

Nancy, John, Lyle, etc.

Here is my first draft of The Equals rewrite. I felt it was more important to get you the basic story as soon as possible, so there may be a plot hole here and there that we can fix in the polish. Despite the page numbers, I'd say this draft should run between 100 and 110 minutes screen time, depending on how elaborate you want to get with the battle and duel scenes. I've stuck to the bare minimum who-kills-who-and-how on those since you all and the stunt coordinators will have to work the rest out according to terrain, inspiration, actors' abilities, etc. The same goes for physical description of locales- I hope the action sequences are adaptable to whatever you find that looks good. I think there should be some similarity between the monastery in the 1945 sequence and the fortress in the present day battle- it is, after all, only a continuation of the same fight between Yang and Liu. I've changed the character of Tomo to a Chinese named Wing- he can be changed back to a Japanese easily if your casting makes more sense that way. The non-English dialogue is simple and sparse- I think you can use sub-titles when the audience needs to know what's going on or when you have a situation where the translator is adding their own interpretation before passing on an order or a comment. Mai's English should be very good, slightly accented, perhaps with European rather than American syntax. I've tried to keep the body count down but just to fill the open space in the final battle I think you'll need about thirty to a side. I haven't indicated any music but I think there should be a fairly extensive score to this thing, using both Japanese and Chinese instrumentation, perhaps getting more primitive as we go back in time (climb the mountain from the city). Most of the name changes are because they're easier to type; feel free to mess with them if you run into something the natives tell you is more authentic.

John

THE EQUALS

screenplay by John Sayles

1/28/81

NOTE - In this pre-credit sequence I think it would help to have some different kind of color stock than that used in the present-day part of the film.

1. SILHOUETTE

of a sentry sitting on top of a wall, backlit by a rising sun-

CUT TO:

2. REVERSE SHOT

the sentry, CHIN, dressed in a Chinese monk's fighting getup, yawns as he stares out over a steep hill, shading his eyes against the sun. A man in his forties, LI YANG, appears beside him, also looking out. Chin stands to offer him a quick bow.

CHIN

(Chinese) I heard them fighting in the night.

YANG

(Chinese) (nods) They'll come today.

We FOLLOW Yang down stone steps into the courtyard of a medieval fortress-like monastery. He crosses the bare dirt courtyard, passing several MONKS, one carrying wooden shields, another carrying an armful of spears, a trio bending a longbow to string it. All bow in deference to Yang as he goes by. He stops before a central hut-like building, and turns to look up at the monastery walls-

CUT TO:

3. WALLS, YANG'S POV

a circular PAN of the walls reveals a sentry looking out on top of each-

CUT TO:

4. YANG

enters the hut-

CUT TO:

5. INT. HUT

we start with a closeup on the face of LIU, a young man. He kneels on the floor of the hut, torchlight accentuating the look of hatred and envy on his face. We hear the sound of blades slicing through air, then SHIFT the camera till it looks over Liu's shoulder and see PAO, Liu's older brother, going through an elaborate practice form with a pair of incredible Chinese fighting swords. We TRACK IN to look closer at the swords, known hereafter as the EQUALS. Their surfaces are glass smooth, one etched with a picture of a Chinese warrior, the other with the picture of a beautiful woman. They catch the torchlight, flashing reddish-gold. Pao begins with the Equals held in front of him, blades crossed to make an X, then flows into movement, each stroke melting seamlessly into the next, no hard edges to the transitions. We TRACK around Pao in a circle, his face relaxed in concentration, till we have a reverse of our first shot and see Liu kneeling beyond Pao. Yang appears behind him, watching for a moment-

YANG

Pao.

5. cont.

Liu, surprised, hops to his feet. Pao stops his form and bows to Yang.

PAO

(Chinese) Father.

We FOLLOW Pao to them. He offers the swords- handing to them to Yang across Liu who eyes them constantly.

YANG

(Chinese) Take watch on the east wall.

Liu bows-

LIU

(Chinese) Yes, Father.

We FOLLOW Liu to the exit door. He turns to look back in-

CUT TO:

6. ROOM, LIU'S POV

Yang and Pao standing together, talking strategy-

CUT TO:

7. CU LIU

hardening with jealousy as he turns to go out-

CUT TO:

8. WALL TOP, CU CHIN

nodding off, his head starting to loll- a hand slaps on his shoulder and he starts awake in terror. Liu squats by him to take over the watch. We HOLD on Liu as Chin hurries down into the courtyard to get some rest. Liu looks after him, then looks around the interior of the monastery-

CUT TO:

9. MONASTERY, LIU'S POV

we PAN away from Chin crossing the yard to the barracks, no activity yet, then up and around to the three other sentries looking outward for enemies, their backs to Liu-

CUT TO:

10. LIU

he turns and pulls his sword out. He polishes the flat of it with his shirt, then raises and tilts it side to side to catch the sun-

CUT TO:

11. LONG SHOT, MONASTERY

looking up from the hillside at the high east wall of the monastery, we see the flash of the blade in the sun. The head of a Japanese SCOUT appears in the frame. He sees another flash, then we FOLLOW and WIDEN the shot as he hurries down the steep, rocky hill. He is dressed in a worn and dirty WWII Japanese infantry uniform. A title is superimposed over the shot-

CHINA - 1945

then it fades. We FOLLOW the scout to COLONEL SATO, an officer standing erect at the center of a half-dozen filthy, exhausted SOLDIERS who sprawl on the ground around him.

SCOUT

(Japanese) He's there.

SATO

(Japanese) On your feet!

The men rise wearily and we TRACK with them up the steep face, sometimes crawling on all fours to make the grade. Their faces are drained with fatigue as they pass, all but Sato, who we HOLD ON. He is determined, driven by an inner discipline-

CUT TO:

12. INT. COURTYARD

of the monastery. An ARCHER has come out onto the porch of the barracks with his bow and sits testing the pull-

CUT TO:

13. HILLSIDE, SCOUT

he crouches on all fours, head perked up like a fox, sniffing for danger. He scrambles up the last bit of hill and slides in against the base of the wall. A rope ladder falls down beside him. He takes a deep breath, then starts to climb up it-

CUT TO:

14. TOP OF WALL

Liu keeping his eye on the other sentries as the scout climbs up beside him. The scout checks the yard and walls, then stands quickly to signal the others to come-

CUT TO:

15. COURTYARD, ARCHER

he stands now, pulling the bowstring back as far as he can, his back to the east wall. We see the shadowline of the wall top, see the form of a soldier climbing over then ducking down, but the archer doesn't turn to see. We PAN across to the door of the main hut as Yang and Pao walk out. A shout from the north wall turns their heads-

SENTRY

(off, Chinese) Over there!

CUT TO:

16. NORTH WALL, SENTRY
pointing and shouting-

SENTRY

(Chinese) On the east wall!

There is a crack of gunfire and the sentry sprawls backwards off the wall-

CUT TO:

17. EAST WALL

the soldiers halfway down the stone steps into the monastery. The scout swings his rifle from the wall to the courtyard and opens fire-

CUT TO:

18. COURTYARD SHOOTOUT, VARIOUS SHOTS

very rapid action as the soldiers fan out across the courtyard laying down rifle fire. A monk carrying water buckets with a shoulder-yoke is hit, buckets flying as he goes down- the monks from the barracks rush out with swords and staffs and are immediately cut down by the one soldier with a machine gun- the monk who was testing his bow puts an arrow in the machine gunner, who sprays the courtyard as he falls, his last blast cutting Pao down at the legs as he runs for cover- Yang and the archer grab Pao by the arms and drag him into the hut as Liu points frenetically at them and yells at the soldiers-

LIU

(Chinese) Stop them! Stop them! There's a tunnel!

Liu and two soldiers with bayonet-mounted rifles run for the hut-

CUT TO:

19. INT. HUT

Yang and the archer have opened a trap door in the floor of the hut and the archer is dragging Pao down into it. They disappear into the tunnel below as Yang turns, drawing the Equals to face the soldiers as they rush in. He parries the bayonet charge of the first, side-stepping and slashing the soldier's neck as he lurches past, then head-fakes the other and runs him through with a straight thrust through the middle. He is unable to yank the sword out of the soldier before Liu is on him with his sword and he has to step away to defend himself. Liu and Yang look into each other's eyes- Yang shocked by his son's betrayal, Liu sending back a look of shame mixed with hatred. Liu attacks again, his father easily parrying his blows till- CRACK! there is a single shot and Yang is hit in his shoulder. Liu whirls to face the scout, who stands at the doorway trying to get a clear shot at Yang-

LIU

(Chinese) No!

SCOUT

(Japanese) Out of the way!

The scout side steps and gets a few more rounds off just as Yang dives into the tunnel opening. He runs to it and starts pouring fire down after Yang-

19. cont.

(off, Japanese) Stop!

SATO

CUT TO:

20. INT. HUT-

the scout stops firing and turns to see Colonel Sato, who stands looking at his two dead soldiers.

(Japanese) Don't waste bullets.

SATO

Sato puts his foot on the body of the impaled soldier and wrenches the Equal from it. He walks up to Liu, staring directly in his eyes. The sentry covers Liu with his rifle. Sato takes hold of the front of Liu's shirt and wipes the blade of the Equal clean of blood on it, looking contemptuously into Liu's face. He turns and walks out of the hut, the sentry covering his back with the rifle. We HOLD on Liu who watches after them for a moment, then goes to the door and looks out-

CUT TO:

21. COURTYARD, LIU'S POV

we PAN across the bodies of the slaughtered monks till we come to Sato, who stands examining the blade, holding it up to the sunlight-

CUT TO:

22. CU, LIU

rage, frustration, shame all reflected on his face-

CUT TO:

23. CU SATO

eying the sword with admiration. We TILT UP to see it held in his hands, the engraving of the beautiful woman flashing in the sun. The title is superimposed-

THE EQUALS

and then we-

FADE TO BLACK:

24. CU, FIGHT FAN

veins bulging in his neck as he screams-

FAN

Kill him! Kill him!

