violent mass.

175 EXT. THE KNOLL/HONG KONG - NIGHT

175

- On the knoll TAI-PAN and MAY-MAY huddle against the wall in a blast of howling dust as boards rip from the church.

MAY-MAY

(terrified)

Hold me, Tai-Pan! Hold me!

His arms envelope her even more tightly.

TAI-PAN

It's alright, lass - it's alright...

- We get a LONG SHOT of the church as, in a darkness cut only by angry streaks of lightning, it is caught in a twisting maelstrom of cloud and disintegrates in a shattering spiral of wood and debris.

176 EXT. BEACH/HONG KONG - DAY

176

In rain and howling wind the grass and shrubs are bent horizontal... but gradually the wind lightens, sunlight throws shadows on the beach - the sea calms...

177 INT. LIVING ROOM - TAI-PAN'S HOUSE/HONG KONG - DAY

177

Sunlight penetrates the roofless shambles.

178 EXT. SHORELINE/HONG KONG - DAY

178

Ruined sampans are crawled over by those who have survived. In the harbor beyond we see the ships - many with broken masts and spars -- but still there.

179 EXT. CHURCH - THE KNOLL/HONG KONG - DAY

179

Sunlight is here too - amidst a shambles of rubble. We hear FOOTSTEPS... someone is pushing his way through the debris.

It is CULUM... he crawls over a broken beam and sees AH GIP - wedged fatally beneath. A pause.

CULUM

There -- !

He's pointing her out to ORLOV and A CREWMAN who are with him. They begin to dig her out as CULUM goes on.

FEATURING TAI-PAN and MAY-MAY - lying in what's left of a corner of the building - masonry half-burying them - both dead. He with his arms around her - she, her head lodged in his chest...

CULUM has stopped before them, his eyes moist. ORLOV moves to his side...

CULUM

... So that was the China lady.

A long moment, and he looks at the TAI-PAN... Then brokenly -

CULUM

Why couldn't I talk to him...

DISSOLVE:

180 EXT. THE KNOLL/HONG KONG - DAY

180

CULUM in different clothes, a new day, wanders the knoll desolately, finally he sits on the steps of the ruins of the church, staring out over the bay, his hands fingering half a broken coin. The far distant SOUND of a bagpipe playing an elegiac lament. ARISTOTLE QUANCE puffs and pulls himself up to the knoll, his clothes torn, a bruise or two.

Dully, CULUM looks at him -

CULUM

Oh - Mr. Quance... Please - please leave me alone.

QUANCE sags on the ground.

QUANCE

I'm sorry lad. I haven't got the strength to go back down.

(CONTINUED)

180 CONTINUED:

180

CULUM stands - and walks to the front of the knoll. QUANCE sees his fingers twisting and turning the half-coin. Finally -

QUANCE

What be the half-coin?

CULUM

I don't know. Someday it's something
I have to do.

QUANCE shrugs, then -

QUANCE

I'm sorry about your dad. It was his
Fate, lad. Joss rules us all in the
end.

CULUM

God, I hate that word.

QUANCE studies him...

QUANCE

The oldest story in the world is sons
who didn't appreciate their fathers
until they were dead - I wouldn't make
a Cross of it.

CULUM turns on him sharply - 'how does he know what I'm thinking.' A beat -

QUANCE (cont'd)

I know it's a bad time to bring it up,
Tai-Pan, but could you lend me a hundred
and fifty guineas?

CULUM

What did you say?

QUANCE

It's as embarrassing for me as it is
for you, Tai-Pan, but that old witch
Fotheringill is so upset by the damage
to her houseboat, she's going to throw
me out if I don't pay.

CULUM

You called me 'Tai-Pan.'

QUANCE

(flatly, deliberately -)
Well, you are, aren't you?

(CONTINUED)

180 CONTINUED:

180

A long beat, then CULUM takes a deep breath...

CULUM

What was your hold on my father?

QUANCE

No hold. The first time I saw him, he was in an alley - near dead. I nursed him back to health.

CULUM nods -- and begins to take coins from his purse - when -

ORLOV

Master Culum!

He is panting up the path - his face angry.

CULUM

What!

ORLOV

Captain Brock sent a passel of orders aboard my ship.

CULUM

What orders?

ORLOV

He ordered us to put the flag at half mast - something that didn't need his tellin'. He also ordered your Missus to go aboard the White Witch, and for me to tell you not to worry, he was arranging your dad's funeral and would dispose of the China lady. He said you'd be joining him now and I was to --

He stops because CULUM has turned back to the bay.

ORLOV (cont'd)

... Is that your wishes?

CULUM doesn't move - a long second as ORLOV and QUANCE stare at him...

CULUM

I will make the arrangements for my father's funeral... And it's my wish my father and his lady be buried together.
(he turns back to ORLOV)

I want you to go aboard White Witch and fetch my wife.

(CONTINUED)

180 CONTINUED:

180

ORLOV

Fetch?

CULUM

Aye. Fetch. And take as many men as
you think you'll need.

ORLOV smiles and is about to go, when CULUM has an afterthought. He slowly
undoes the bag of gold sovereigns at his waist.

CULUM (cont'd)

And give these to Brock. They're his
gold sovereigns... Tell him if it's
a funeral he wishes to arrange, the
Tai-Pan suggests he buy himself a coffin...

He stares into Orlov's eyes - then turns back to the harbor.

ORLOV

Aye, Tai-Pan.

And he glances at QUANCE and is off.

The CAMERA PULLS BACK AND UP... HIGER AND HIGHER... until we see CULUM on
the knoll - next to him the charred mound of stones that held the Tai-Pan's
cross... and the spread of the harbor with all its ships lying out before
him.

- - - T H E E N D - - -