CUT TO:

25. INT. PRIVATE ARENA

a little basement-like room where you'd expect to see a cockfight, a motley bunch of FIGHT FANS standing and sitting around a 15x15 ring in which RICK, an Anglo, does battle with an expressionless KOREAN. The Korean is using a fairly straight-forward karate attack while Rick is much more free-form- a little of this, a little of that- a half-dozen hard martial arts schools thrown together. Both are bleeding from the face. The crowd stomps, curses, shouts, hungry for action. A title is superimposed-

LOS ANGELES - 1981

CUT TO:

26. CROWD

we PAN along an aisle, lots of money changing hands as fight-in-progress bets are laid down-

CUT TO:

27. FIGHT, VARIOUS SHOTS

the Korean stands at the center of the ring, pivoting as Rick circles looking for an opening. Whenever Rick takes a shot the Korean counterpunches with a fist or foot, staying compact, working inside of Rick's time. The Korean drives him back into a corner, working mostly to his ribs and kidneys, with Rick just missing head shots. Rick looks tired, the body blows taking their toll, his knees rubbery-

CUT TO:

28. CROWD, RINGSIDE

we PAN across the screaming fans, past a pair who start fighting themselves when one spills beer on the other, till we stop on the placid face of Pao. He is 35 years older, wearing glasses, watching the fight from a high-backed wheelchair-

CUT TO:

29. RING

Rick is cornered, trying to slip or block the Korean's punches and kicks but taking some crippling shots. He seems about to fold, but catches the other man with a knee to the groin as he comes in, follows with an elbow to the throat, then brings the Korean to his knees with a lightning combination of chops and high-kicks. He polishes him off with a two-footed jump kick that knocks his opponent through the ropes-

CUT TO:

30. RINGSIDE

the crowd going crazy, leaping up and down, screaming. Pao sits calmly among them, pulling his glasses off to clean the lenses with a handkerchief-

CUT TO:

31. RICK

stands, bloodied, hardly acknowledging the cheers as he tries to clear his head enough to realize that he's won-

CUT TO:

32. INT. DRESSING ROOM, TABLE

the crowd noise fades as we see a hundred dollars counted out in twenties and the pile pushed forward. We WIDEN to see Rick sitting on a dressing room bench still dressed to fight, staring at the money without really seeing it. We hear somebody walking out of the room, then a voice at the door-

PAO

(off) Mr. Murphy?

PROMOTER

(off) He's all yours.

There is the whirring sound of a motor and Pao appears beside Rick in his electric wheelchair-

CUT TO:

33. ROOM

we see that they are actually in a cramped little supply room. Rick's clothes hang from nails on the wall. Pao scrutinizes Rick's face as they talk. Rick seems depressed despite his victory- Pao has a very strong Chinese accent.

PAO

Mr. Rick Murphy?

RICK

Yeah?

PAO

You fight for money?

RICK

No, I'm an idiot, I do this for fun.

PAO

My name Li Pao. I pay.

RICK

You pay for what?

PAO

I bring something back Japan. You protect.

RICK

How much?

Pao points to the money on the table.

PAO

That much every day.

33. cont.

RICK

Why me?

PAO

I come to see other man. You win fight.

RICK

(nods) And just who would I be protecting you from?

PAO

Enemies.

Rick smiles bitterly, picks his money off the table.

RICK

Enemies, huh? Well, I'm sorry Mr. Pao-

PAO

Mr. Li-

RICK

-but I can't get a license to carry a gun. I have a record with the police.

PAO

No guns where we go.

RICK

Oh yeah? Where's that?

CUT TO:

34. L.A. AIRPORT, SECURITY AREA

Rick in a line of Japanese tourists, many of them bearing souvenirs from Disneyland, waiting to step through the metal-detection arch. Rick steps through without a buzz, and we see Pao sitting in his chair being searched by hand-

CUT TO:

35. AIRPORT, CORRIDOR

Rick walking, Pao riding toward their gate. Rick is checking out everybody in sight-

RICK

Who's going to be meeting us at the other end?

PAO

No one.

RICK

Well when do we deliver this whatever it is we're bringing back?

35. cont.

PAO

I tell you in Japan. Now you look for enemy.

RICK

(mutters) Look for enemy. I hate this job.

CUT TO:

36. INT. AIRPLANE

Rick helps a steward lift Pao from his chair into his seat-

STEWARD

There we go-

PAO

You put chair near-

STEWARD

Don't you worry, we'll just fold it up and put it right over here-

CUT TO:

37. INT. PLANE

in flight. Rick is flipping through a magazine. He looks over at Pao. Pao is staring straight ahead, a distant look on his face- he hardly seems to be breathing. Rick touches his arm-

RICK

Mr. Li?

Pao turns his head very slowly to look at Rick, not breaking out of his reverie.

RICK

You okay?

Pao turns back and resumes his stare without a word-

CUT TO:

38. EXT. TOKYO AIRPORT

establishing shot of the building for international arrivals. We PAN past a very small car loaded with four Japanese THUGS, waiting and watching the exit doors, continue to join MAI, a beautiful young Chinese woman as she walks across the pickup lane, nervously watching the same area, then HOLD as she goes on past a parked limosine. We TRACK IN to the rear seat of the limosine but are unable to make out the person sitting there through the tinted window-

CUT TO:

39. INT. AIRPORT, CUSTOMS AREA

Rick is getting his ratty-looking suitcase checked. He looks across to the desk where Pao is being checked and we PAN to follow his gaze. A customs officer has Pao's bags open and is examining a large antique Chinese bowl and the bill of sale that goes with it. We PAN back to Rick, looking around tensely-

CUT TO:

40. INT. AIRPORT, LOBBY

Rick, carrying both his bag and Pao's, walks alongside toward the exit doors as Pao steers his electric wheelchair-

PAO

Now is most dangerous time.

RICK

Why don't you just call in the cops?

PAO

If we have trouble you run with bags.

RICK

Run?

PAO

Someone will come for them.

RICK

What do you mean, run? What about you?

PAO

(shrugs) No legs. I am not worthy.

CUT TO:

41. RICK

confused, takes a look at what lies ahead of them in the lobby-

CUT TO:

42. LOBBY, RICK'S POV

we TRACK through the lobby, various people noticing Pao in his chair, then looking away. Rick and Pao catch up with the shot and we FOLLOW them through the electric-eye door to the outside, Pao in the lead- WHAM! WHAM! a shell from a high-powered rifle slams into Pao and other shots shatter the glass door behind Rick as he hits the ground. Pao's chair continues to buzz ahead, a blood stain spreading on the back of it. Rick abandons his bags and runs for Pao- WHAP! a man dressed as a porter swings a pair of wrapped skis and clotheslines Rick, knocking him onto his back-

CUT TO:

43. RICK

face bloodied, rolling to get to his feet- we see two sets of legs run past on the way to the bags by the exit door. Rick gets to his knees, looks for Pao-

CUT TO:

44. CURBSIDE, RICK'S POV

Mai kneels holding Pao, who has tumbled off his chair into the road. Mai is crying hysterically-

CUT TO:

45. RICK

turning to see as we hear a screech of tires-

CUT TO:

46. ROAD

the small car with the four thugs screeches away. A couple airport security cops run into the picture, not sure of who's shooting who. The limosine glides by them innocently, driving in the opposite direction from the thugs-

CUT TO:

47. RICK

he gets to his feet. Dozens of police are making the scene now, pushing their way through curious onlookers to get to Pao. Rick watches the cops, pulls out a handkerchief to wipe the blood from his face-

CUT TO:

48. COPS, RICK'S POV

a pair of tough-looking cops scanning the crowd for witnesses with hard eyes-

CUT TO:

49. RICK

fading backwards into the crowd, his reflexes taking him in the opposite direction from the police. He bumps into somebody, turns to see an old PORTER smiling up at him-

Bag?

PORTER

What?

RICK

You have bag?

PORTER

Rick looks back to the shattered exit door-

CUT TO:

50. SIDEWALK

in front of the exit door, strewn with shattered glass. The bags are gone.

CUT TO:

51. RICK & PORTER

Rick shakes his head, confused-

RICK

No bags.

Rick pushes away into the crowd and we HOLD on the porter looking after him-

CUT TO:

52. CURBSIDE

an ambulance arriving too late. We can barely see Mai's tear-streaked face through an opening in the police and onlookers ringing around her and Pao's body-

FADE TO:

53. TOKYO STREETS, NIGHT

Rick is wandering through the honky-tonk Ginza area, past neon-flashing facades of strip joints and night clubs. Two middle-aged American couples come out from a club and walk behind Rick for a ways, talking loudly, a little drunk-

MAN

It said they didn't have any idea what the motive was.

WOMAN

That thing yesterday? That was just awful. You're not safe anywhere.

2ND WOMAN

Aren't there supposed to be police at the airport?

2ND MAN

Broad daylight. Probably one of those whatchamacallits. Tong wars.

MAN

Tong wars are Chinese.

2ND WOMAN

He was Chinese, the guy they shot. It said in the paper.

WOMAN

Let's go in here-

CUT TO:

54. STREET, NIGHT

Rick has entered a less tacky section of town. He passes the open door of a tourist bar, stops and backs up to look when he see Mai sitting at the counter nursing a drink. He enters-

CUT TO:

55. INT. BAR

Rick sits at the stool next to Mai. She glances at him, giving no sign of recognition-

RICK

Hello.

Mai nods, goes back to her drink.

RICK

Do you speak English?

MAI

Sure.

RICK

Do you live here?

MAI

Tokyo? No. I live in the country.

Mai speaks with no trace of an accent.

RICK

Oh.

MAI

Are you here for a vacation?

Rick gives her a long look, decides to stop playing-

RICK

I came here as a bodyguard for a man.

MAI

Really?

RICK

Only we got japped coming out of the airport. (realizes)
Excuse the expression.

MAI

(shrugs) I'm Chinese.

55. cont.

RICK

The man I was babysitting got killed.

MAI

(nods) Was he your friend?

RICK

I didn't really know anything about him. Maybe he deserved to get whacked out.

MAI

You're very calm about it.

RICK

(getting mad) I'm nothing compared to you, sister.

MAI

Pardon?

RICK

You were there when they shot Mr. Li yesterday. You looked pretty bent out of shape. And here you are pretending you don't know anything about it.

Mai looks him in the eyes for a long moment, as if trying to gauge his character-

MAI

Did m- did Mr. Li owe you money?

RICK

Half my fee was supposed to come when we made some kind of delivery.

MAI

(gets up) Okay. If you want it, come with me.

Mai walks out of the bar quickly. Rick sighs, then mutters as he starts after her-

RICK

Everything's gotta be a big fucking mystery-

CUT TO:

56. STREET, NIGHT

Mai walks silently, almost as if Rick isn't there. He keeps glancing at her face for a sign of life-

RICK

Where'd you learn to talk English?

56. cont.

San Jose.

MAI

No shit.

RICK

Where'd you learn?

MAI

He glares at her. They walk by us out of the frame. We HOLD on the street. A dark figure, features indistinguishable from a distance, steps out from a doorway and watches after them-

CUT TO:

57. INT. HOTEL ROOM

a small and plain rented room, not seedy but not luxurious. Rick checks suspiciously into closets, takes a peek into the bathroom, while Mai stands watching him at the center of the room-

You're expecting somebody?

MAI

I don't like surprises.

RICK

Rick's eyes rest on Mr. Li's wheelchair, sitting in the corner-

The bags you were carrying for Mr. Li-

MAI

Somebody lifted them. If you got any ideas I could use a change of underwear-

RICK

There's a freighter that leaves every week for Hong Kong. I'll be completing Mr. Li's delivery-

MAI

You've got his bags?

RICK

You're a mercenary, right? You fight for money? I have an offer to make you-

MAI

No way. I'm going home.

RICK

I need protection-

MAI

57. cont.

RICK

Like a snake needs tennis shoes. Just give me my money, okay?

MAI

(sighs) All right. It was a thousand dollars?

RICK

Eight hundred.

Mai looks at him, surprised-

RICK

Maybe I'm a mercenary but I'm not a thief.

Mai nods, then goes into the next room. Rick waits a moment, then we FOLLOW him into the bathroom where he studies the bruise on his cheek from when he was hit with the skis the day before in the mirror. CRASH! There is a splintering of wood from the hall door and before Rick can react his head is being pushed against the mirror by an automatic with a silencer on it. Two of the thugs from the airport hold guns on him while MORA, a young, hard-looking character looks on, all of them crammed into the little bathroom-

MORA

Where is she?

RICK

She's here.

MORA

Where?

RICK

The next room.

MORA

(Japanese) Go see.

One of the thugs hurries out of the bathroom. A moment's silence, then he calls-

THUG

(off, Japanese) She's gone.

Mora snaps his fingers, signals for the others to bring Rick along-

MORA

Come on.

RICK

Where are we going?

MORA

To visit the Colonel.

58. EXT. STREET, NIGHT

the little car pulls up in front of a building advertising martial arts training (in Japanese) and the men get out, Mora in the lead, the two thugs flanking Rick, their guns held low-

MORA

- You'll get a bang out of the Colonel- he's a real vintage character.

RICK

Where are you from?

MORA

I came up in Japantown in L.A.

RICK

I lived a couple blocks from you then-

MORA

So what?

As Mora puts his hand on the door of the building Rick strikes backwards with both of his arms catching the thugs off guard and giving himself an opening to run. The men recover, aim after him-

MORA

(Japanese) Don't shoot!

He puts a finger to his lips, looks around the neighborhood-

MORA

(Japanese) You run him down. I'll bring the car.

CUT TO:

59. STREET

Rick running down a deserted street. The headlights of a car appear at the far end of the street, coming toward him. The car hops onto the sidewalk, speeding to hit him. Rick ducks into a side alley, tries one door, it's locked, tries another- it opens-

CUT TO:

60. INT. KITCHEN, RICK

he finds himself standing in the kitchen of a sushi restaurant. A half dozen KITCHEN WORKERS look up from the fish they are chopping, knives in hand. Rick smiles and we FOLLOW as he walks through the kitchen toward the dining room, making his way around gleaming modern equipment and butchering tables. One of the thugs is waiting at the exit to the dining room, a short sword in hand. Rick turns, sees-

CUT TO:

61. EXIT TO ALLEY

the other thug has come in behind Rick. He too holds a short sword. He moves toward Rick-

CUT TO:

62. KITCHEN FIGHT, VARIOUS SHOTS

Rick vaults over a cutting table, sending fish flying and the kitchen workers scattering. The two thugs close on him and a desperate fight ensues, Rick using any piece of kitchen equipment at hand- skillets, trays, a work stool- to ward off the men's sword attacks. The cramped quarters and amount of equipment hanging overhead make it difficult for them to get a good shot at him. Disarmed, Rick dives headfirst across another cutting table covered with glistening fish guts and makes for the dining room again, but they trap him by the cooking equipment. Rick ducks under one headhunting slash and snap-kicks the thug backwards into the tempura vat where he screams in pain as his back hits the sizzling oil. The other thug backs him up with a nearly-fatal straight thrust and he reaches behind himself blindly for a weapon- coming up with a long pike that he swings by the tail to parry the thug's next slash and then WHAP! to deck him with a baseball-type swing across the face with it. He turns to run but is staring into Mora's automatic-

MORA

Drop the fish.

Rick drops the pike.

MORA

You breathe wrong, smart boy, I'll put one in your skull.

He turns to the kitchen workers who have gathered around wide-eyed, whispering to each other-

MORA

(Japanese) Back to work!

The men scurry away-

CUT TO:

63. INT. TRAINING ROOM

a pair of Japanese SWORDSMEN spar with bamboo swords. We PAN away from them across a dimly-lit martial arts training room to an office door just as Mora closes it for privacy-

CUT TO:

64. INT. OFFICE

Rick sits on a hard chair at the center of the room. There are martial arts illustrations on the walls. The thug who wasn't turned stands holding his gun on Rick. Colonel Sato strolls around Rick, looking him up and down. Sato has aged but still looks formidable. He sniffs Rick and makes a face at the fish smell, then turns to Mora-

SATO

(Japanese) Bring the boy in.

64. cont.

Mora turns and calls into an adjoining room-

MORA

Hashimura!

A young man who we identify as one of the hit men from the airport, HASHIMURA enters and kneels a few feet from Rick, his eyes downcast in shame-

SATO

(Japanese) Put out your hand.

Hashimura holds his left hand out, palm upward-

CUT TO:

65. RICK

watching, not comprehending-

CUT TO:

66. ROOM

SATO

Mora!

Mora draws an evil-looking knife, crosses, and touches the edge of the blade to Hashimura's palm-

CUT TO:

67. CU HASHIMURA

looking at the knife on his hand, sweat beading his forehead. He swallows, trying to get his composure-

CUT TO:

68. MORA

addresses Rick-

MORA

This poor fuck was supposed to shoot you in the head at the airport. He lost his nerve and pulled to the left.

CUT TO:

69. RICK
watching uneasily-

RICK
Don't feel like you have to do anything for my benefit.

CUT TO:

70. HASHIMURA
getting control of his face, looking pretty stoic now-

CUT TO:

71. ROOM
the men frozen in a tableau momentarily, then Sato barks-

SATO
(Japanese) Do it!

CUT TO:

72. HAND
ZIP! the knife slices across Hashimura's palm- a thin white line appears first, then red blood begins to seep out. We TILT UP to his face, straining not to let his deadpan look of acceptance break-

CUT TO:

73. RICK
reacting. Mora and Sato set chairs on either side of him and sit-

MORA
Where's the girl?

RICK
I don't know.

Mora lays the knife on Rick's cheek just below his eye-

MORA
I didn't hear you.

CUT TO:

74. HAND, RICK'S POV

blood pouring out of the cut now, dripping through Hashimura's fingers onto the floor-

CUT TO:

75. ROOM

RICK

She said something about a freighter to Hong Kong.
She was going to be on it. She wanted to hire me.

MORA

And what about the sword?

RICK

I don't know anything about a sword.

Mora presses the knife into Rick's cheek-

MORA

I didn't hear you.

RICK

What am I stupid, I'm gonna hold out on you?
I don't give a shit about this girl or whatever she's
carrying. If I knew anything about a sword,
believe me I'd tell you.

Mora sits back and withdraws the knife-

MORA

You remember World War Two?

RICK

Yeah-

MORA

John Wayne, Lee Marvin, the yellow peril-

RICK

Yeah, sure-

MORA

The Colonel here was in the middle of it- professional
soldier, live by the blade and all that. Somewhere along
the line he picks up this sword- Chinese job with all
this engraving all over it- and these old boys are
funny, their weapons are like holy to them. He ends
up on some island after they unload on Hiroshima and
he's got to surrender it to John Wayne's stand-in.

75. cont.

RICK

So it's a sword.

MORA

Thirty five years he tries to track this sword down.
One day it turns up in some hock shop in East L.A.
Certain other parties get to it first- well, you
see the mess we got here.

SATO

(Japanese) What does he say?

MORA

(Japanese) He doesn't know.

SATO

(Japanese) Try again.

Mora puts the knife at Rick's throat- Sato leans close to look deeply into Rick's eyes-

MORA

You positive about the sword my friend?

RICK

I don't know anything about it.

MORA

(Japanese) He doesn't know.

Sato scowls, stalks away-

SATO

(Japanese) Get rid of him.

MORA

On your feet.

Rick stands, looks to Hashimura who continues to kneel with his hand held out, a big puddle of blood spreading beneath him-

RICK

He's gonna bleed to death if you leave him there.

MORA

Worry about yourself, smart boy.

CUT TO:

76. HASHIMURA

glassy eyed, kneeling in a semi-conscious state-

CUT TO:

77. ALLEYWAY

Rick walks with his hands tied behind his back, followed by the thug holding his gun on him at a safe distance-

RICK

You speak English?

No response.

RICK

You wouldn't let on if you did, would you?

No response.

RICK

Listen, I just remembered something- take me back.

An arm snakes out from the darkness to cover his mouth as he is snatched offscreen-

RICK

Your Colonel's gonna be pissed if he doesn't hear this. Hey c'mon-

Rick turns-

CUT TO:

78. ALLEYWAY, REVERSE ANGLE

two Chinese men in suits stand holding guns on him-

RICK

Oh shit.

One waves his gun to come with them-

RICK

What happened to the other guy?

The man waves again. Rick nods, goes with them-

CUT TO:

79. INT. LIMOSINE

the door is jerked open and Rick pushed inside. The door is slammed and Rick is looking into the searching eyes of Liu, thirtyfive years older and looking very prosperous in an expensive Hong Kong suit-

LIU

Mr. Murphy.

79. cont.

RICK

What can I do for you?

LIU

I trust we won't need any demonstrations.

RICK

What do you want to know?

LIU

If you don't tell me what I want I'll have you shot.

RICK

Ask me something.

LIU

Tell me everything you told Colonel Sato.

RICK

She told me she was leaving on a freighter to Hong Kong later this week. The bags went through customs and we went through a metal detector- there wasn't any sword.

Liu continues to search his eyes for a moment, then nods-

LIU

If you should come across the sword I'll pay you twenty thousand American dollars for it. You may go now.

RICK

Can you untie my hands?

The door jerks open and Rick is yanked from the car-

CUT TO:

80. RICK

hits the pavement with a thud as the limosine speeds away. He gets to his feet slowly, hands still tied behind him, sighs and starts to walk-

CUT TO:

81. TOKYO STREET, NIGHT

Rick wanders through crowds of people trying to get somebody to untie him- the Japanese back away, scared by his appearance and smell-

RICK

Excuse me- excuse me, do you speak- could you give me a hand? Could somebody untie me?

CUT TO:

82. INT. HOTEL LOBBY

fairly seedy. Rick comes in, hands still tied. Nobody is at the desk. He manages to ring the desk bell with his elbow. Nobody comes. He yells-

RICK

Anybody here?

No answer.

CUT TO:

83. HOTEL STAIRS

Rick appears at the top of the stairs and we FOLLOW him to the door of his room. He lays down on the floor and kicks his legs up till his room key falls out of his pocket, gets hold of it, then stands and fiddles behind his back till he manages to open the door-

CUT TO:

84. INT. HOTEL ROOM

the lights are on as Rick enters. Mai is sitting on his bed. He stares at her for a moment-

RICK

How are you at knots?

She comes to him and starts untying his hands-

MAI

I'm ashamed for what I did.

RICK

Hey, two sets of people almost bump me off in the same night, no big deal.

MAI

I used you. I knew you'd talk.

RICK

So you're not going to Hong Kong-

MAI

You have no character-

RICK

When I get my hands free I'm gonna kick the shit out of you.

MAI

A man who fights for money-

84. cont.

RICK

Does it cause he's too stupid to do anything else.
I got plenty of character- brains is what I'm
short on. Your friend Mr. Li used me too- told
me to run with the suitcases so I could draw fire
away from him.

His hands are free, he rubs his wrists-

RICK

Now get out of here.

Mai starts to cry-

MAI

I'm scared.

RICK

Don't start that helpless crap with me.

MAI

(weeping) They'll kill me. Like they killed my
father.

She dissolves into tears in front of him, weeping hysterically. He sits, not
trusting her and jolted by this new information-

RICK

Do you have a sword?

She shakes her head no-

RICK

Do you know where it is?

Mai shakes her head yes-

RICK

Then you're gonna take me to it.

Mai stares at him through her tears-

CUT TO:

85. EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD, MORNING

Mai's little car climbing a paved mountain road, winding around a curve-

CUT TO:

86. CAR

closer. Mai pulls up at an overlook and she and Rick get out. Mai has binoculars and the curve of the mountain enables her to check the road several miles down into the valley they've climbed out of-

Anybody coming?

RICK

(scans) No.

MAI

Where are we going?

RICK

Up.

MAI

She gets into the car and starts it up. Rick takes a last look down into the valley and then moves to join her-

CUT TO:

87. MOUNTAINSIDE

the car straining up a rough dirt road surrounded by forest-

CUT TO:

88. CAR

closer. They come to a halt as the road ends. An overgrown path leads up into the forest- Mai gets out and pulls the wheelchair from the back seat-

What now?

RICK

You carry this.

MAI

Oh come on-

RICK

My grandfather will want it.

MAI

He uses a chair too?

RICK

Let's go.

MAI

She hurries off up the path-

RICK

You ever spend time in the Marines?

89. PATHWAY

Mai and Rick climbing, Rick struggling to keep the chair from tangling in the branches-

RICK

So why is it such a big deal?

MAI

The sword is one of a pair called the Equals. They have been in my family for centuries. Whoever controls them controls the family.

RICK

And the character in the limosine?

MAI

My uncle. His name is Liu.

RICK

What?

MAI

You have a family?

RICK

The nuns raised me. My mother took a walk so I landed with them.

MAI

You didn't know your father?

RICK

(shrugs) Just as well. I just would have knocked heads with him.

MAI

That's very sad. Not to have a family-

RICK

Save your pity.

Mai shrugs, walks away-

CUT TO:

90. EDGE OF FOREST, LATE AFTERNOON

Mai and Rick rest at the point where a bare, steep hill climbs up from the timberline-

MAI

You aren't going to understand what you're walking into.

RICK

Try me. As long as people don't go waving guns at me.

MAI

No guns.

91. HILLSIDE, DUSK

very steep. Rick climbs with the chair strapped to his back, using his hands to help pull himself up. He comes over the lip of the hill, sees-

CUT TO:

92. FORTRESS

an ancient earth and stone fortress silhouetted by the setting sun. Eerie. We see the outline of several rows of armed warriors standing in front of the walls. Mai and Rick walk into the shot, Rick looking about warily as they cross the open field to the fortress-

CUT TO:

93. CU RICK

looking around-

CUT TO:

94. FIGURES, RICK'S POV

as we near the armored warriors. They stand ready, not moving-

CUT TO:

95. RICK & MAI

walking, Rick spooked. A woodblock sounds alarm, they look up-

CUT TO:

96. FORTRESS WALL

a silhouetted figure pops up for a look, like a prairie dog, then disappears-

CUT TO:

97. RICK & MAI

they have reached the assembled warriors, who we now realize are terra-cotta statues formed in perfect size and detail. Rick eyes them-

CUT TO:

98. CU STATUE

the face eerily lifelike-

CUT TO:

99. RICK
walk among the rows of figures-

CUT TO:

100. STATUES
we TRACK past the stolid faces-

CUT TO:

101. RICK & MAI
they stop a few feet from the gate. It opens outward to reveal a waiting gauntlet of monks waiting inside, dressed in traditional fighting clothes as in the opening sequence. We FOLLOW Mai and Rick as they walk in between the two rows of monks to where Yang waits, kneeling on a rug, the masculine Equal lying in a sheath at his side. Mai kneels before him, bows her head. Yang does not look at Rick. Rick stands uneasily for a moment, then steps away from them-

CUT TO:

102. YANG & MAI, CLOSER
tears in Mai's eyes-

MAI
(Chinese) My father is dead.

YANG
(nods) (Chinese) We have heard.

CUT TO:

103. COURTYARD, RICK
trying to stay calm, Rick sets the wheelchair down and sits in it. He looks around-

CUT TO:

104. INT. FORTRESS, RICK'S POV
a circular PAN of the inside of the fort. There is a barracks building, training hut, small canopied altar, easily accessible walls with lookouts and archers' nooks on top- similar to the monastery set-up in the pre-credit sequence but in the Japanese rather than the Chinese style-

CUT TO:

105. COURTYARD
Mai and Yang kneeling, Rick sitting. Yang calls-

YANG

Chang!

105. cont.

A young monk, CHANG, runs out from the ranks to kneel before Yang-

YANG

(Chinese) The sword.

CUT TO:

106. RICK

Chang crosses to Rick, standing over him and looking down with undisguised resentment-

RICK

What can I do for you?

Chang reaches past Rick's head and unscrews one handle of the wheelchair, revealing the grip of the sword. He draws it out suddenly, startling Rick-

CUT TO:

107. CU RICK

surprised, looks across to Mai-

CUT TO:

108. MAI

is looking directly at him, apparently not ashamed to be caught in another lie-

CUT TO:

109. SWORD

glinting in the last light of day as it is carried over and laid next to the masculine Equal across Yang's outstretched hands-

CUT TO:

110. COURTYARD

the monks all kneel and bow their heads to Yang-

CUT TO:

111. CHANG

bowing to Yang, sneaking a look at Mai's face-

CUT TO:

112. LS COURTYARD

all bowing but Rick, who stands by the chair, confused-

CUT TO:

113. RICK

looking on, eyes on the Equals-

CUT TO:

114. EQUALS, RICK'S POV

held crossed above Yang's head, catching light. We TILT DOWN to Yang's face. He turns his head to give Rick an unyielding, fierce look-

DISSOLVE TO:

115. INT. BARRACKS

later. A dozen monks sit on the floor, praying before they go at the neatly arranged line of full rice bowls in front of them. One rises with a bowl and we FOLLOW him across the floor to where Rick sits alone against the wall.

RICK

Hi.

No response.

RICK

Can I see your wine list?

The monk slaps the bowl down, stalks off. Rick looks at the rice, sighs, eats-

CUT TO:

116. INT. BARRACKS, MORNING

Rick wakes on the floor, and rises, his body stiff. He walks out to look into the courtyard-

CUT TO:

117. COURTYARD, RICK'S POV

all the monks are spread across the yard, moving through graceful Tai Chi forms-

CUT TO:

118. MONK
closer, doing Tai Chi movement-

CUT TO:

119. MAI
dressed traditionally, moving gracefully through the form-

CUT TO:

120. RICK
watching-

CUT TO:

121. MAI
we FOLLOW her arms, then TILT to her face, calm and beautiful-

CUT TO:

122. RICK
reacting to her beauty-

CUT TO:

123. WELL, WATER SURFACE
descending bucket reflected until it breaks surface to dip-

CUT TO:

124. BUCKET
carried, slopping water, to a bath area where the monks stand stripped to the waist, washing themselves. Rick stands at the fringe, then pulls off his shirt and dips into a bucket to wash. Chang appears beside him, looking into the bucket as if Rick has defiled the water. He dumps it, staring at Rick challengingly, and walks away. The other monks look to Rick for his reaction-

CUT TO:

125. COURTYARD, RICK
dressed, he slows on his way across the yard to watch as two teams of three archers strain to string a pair of long bows. There is a woodblock alarm, all look up-

CUT TO:

126. GATE

WING, a heavyset monk in his early forties enters through the gate at the head of a three-donkey supply train. Monks run forward to help unload. Wing pulls a small urn from a saddlebag and starts off toward the training hut-

CUT TO:

127. RICK & ARCHERS
eyes following Wing-

CUT TO:

128. URN
being carried-

CUT TO:

129. MONKS
turning on their way to the donkeys to look at the urn-

CUT TO:

130. TRAINING HUT
Wing is greeted out front by Mai and Yang. They go in together-

CUT TO:

131. RICK
turns away to see all eyes on him, accusing.

RICK

Hey, it's not my fault. He just got shot, that's all.

He tries to walk away but Chang is blocking his way. Rick walks around him-

RICK

Don't push your luck.

We HOLD on Chang's scowling face-

CUT TO:

132. MONK

sitting on the barracks porch, fixing an arrowhead on a shaft. There is a whirring and we FOLLOW Rick past as he rides Pao's wheelchair around the courtyard. He passes a group of monks doing solo forms with wooden swords-

RICK

Afternoon, fellas.

We FOLLOW him past a group of monks kneeling in meditation, till he finally pulls to a stop next to Wing, who squats eating a bowl of rice-

RICK

Hiya.

WING

(smiles) Hello.

RICK

You speak English?

Wing has an almost constant smile on his face, like he's keeping a big secret from the world-

RICK

What's so funny?

WING

Nothing.

RICK

What are you doing here?

WING

Waiting for the battle.

RICK

Battle?

WING

When Colonel Sato and Li Liu come there will be a battle. It won't take them long to find us.

RICK

I hope you brought up the heavy artillery today. Those people don't fuck around.

WING

Our weapons are very traditional.

RICK

They'll wipe you out.

132. cont.

Wing smiles, dumps the rest of his rice onto the ground, then hurls it up into the air, shouting-

WING

Three!

CUT TO:

133. BOWL

wobbling as it climbs- WHAP! WHAP! WHAP! - it falls to earth with three arrows sticking out of it. Rick picks it up, looks around-

CUT TO:

134. WALLS, RICK'S POV

a quick pan of the wall tops. No archers in sight-

CUT TO:

135. RICK & WING

RICK

Where are they?

Wing smiles, shrugs-

WING

It's not too late for you to go home.

RICK

I've got business with the old man.

WING

Ah. Business.

RICK

You people are crazy, you know that? Up here playing samurai in the Land that Time Forgot- killing each other for war souvenirs-

WING

(suddenly serious) I'll tell Master Yang you want him.

Rick watches Wing walk away, then sees Mai crossing the courtyard and moves to join her-

135. cont.

RICK

Hi.

Mai keeps walking-

RICK

Hey, don't go all mystical on me, okay? I'm getting tired of this silent treatment here-

MAI

There's nothing for you here. You should go.

RICK

Not till I get what I came for.

She turns away from him-

RICK

(softens) Hey, I'm really sorry about your father, you know. You must have loved him and all that-

Mai turns to him and is about to speak when Chang appears, stepping between them brusquely and pointing toward the altar area-

CHANG

(Chinese) You! Father Yang wants you!

MAI

My grandfather wants to see you.

CHANG

(Chinese) Hurry up!

Rick stares at him and strolls away toward the altar-

CUT TO:

136. FRONT OF ALTAR

Yang stands one step up from the ground, the Equals strapped on, flanked by Chang and Wing. Several of the monks and Mai look on as Rick makes his petition-

WING

Father Yang will speak to you.

RICK

That's big of him. Tell him I almost bought the farm protecting that sword he's wearing. Tell him somebody offered me \$20,000 for it-

WING

So?

136. cont.

RICK

So he owes me money.

WING

(Chinese, to Yang) He wants money for the sword.

YANG

(Chinese) Didn't Pao pay him?

WING

Did Li Pao pay you for your work?

RICK

I'm not gonna settle for the short end. You people owe me.

WING

(Chinese) He wants more.

YANG

(Chinese) Send him away.

WING

(smiles) You have receive all that we have to offer.
I'll you'll excuse us, Father Yang is in mourning-

Yang turns to leave, Rick grabs him by the arm- Chang has his sword drawn in a flash. Yang gives Rick a chilling look. Rick withdraws his hand-

YANG

(Chinese, to Wing) Do we have to kill him?

WING

(smiles) You are a fighter? A professional?

RICK

(uneasy) I guess. That's how I got by in the States.

WING

And you are very skilled?

RICK

(shrugs) I've never been beaten.

WING

(Chinese, to Yang) He will fight empty-handed.

YANG

(nods) Chang!

136. cont.

Chang bows, glares at Rick as he walks out into the courtyard. Rick looks to Mai, wondering what's up-

CUT TO:

137. MAI

lowers her eyes from his look-

CUT TO:

138. ALTAR

WING

You will fight Chang. If you win we will give you what you ask. If you lose- (smiles) -and if you survive your defeat, you will leave us.

RICK

No weapons.

WING:

No weapons. There is no dishonor if you refuse to fight. You may leave unharmed right now-

RICK

What are the ground rules?

WING

One fights to survive. (smiles) I wish you luck. (Chinese, to the monks) Make a circle!

The monks run to form a ring around Chang, leaving an opening for Rick to enter through-

CUT TO:

139. RICK

he gives Mai a last, mistrustful look, then walks to where Chang waits for him-

CUT TO:

140. FIGHT, VARIOUS SHOTS

a matching of hard (Rick) and soft (Chang) schools of empty-hand fighting. Rick pursues Chang, who constantly gives ground in a circular pattern. Rick misses with most of his hand and foot blows, Chang slipping in lightning-fast counterpunches or using Rick's momentum to throw him. Rick begins to lose his rhythm, but rather than standing back and looking for the right opening he attacks more fiercely, with negative results. He is soon arm and leg-weary like a boxer who has shot his wad, and Chang closes and begins to snap him around with kicks and punches. Mai watches, upset by the beating Rick is taking. Yang watches deadpan, and Wing has a little smile on his face. Rick is bleeding, reeling, barely able to stand, but his pride keeps him up. He has one last flurry of offense and then is spent, trying only to stay on his feet while absorbing Chang's blows. He staggers, falls to his knees, Chang standing back with his face twisted with hate. Yang notes his attitude. Rick crawls toward Chang to renew the fight and Chang kicks him in the face, flipping him over on his back. He lies there, nearly unconscious, hands frozen into fists. Chang kneels over him, pulling his head back by the hair to expose his throat and raising his arm for a killing blow. Yang calls out-

YANG

(Chinese) Enough!

Chang backs away, disappointed. A pair of monks trot out and begin to drag Rick from the courtyard. We FOLLOW and as they pass Mai she looks away, upset. Yang notes this, and as Chang comes to him and bows he gives only a curt nod of congratulations and turns to go. We HOLD on Chang, hurt and confused by the Father's reaction-

CUT TO:

141. INT. BARRACKS, NIGHT

Rick lies on a mat on the floor, face puffed up, staring at the ceiling. There are monks sitting together at the other end of the room, ignoring him. Mai appears and kneels beside him. She starts applying a poultice over his eye-

MAI

This will draw the swelling out.

RICK

I never lost a fight before.

MAI

That may be your worst problem.

RICK

Is he your grandfather's top student?

MAI

No. I am.

RICK

Sure.

141. cont.

MAI

Chang isn't better than you. Just more educated.

RICK

Why did you bring me up here?

MAI

(quietly) I thought you wanted to be with me.

Rick looks at her carefully, wondering what to believe-

MAI

I know, it's stupid. You came for the money.

RICK

Were you raised up here with all these- guys, or what?

MAI

I went to schools in Europe and America. My grandfather wanted me to be his spy.

RICK

What happened?

MAI

I've told him all about the rest of the world and he doesn't want any part of it. Here-

She starts to rub his temples-

MAI

Lie still and let everything drain out of you- all the tension, everything-

RICK

I never lost a fight before.

MAI

I'm sorry I got you into this. It was wrong to use you. You'll feel better in the morning and you can leave-

She kisses him quickly on the lips, then hurries away across the room. We FOLLOW her past Chang, who watches jealously, then PAN back with his resentful gaze to Rick, who sits up wondering what the story is on Mai-

DISSOLVE TO:

142. INT. BARRACKS, MORNING

Ricks wakes, rises, stretching to get the stiffness from his battered body. We FOLLOW him out onto the barracks porch, where he watches the monks finishing their Tai Chi forms, all facing Yang. Yang calls one of the monks up, the monk drawing a real sword and Yang wielding a wooden one. They bow and square off. Wing appears and sits next to Rick-

WING

Many young men come to Japan to search for Father Yang and to follow his teachings-

CUT TO:

143. COURTYARD

Yang and the monk begin to fight, Yang all defense. He parries the monks attacks easily-

WING

(over) -we hear of them on the mountain. If they prove themselves to be good men we find them and bring them here.

RICK

(over) What do you call that style of his?

Yang slips a blow, parries another, then lashes out suddenly, shattering the monk's sword-

CUT TO:

144. PORCH

WING

(smiles) It is the Way of the Cobra.

CUT TO:

145. COURTYARD

the monk throws away the remains of his sword and Yang tosses him the wooden one. He attacks. With a seemingly minimal effort Yang is able to duck and slip every one of his thrusts, the wooden sword fanning air as it misses-

RICK

(over) Got some real nice moves for an old guy.

Yang steps under a backhand slice and flips the monk, sword flying away. The monk bows and runs back into the ranks-

CUT TO:

146. PORCH

Rick shakes his head in amazement-

RICK

Jesus.

WING

He is a master. (smiles) We'll guide you down the mountain tonight.

CUT TO:

147. COURTYARD

later in the day. Rick is stretching, working out the kinks. He is very, very sore. He stops as he hears a chanting begin offscreen, then we FOLLOW as he walks toward it. He is soon surrounded by monks preparing the inside of the monastery for battle- sweeping the courtyard of debris, scrubbing walls, setting in supplies of arrows for the archers- all chanting as they work. Rick wanders among them, ignored, feeling the exclusion. He passes the training hut, sees something inside that stops him, then enters-

CUT TO:

148. COBRA

coiled to strike. We WIDEN to see it posting to keep its line on a white crane that circles it, jabbing with its legs then backing off-

CUT TO:

149. INT. HUT

Yang sits studying the matchup between the crane and the cobra. Rick steps in silently and watches from behind him-

CUT TO:

150. COBRA & CRANE, FIGHT

the crane moves in and out, its long legs used effectively to slash at the snake without moving its body too close. The crane seems to be in total control until ZAP! the cobra uncoils and strikes the crane high on the chest, driving it backwards with an explosion of feathers. Yang steps in with a pair of sticks, trapping the cobra and tossing it into an open basket. He sits back down to think about what he's just seen-

CUT TO:

151. SUNSET, VIEW FROM MONASTERY WALL
the sun going down below the treeline-

CUT TO:

152. WALL TOP, RICK
watching the sun go down from an archer's nook. Wing comes and sits
beside him, holding out a roll of bills-

RICK

What's this?

WING

Your money.

Rick takes it, confused-

WING

That is what you came for, isn't it?

Rick looks at the money, then up at Wing's smiling face. He stands and we FOLLOW as he marches down the interior steps, across the courtyard, passing Chang, passing Mai who has come to see him leave, follow him into the training hut where he comes to a stop by Yang, who sits with his back to Rick doing calligraphy. Rick tosses the wad of money down onto Yang's paper. Yang looks at it-

CUT TO:

153. MAI
entering the hut to see what's going on-

CUT TO:

154. ROOM
Yang turns slowly to look up at Rick-

RICK

I want you to teach me. I'll do whatever I have to.

MAI

(Chinese) He wants to learn your Way.

Yang nods-

YANG

(Chinese) Tell him to kneel.

154. cont.

MAI

He wants you to kneel.

CUT TO:

155. RICK

he sighs, swallowing a load of pride, a slowly gets to his knees-

CUT TO:

156. ROOM

Yang nods in approval-

YANG

(Chinese) He must call me Father.

CUT TO:

157. RICK & MAI

Mai has come up behind Rick, frightened by what is happening-

MAI

He says you have to call him Father. (gives Chinese word)

RICK

(Chinese) Father.

Yang smiles slightly.

YANG

(Chinese) Close the door.

Mai hesitates, the implications of what her grandfather is doing just sinking in-

YANG

(Chinese) Close the door, woman.

Mai nods obediently and crosses to the door, closing it on Wing who stands in the courtyard looking in, and beyond him, Chang-

DISSOLVE TO:

158. BURNING TORCH
stuck in the ground of the hut-

CUT TO:

159. INT. HUT
torches all around. Rick stands in the middle of the floor, stripped to the waist, holding a thick, heavy-looking stick in each hand. He faces Mai, who holds thin practice sticks. Yang sits watching as Mai demonstrates a basic two-sword form and Rick tries to mirror her. Yang seems to lose interest and goes back to his calligraphy-

MAI

I'm going to stop in a minute and then you keep doing the form-

RICK

Okay, let me remember what comes when-

MAI

Don't think- remember with your body, not your mind.

Mai steps back and watches Rick go through the form dreamily, working only on the fluidity of the motion, like a dancer. Yang looks up-

YANG

(Chinese) Test him.

Mai makes a backhand stroke with her stick- WHAP! she knocks one of his sticks from his hand, startling him-

RICK

Hey!

MAI

From now on every move you make is as if your life depends on it.

Rick picks up the stick-

MAI

Go ahead.

Rich resumes the form with more authority, eyeing Mai suspiciously. Yang watches for a moment-

YANG

(Chinese) Test him!

159. cont.

At Yang's words Rick jumps back and stiffens protectively-

MAI

"Look at your body.

RICK

What about it?

MAI

Look at the tension- you're all stiff.

RICK

What do you want, people whacking you with sticks outa nowhere-

YANG

(Chinese) He must understand that we're at war.

MAI

You were surprised. From now on assume you're going to be hit. On this mountain everything we do is preparation for an attack. Let's try it again.

Rick resumes the form, some of the grace back, but totally alert-

CUT TO:

160. TORCH

a torch that has burned down lifted and used to light a fresh one by Mai. Yang watches Rick go through the form, Rick's arms heavy despite his determination-

YANG

(Chinese)
Have him make the cross now.

MAI

My grandfather says your arms are heavy.

RICK

No shit.

MAI

Hold the sticks out straight from your shoulders.

Rick holds them out-

MAI

Now keep them there.

160. cont.

RICK

(dismayed) How long?

MAI

-Till my grandfather says to let them down.

Rick glares at Yang, who looks back at him calmly for a moment, then goes back to his drawing-

CUT TO:

161. MAI & RICK

Rick's arms starting to tremble-

MAI

You're fighting the weight. Make yourself think that the sticks are lighter than air. Think that they're holding your arms up.

RICK

They weigh a ton.

MAI

Think it.

Rick takes a deep breath, concentrates. His arms stop trembling, the sticks steady-

CUT TO:

162. SUNRISE, VIEW FROM COURTYARD
peeking over the wall's edge-

CUT TO:

163. INT. HUT

we FOLLOW along a shaft of light from a tiny window down to Rick, arms hanging, jerking as he desperately tries to keep the tips of the sticks from touching the floor. Mai kneels, dozing, as Yang sits back from his drawing paper-

YANG

Mai!

MAI

(waking) Yes?

YANG

(Chinese) See if his spirit is gone.

163. cont.

MAI

My grandfather says to raise the sticks.

RICK

I can't.

MAI

Try.

Rick's arm strain, shaking spastically-

RICK

I can't.

Yang crosses to him, looks him in the eyes for a moment, then quickdraws a sword from his belt and brings it down as if to cleave Rick's skull in two- WHACK! Rick heaves the sticks up, crossing them in a parry from the form Mai showed him, just in time to intercept Yang's blow. Rick is surprised at his own ability to react. Yang steps back and sheathes his sword.

YANG

(Chinese) He has the spirit of survival.

MAI

Grandfather says that your body knows more than your mind thinks it does. The lesson is over.

Yang and Mai walk out of the hut. Rick watches them go, dropping the sticks, then falling to his knees, holding his throbbing arms tight to his sides-

CUT TO:

164. INT. HUT, DAY

Rick asleep on the floor where we left him. He is roused by a gentle kick from Wing-

WING

(smiles) In the daytime you belong to me. We have work to do.

RICK

Work?

WING

Call me Uncle. Let's go.

CUT TO:

165. COURTYARD, WELL

Rick warily facing a two-bucket yoke that Wing expects him to haul-

RICK

My arms are hangin-

WING

Use your legs.

Rick squats, gets the yoke onto his back, stands and joins into the flow of monks hauling buckets from the well-

WING

There won't be time to draw water in a battle- they may come at us with fire.

RICK

As long as they don't attack with those damn sticks-

CUT TO:

166. BUCKET MONTAGE, VARIOUS SHOTS

Rick surrenders himself to the mule work of loading, carrying and unloading the buckets into huge barrels situated around the interior walls, shoulder to shoulder with the laboring monks-

CUT TO:

167. EXT. BARRACKS PORCH

Rick slumps down, letting his yoke fall away. Someone lays a bowl of rice beside him. He eyes it, too weary to consider eating. A monk sits beside him and begins to eat. Others arrive, laying their yokes down, sitting to eat, until Rick is surrounded, accepted as a fellow worker. He picks up his bowl and digs in, then pauses as he sees somebody. We PAN with his gaze till we see Chang, sitting off by himself at the opposite end of the porch, staring sullenly into the courtyard-

CUT TO:

168. INT. BARRACKS

Rick sits with his shirt off, wincing as he tries to move his arms in various directions. Mai appears behind him with a bowl of ointment and wordlessly begins to rub his back with it, finding the muscles with a kind of fingertip acupressure. Rick moans in relief-

RICK

Oh God, that feels great.

168. cont.

MAI

(deadpan) My grandfather told me to get you ready. We start with the swordwork in an hour.

RICK

When do I sleep?

MAI

That's your problem.

CUT TO:

169. INT. HUT

torchlight. We start on Rick, smoothly and alertly going through the two-sword form with the heavy sticks, then PAN across the room past Mai, who watches with a look of resigned envy, to Yang. He looks up from his calligraphy, takes hold of a torch standing next to him and hurls it at Rick- we PAN with the torch as it flies end over end then WHACK! Rick parries it away easily with a stick, shoots a look at Yang, then continues with his form-

CUT TO:

170. COURTYARD, DAY, TARGETS

we TRACK down a line of six targets, THUMP! THUMP! THUMP! arrows thumping into each as we pass it till we reach the sixth- WHISH! Whereas all the other targets had arrows grouped tightly around their dead centers, this one has three widely scattered sticking from it. WHISH! another arrow goes sailing completely over the target-

CUT TO:

171. RICK & WING

Rick exasperated as he holds the bow. Wing looks on, smiling. The other archers methodically draw and shoot behind them-

RICK

Damn!

WING

You're aiming.

RICK

Not very well.

WING

Don't aim. The arrow wants to go to the center of the target. You just have to let it.

RICK

171. cont.

RICK

That's a big help.

WING

You need patience. Draw on the target and just hold.
When you think you're in line with the center, tell me.

Rick concentrates, drawing the arrow back, taking aim, wavering, then
steady-

RICK

I've got it.

WING

Just hold it there. Let the arrow become one with the
center. The center is trying to suck the arrow from
your bow, but you won't let it go yet. Hold it back-

RICK

This is like sex-

WING

Concentrate. Are you sure you have the center?

RICK

Yeah. Can I let it go?

WING

If you're sure you have the center why do you have to
let it go?

RICK

To see if I'm right.

WING

If you have to test then you aren't sure.

RICK

Okay, I'm sure, I'm sure. Now can I shoot it?

WING

(calling, Chinese) Lung! Test him!

LUNG, a monk, runs to Rick's target and extends the palm of his hand
in front of the center, notching his fingers so a perfect shot would pass
through them-

CUT TO:

172. CU TARGET
a good look at Lung's hand-

CUT TO:

173. RICK & WING

WING

Go ahead. Let it go.

Rick's arm starts to tremble. He lowers the bow.

RICK

You win.

Lung trots away-

WING

Draw the bow and find the center. Hold on the center.
When the arrow and the center are one, you will know it.

Wing walks away. Rick looks after him a moment, then draws on the target, determined-

DISSOLVE TO:

174. CU ARROW

we PAN from the tip of a notched arrow back across the shaft to Rick's face, set hard in concentration-

CUT TO:

175. COURTYARD, LONG SHOT

revealing that the other archers have departed, leaving Rick alone in the courtyard, holding a bead on his target-

CUT TO:

176. RICK, OVER-THE-SHOULDER

we FOLLOW the tip of the arrow as it lines up with the bullseye, wavers slightly, then steadies on it, unmoving for a long moment-

CUT TO:

177. CU RICK

face more relaxed now. A smile creeps slowly onto his face as he realizes the center is his. He exhales, unnotches the arrow, and walks away, taking a last look back at the target-

DISSOLVE TO:

178. INT. HUT

torchlight. Yang sits watching as Mai faces Rick, he with the heavy sticks, she with the light ones. There is a determined look in her eye as she stares at him-

YANG

(Chinese) Put him on the defensive.

MAI

To fight with the swords you have to be in balance. Neither your mind nor your body should have too much control over the other. You have to defend as well as attack. My grandfather says you are seriously out of balance.

RICK

So what do I do?

MAI

To every action there is a masculine and a feminine. The swords of our family, the Equals, are masculine and feminine. You, on the other hand, are controlled by only one side of your nature.

RICK

(impatient) Yeah, right, too much yang and not enough yin.

MAI

Tonight we're going to fight, but you can only react defensively.

RICK

What if I get carried away? I don't want to hurt you-

MAI

You have to learn control before you learn balance. Do your best.

YANG

(Chinese) Let's go. Hit him.

Mai turns and bows to her grandfather, then pivots quickly and backhands a stick hard into Rick's chest-

CUT TO:

179. STICK FIGHT, VARIOUS SHOTS

Mai attacks Rick with a fury, all her resentment from being passed over for inheritance of the Equals coming out. At first she lands blows frequently, driving Rick back across the floor. Yang notes her anger. Rick finally has his back to the wall, taking shots on the arms and legs. He loses his temper and takes a hard swipe at her head, but Mai ducks under and jabs into his solar plexus with the butt end of her stick. He gasps-

MAI

Defense, dammit!

She backs him around the room, showing off her speed and skill, still finding some openings. But Rick is starting to get the hang of it, catching her blows and giving with them rather than trying to knock them backwards with greater force. Mai meets sticks with him, slides down to step in close, then snaps a knee up into his groin. Rick yelps, goes down on one knee, but has to keep parrying as Mai continues her stick attack-

CUT TO:

180. YANG

smiling slightly-

DISSOLVE TO:

181. INT. HUT

much later. Rick and Mai are still sparring, arm-weary. Mai's attacks are sporadic and viscious, her temper shot, while Rick's parries are desperate but effective. Yang looks on disapprovingly. He stands-

YANG

(Chinese) You're playing. This isn't a sport.

He draws a sword from a nearby rack and throws it between them so it sticks up in the dirt. Mai looks at it, then at him. She nods, tosses her sticks away and takes up the sword. She circles Rick, who crouches a little more and watches her every move. She attacks. Each blow is a potential killer but Rick manages to catch and deflect them. He hops back from one that gets inside his sticks and it nicks him on the chest. Mai pauses, reluctant, then attacks again. Rick fends off two sideways strokes, then catches a straight thrust with his crossed sticks and rides it down to the ground, sidestepping the blade like a matador. He goes all the way down into the dirt, down onto his knees, trying to force the sword from her grip. She lets go suddenly and kicks him in the face, sending him sprawling backwards. She leaps at him, weaponless, but he rolls enough to duck her blow and bear-hugs her from behind. They struggle a moment, rolling in the dirt, then come to a stop, totally wasted. Rick looks around, sucking wind-

CUT TO:

182. INT. HUT, RICK'S POV
we PAN around to see that Yang has left them alone in the room-

CUT TO:

183. RICK & MAI
they separate, wheezing with exertion-

RICK

You could have killed me.

MAI

I didn't.

RICK

You tried to. Those swords can't be that valuable.

MAI

The Equals are our family history. When they are separated or in the wrong hands the family is out of harmony. The world is out of harmony.

RICK

Do you believe that stuff?

MAI

My father died for them.

RICK

I asked about you.

MAI

I'm a woman. My opinion doesn't matter.

RICK

Don't hand me that.

MAI

After the war my grandfather bought a wife from Hong Kong for my father. Even if he was crippled he could still produce a son to continue the family. So when I was born it was like a curse. My mother died trying to have another child. I grew up feeling--- well, I'm a woman, it doesn't matter.

RICK

That family stuff can do a number on you. At least with the nuns I knew where I stood.

MAI

He wants you to take the Equals.

RICK

What?

183. cont.

MAI

He's chosen you. He decided when you fought Chang.

RICK

Chang kicked my butt.

MAI

He admired the way you lost.

RICK

I'm not even in your family-

MAI

(shakes her head) Future son-in-law.

This stops Rick in his tracks. He looks to see if she's joking. She isn't-

RICK

Did he talk to you about that?

MAI

No. But I know the way he thinks. Before he was going to marry me to Chang. Now it's you.

RICK

Wow.

She rises to leave, a little unsteady on her feet-

MAI

You better sleep. You're going to need it.

She walks away, leaving him to ponder what he's stepped into-

CUT TO:

184. EXT. FORTRESS, DAY, VARIOUS SHOTS
a monk beats time on a woodblock as monks dig pits in the open field in front of the fort. Others set sharpened stakes in the pits and still others cover the staked pits with camouflage turf, creating tiger traps-

CUT TO:

185. FOREST

a work crew is chopping down hardwood trees, then cutting them down for stakes. We TRACK through them till we reach Rick, who is serenely into zen and the art of tree-felling. We MOVE slightly to see Chang standing silently watching him from behind, holding an axe. He looks around to see that nobody is looking, drops the axe and slips away into the woods-

DISSOLVE TO:

186. CU COBRA
coiled to strike-

CUT TO:

187. INT. HUT, COBRA & WHITE CRANE
the two animals facing off again, Yang visible beyond them, studying their fight-

CUT TO:

188. WING & RICK
watching from a slight distance-

WING

The Way of the cobra and the Way of the white crane
are timeless.

RICK

Is that from a fortune cookie or what?

WING

You have too much pride.

RICK

I'm sorry. What's the scoop on this thing?

CUT TO:

189. COBRA & CRANE
fighting as before, the crane seeming to be in control-

WING

(over) When Liu comes he will fight in the style of
the white crane- the predator who attacks without
making himself vulnerable. Father Yang is the cobra-
always on guard, waiting. In nature the cobra
always wins.

CUT TO:

190. YANG
watching in a state of total absorption-

WING
(over) Every day Yang studies the cobra and the
white crane, trying to learn the secret.

CUT TO:

191. RICK & WING

RICK
Isn't that the same one I saw yesterday?

CUT TO:

192. COBRA & CRANE
the cobra strikes, hitting the crane in the thigh, feathers flying.
Yang forks the snake as before-

WING
(over) We've taken the venom from the snake.

CUT TO:

193. RICK & WING

WING
(smiles) Good fighting cranes are hard to come by.

RICK
When does the old man expect to fight Liu?

WING
A battle is not fought with swords but with spirits.
He's been fighting Liu every day for thirty five years.

CUT TO:

194. EXT. FOREST, NIGHT
Chang crouches behind a tree, dressed in black, his face blackened with
charcoal, peering up the hill at the fortress-

CUT TO:

195. FORT, CHANG'S POV
seen from below, set off against a moonlit sky-

CUT TO:

196. EXT. FIELD, NIGHT

we FOLLOW Chang as he crawls across the field, testing in front of him for tiger pits with a short, blackened sword, unraveling a ball of twine as he goes, pinning it to the ground whenever he changes direction to leave a guideline through the booby traps behind him. We TRACK back along the twine, zigging and zagging till we come to see one, two, three, four of Sato's men, dressed in black ninja outfits, crawling along after Chang-

CUT TO:

197. INT. COURTYARD

Rick looks up at the moon for a moment, breathing deeply, then turns to enter the training hut-

CUT TO:

198. INT. HUT

torchlight. Mai stands dressed in silk, holding the Equals and moving gracefully through a practice form-

CUT TO:

199. CU RICK

watching, breathless-

CUT TO:

200. MAI

moving through the form. She sees Rick, her eyes lock with his-

CUT TO:

201. INT. HUT

Rick steps forward. Mai stops her movement, looks into his eyes. He stares at the Equals. She offers them to him. He takes them, turning the blades in the torchlight, studying the engraved picture on each, fascinated. Mai touches his chest, opening his shirt to see where she cut him the night before. She touches his cheek, kisses him on the lips. He responds, his arms going around her, still holding the Equals. She gently pulls him down to the ground with her-

CUT TO:

202. EXT. WALL, FORT

Chang has his back to the wall. One ninja crawls up next to him, then another. Chang turns and pulls a set of dagger-like pitons out. He sticks one into the wall, stands, sticks another above it. He foots up on the first, reaching high enough to set the third in-

CUT TO:

203. INT. HUT

we start on the Equals, lying crossed one over the other on a pad on the floor, then PAN across the floor to Rick and Mai making love, faces glowing in the torchlight. First Rick is on top, then they roll and Mai is on top-

CUT TO:

204. WALL TOP, SENTRY

a monk looking out over the field. He hears something below and looks down over the edge of the wall- SNATCH! he is yanked out of sight. Chang immediately climbs up and resumes his position, holding the fallen sentry's bow-

CUT TO:

205. INT. HUT

Mai is dressing, looking down into Rick's eyes-

MAI

I better go. Grandfather will be here soon.

RICK

I thought he wanted us to get together.

MAI

Not yet. Making love was my idea.

She bends to kiss him and then we FOLLOW her out. After two steps into the courtyard a black sack is thrown over her head from behind and powerful arms lift her and carry her away-

CUT TO:

206. INT. HUT

Rick is up with his pants on. He bends to grab his shirt off the floor and sees a shadow on the ground- he whirls-

CUT TO:

207. NINJA

sword raised over his head, starting a downstroke-

CUT TO:

208. ROOM, FIGHT, VARIOUS SHOTS

instead of throwing up his arms in defense Rick rolls into the ninja's legs, tight enough so his sword deflects into the ground and Rick can roll away. Another ninja rushes forward taking a low golf-swing at Rick, who rolls away again, then backrolls over the Equals, coming up onto his feet with one in each hand. The two ninja come at him at the same time- ZIP! ZIP! ZIP! with three seemingly effortless slashes he cuts them down, then runs out into the courtyard-

CUT TO:

209. INTERIOR WALL

Chang and one of the ninja haul Mai up the stairs to the top of the wall as the other stays behind and pulls out a lightweight automatic rifle. He opens up on the hut entrance, muzzle sparks lighting his face-

CUT TO:

210. RICK

diving for cover as bullets hit all around him, losing one of the Equals in the process-

CUT TO:

211. BARRACKS

monks pouring out with various weapons in hand, some taking cover before the ninja starts blasting away at them-

CUT TO:

212. NINJA

laying down fire as he retreats up the stairs backwards-

CUT TO:

213. BARRACKS DOORWAY, WING

he leans out for a split second, bow drawn, releases-

CUT TO:

214. NINJA

WHAP! he takes an arrow in the heart and falls down the steps-

CUT TO:

215. COURTYARD, RICK

we FOLLOW as he sprints across to the steps, runs up them to the top of the wall just as Chang jumps over the edge with Mai and the other ninja turns, sword drawn, to hold him off. We See their fight in silhouette as they tightrope back and forth on the wall's edge, the ninja two-handing his sword, Rick holding the Equal in his right hand, giving ground, parrying until WHACK! he hits the ninja's sword with a twisting blow and wrenches it from his grasp-

CUT TO:

216. WALL TOP

closer. We can see Rick's expression as the disarmed ninja bows at his feet, offering his back, pleading for mercy. Rick holds the sword over the man's head, trying to get his control back- there is a scream from Mai out in the field- Rick unthinkingly slashes the bowing ninja and turns to leap out into the field- CLUNK! A huge spotlight clunks on out in the field, pans till it hits Rick-

CUT TO:

217. CU RICK

covering his eyes, blinded by the light-

CUT TO:

218. FIELD, LIGHT

Mora steps in front of the huge light with a submachine gun and opens up at Rick-

CUT TO:

219. RICK

leaps and tumbles down the steps into the courtyard, landing on top of the ninja he has just murdered. Someone stands over him. He looks up-

CUT TO:

220. COURTYARD

Yang looks down at him grimly, flanked by a dozen monks, some carrying torches-

YANG

(Chinese) To your positions.

The monks run off in different directions, leaving Yang and Wing looking at Rick. Yang is holding the Equal that Rick dropped before. He holds out his hand solemnly and Rick hands him the other. Yang looks at the blood on its blade, then down at the slain ninja. He walks away. Rick looks to Wing-

220. cont.

RICK

They've got Mai.

WING

We have the swords. (he points to the dead man)
He put himself at your mercy.

RICK

I don't know what happened- she screamed-

WING

We will have to purify. Go to the altar and wait.

RICK

They've got Mai-

WING

Go. There's nothing you can do.

Wing walks away. Rick looks at the dead man-

CUT TO:

221. LIGHT

the huge spotlight shining directly at us at first, then we PAN along the beam to see Mai, strapped to a chair sitting in its path in the middle of the field-

CUT TO:

222. CU MAI

her face set, stoic, half light and half dark-

CUT TO:

223. WALL TOP

Wing peeks out from behind an archer's nook. We see over his shoulder out onto the field where Mai sits strapped, maybe ninety yards away. We hear Mora's voice over a bullhorn-

MORA

(Japanese) Li Yang! Li Yang! Do you hear me?

WING Li

(Chinese, yelling) The house of Yang hears you.

CUT TO:

224. CU MORA
standing in the dark calling over a bullhorn-

MORA
(Japanese) I can't quack like a duck.

CUT TO:

225. CU WING
yelling out-

WING
(Chinese) I won't grunt like a pig!

CUT TO:

226. MORA

MORA
You speak English?

CUT TO:

227. WING

WING
What do you want?

CUT TO:

228. INT. ALTAR
Rick sitting, agitated, listening-

MORA
(off, bullhorn) Tomorrow morning we make a trade.
We give you the girl, you give us the swords, we
go away.

CUT TO:

229. WING

WING
How do we know you won't attack after you have the
Equals?

WHAM! WHAM! WHAM! WHAM! Wing presses against the nook as a burst of
machine-gun fire slams into it.

229. cont.

MORA

(off, bullhorn) If we wanted to kill you you'd be dead by now.

CUT TO:

230. COBRA

we PAN from the coiled snake to Yang, poking it gently with a stick, studying its motion-

MORA

(off, bullhorn) We'll send a man at daybreak.

WING

(off) We'll have them ready for you.

We HOLD on Yang's face for a long moment, then-

DISSOLVE TO:

231. INT. ALTAR

Rick kneels facing Yang and Wing-

RICK

When I picked them up it felt like they were alive in my hands-

WING

The Equals hold a thousand years of family. A thousand years of knowledge and spirit.

RICK

The man on the wall-

WING

You could have spared him.

RICK

I heard Mai scream-

WING

You were not in balance. The Equals have been desecrated.

RICK

(impatient) They've got Mai out there-

YANG

(Chinese) Begin the ceremony.

231. cont.

WING

If we're going to survive our spirit has to be in balance. The Equals must be appeased.

RICK

(points to Yang) He doesn't care about her. He just wants to keep those damn swords!

WING

You're wrong. The Equals are the soul of his family. One without the other is worthless. We need your help if we're going to get Mai back- you have to purify.

RICK

(considers, sighs) What do I have to do?

DISSOLVE TO:

232. INT. ALTAR

Rick kneels at the center of a semi-circle of ancestral pictures, a candle before each one. He lights the last candle, rises and lifts the Equals. He tries to do a practice form but the swords seem strange to his touch, like he's forgotten everything he learned in the last few nights. He lays them down, then kneels in front of the pictures again. All the candles have gone out, wicks smoking. He is spooked. He starts to light the candles again, starting with the first one on the left-

DISSOLVE TO:

233. FIELD, MORNING

we TRACK to check out Sato's waiting forces, spread out of the field leading to the fortress. Up front he has three machine-gun positions set up, complete with sandbags. Behind them stand two squads of a dozen men each and behind them are Chang and Mora, flanking Mai, who stands with her hands tied together in front of her. At the extreme rear Sato sits on a folding chair, flanked by two guards-

CUT TO:

234. FIELD, LIU'S POV

we see the Japanese forces from behind through binoculars, looking up from the forest's edge-

CUT TO:

235. FOREST, LIU

watching Sato through his binoculars, four swordsmen waiting by him-

CUT TO:

236. MORA
talking into the bullhorn-

MORA

Good morning.

CUT TO:

237. TIGER PIT
it has been discovered, the stakes exposed-

MORA

(off, bullhorn) We found all the little surprises
you left for us.

CUT TO:

238. FORTRESS
no one visible but the terra-cotta statues-

MORA

(off, bullhorn) We're ready for the trade.

CUT TO:

239. CU STATUE
the stone face impassive-

MORA

(off, bullhorn) If you try anything funny we'll
cut your daughter's throat.

CUT TO:

240. FIELD, MORA, CHANG, MAI
Mora lowers the bullhorn. He nods to Chang, who starts for the fort-

CUT TO:

241. FIELD, SEEN FROM WALL
we watch Chang approach over the shoulder of an archer who covers him
with his drawn bow all the way-

CUT TO:

242. INT. ALTAR

Wing enters to find Rick still lighting candles-

WING

It's time. I have to take the swords.

RICK

I don't know if I did it right.

WING

You've emptied yourself of hatred?

RICK

The first time I lifted them they were heavy- I felt like I could hardly hold them up-

WING

And then?

RICK

I went through the ritual again. And when I picked them up they felt like swords again, but nothing special. So I started doing it again-

WING

Are you ready to die today?

RICK

(thinks) Die? (shrugs) If I do, I do. Everybody dies.

WING

(nods) The Equals may be satisfied. We'll find out soon enough.

As Wing takes the swords away we ZOOM IN for a close look at them-

CUT TO:

243. INT. GATE, EQUALS

we PULL OUT from the swords to see Wing pass them to Chang. Rick and Chang exchange a glare. Yang is there, looking on, deadpan. Chang turns and starts across the field and we FOLLOW as Rick runs up the wall stairs to an archer nook, looking out with him to see Mai released. She starts across the field, heading directly at Chang. The archer next to Rick leads Chang slightly with his bow-

CUT TO:

244. CHANG

walking, a smirk growing on his face-

CUT TO:

245. MAI
walking, a terrible look of anger on her face-

CUT TO:

246. SATO
eyes piercing, bright with excitement-

CUT TO:

247. YANG
watching calmly from the open gate-

CUT TO:

248. RICK
watching, nervous about Mai's chances-

CUT TO:

249. FIELD
Mai and Chang about to meet halfway between the Japanese lines and the fort, an open tiger pit to their left-

CUT TO:

250. MAI
walking, her eyes going to the Equals-

CUT TO:

251. EQUALS
held in Chang's grip. We TILT up to the smirk on his face-

CUT TO:

252. MAI
deciding-

CUT TO:

253. FIELD
Mai and Chang are about to pass when Mai gives a yell and high kicks Chang, knocking him backwards and hitting the dirt herself-

CUT TO:

254. RICK
horrificed-

RICK

Mai!

CUT TO:

255. SATO
eyes widening with rage-

CUT TO:

256. YANG
calling up to the wall tops-

YANG

(Chinese) Ready!

CUT TO:

257. MORA
standing by one of the machine-gun emplacements-

SATO

(Japanese) Get ready!

CUT TO:

258. FIELD
both Chang and Mai back on thier feet, circling each other so neither side can start shooting for fear of hitting their own person. Chang attacks with the swords- Mai throwing her bound hands up so that his first blow cuts the rope loose, then ducking his second thrust. He wades in slashing, backing her up toward the tiger pit, which she glances at over her shoulder-

CUT TO:

259. MAI'S HEELS
hanging over the edge of the pit-

CUT TO:

260. CHANG & MAI
Chang has her stuck, he raises a sword for the kill- WHAP! WHAP! WHAP! WHAP! he is pincushioned by four arrows in the chest. He staggers backwards, starts to fold and sticks the Equals into the ground, using them like crutches to hold himself up for a moment, then lets go and falls over backwards-

CUT TO:

261. MORA

MORA

(Japanese) Fire!

CUT TO:

262. MACHINE GUN MUZZLE

spitting bullets. We hear the other two machine guns open up-

CUT TO:

263. GATE

Yang, Wing and the other monks pulling the gate shut. Rick scurries out just before it closes-

RICK

Mai!

CUT TO:

264. MAI

dives for Chang's body and burrows behind it as bullets tear into it and kick up dirt all around her-

CUT TO:

265. RICK

running out, stops as he sees machine gun fire 'walking' directly at him, and dives behind the rows of terra-cotta statues-

CUT TO:

266. STATUES

blasted apart by machine-gun fire-

CUT TO:

267. RICK

crawling behind the statues, showered by bits of terra-cotta as the bullets hit above his head-

CUT TO:

268. WALL TOP

archers hiding behind their nooks as bullets smack into the wall. One peeks out to send off a real space-shot, arcing the arrow high into the sky, then ducking back in-

CUT TO:

269. GROUND

the arrow smacking in and sticking. We PAN three feet to see that it has landed directly in front of Sato. He regards it casually, then looks up in the sky as he hears a whistling and SNATCH! he grabs another spent arrow out of the air- he throws it aside, rises to yell up to Mora-

SATO

(Japanese) Get the swords!

CUT TO:

270. MORA

moving behind his foot soldiers-

MORA

(Japanese) Get the swords! Relay!

Five of his men run forward, carrying clear plexiglass shields like the Tokyo riot police use-

CUT TO:

271, 272, 273. ARCHERS

three jump cuts of archers releasing arrows-

CUT TO:

274. LEG

WHAP! a soldier falls with an arrow in his leg-

CUT TO:

275. HIP

a soldier falls, hit it the hip-

CUT TO:

276. NECK

a soldier staggers, hit in the side of the neck-

CUT TO:

277. SOLDIER

running, deflects two arrows with his shield, makes a dash for the swords, then backs off from the machine gun fire directed at Mai-

CUT TO:

278. MORA
shouting to his gunners-

MORA
(Japanese) Lift your fire!

CUT TO:

279. FIELD
the moment the bullets stop Mai jumps up and tries to yank one of the
Equals out of the ground, at the same time the soldier makes a rush for
them-

CUT TO:

280. MORA
pulls out an automatic and squeezes off a couple quick rounds at Mai-

CUT TO:

281. FIELD
the soldier falls upon Mai just in time to catch a bullet meant for her.
She manages to pull one sword free, she dives away and rolls into the
tiger pit as the machine guns open up on her again-

CUT TO:

282. INT. PIT
Mai slides down the wall of the pit, spreading her legs just right at the
last second to straddle a bunch of stakes without getting punctured-

CUT TO:

283. FIELD
THE GUNS STOP. The wounded soldier, bleeding, takes the other Equal
as tosses it back to a soldier coming up to his aid. The soldier catches
it and backs up quickly, covering with his shield from the rain of
arrows falling down. He backs past Mora, all the way to where
Sato sits, out of arrow range-

CUT TO:

284. FIELD, LONG SHOT
all quiet for a moment-

CUT TO:

285. SATO
receiving the sword from the kneeling soldier. He looks it over,
studying the design. Mora and the others turn to him, eager to go home-

SATO
(Japanese) Get the other one.

MORA
(Japanese) Skirmish line! Let's go!

CUT TO:

286. FIELD
the soldiers fan out and move forward with their shields up, machine guns
firing over their heads to try to pin the archers down-

CUT TO:

287. FORTRESS
nothing outgoing over the walls-

CUT TO:

288. RICK
on the ground covered with terra-cotta rubble, watching as the soldiers
move closer to the tiger pit-

CUT TO:

289. INT. PIT, MAI
breathing heavily, gripping her sword, waiting for the action to
start overhead-

CUT TO:

290. MORA
watching-

CUT TO:

291. MACHINE GUNNER
firing irregular bursts at the fortress wall-

CUT TO:

292. INT. GATE, FORTRESS

monks armed with swords are waiting in formation. Yang nods to Wing, who signals up to the wall-

CUT TO:

293. WOODBLOCK

being struck-

CUT TO:

294. RICK

listening-

CUT TO:

295. SATO

listening, wary-

CUT TO:

296. DARK

the screen black at first. Then we see a face as a match is lit, then touched to a fuse that starts burning down. We can barely make out a monk in a very cramped space-

CUT TO:

297. SATO'S FORCES

seen from behind from a low angle. Suddenly the field in front of us erupts and an archer pops out from a turf-covered hiding place, drawing a bow with a lit stick of dynamite wrapped to the arrow-

CUT TO:

298. FIELD

two other archers, similarly equipped, pop up- WHISH! they release their arrows-

CUT TO:

299. ARROW

flying through the air, fuse sizzling- KABOOM! one of the machine guns is blown to bits-

CUT TO:

300. FIELD, GUN POSITIONS

KABOOM! KABOOM! the other two go up-

CUT TO:

301. SATO
covering his head as debris rains down-

CUT TO:

302. INT. FORT, GATE
Yang, Wing and the monks pushing the gate open, streaming out across the field giving their battle yells, Rick up and running with them-

CUT TO:

303. MORA
turning his automatic on the archers behind them, fires-

CUT TO:

304. ARCHER
is hit, falls back into his hiding place-

CUT TO:

305. ARCHER
another of the secreted archers being rushed by a pair of soldiers carrying swords- he impales the first with the point of his bow and is cut down by the second-

CUT TO:

306. FOREST, LIU
puts down his binoculars, smiling cruelly-

CUT TO:

307. FIELD, SWORD FIGHTING, VARIOUS SHOTS
the monks clash with Sato's soldiers, who draw swords and use their plexiglas shields. Lots of sword fighting-

CUT TO:

308. SATO
on his feet, barking orders-

SATO
(Japanese) Withdrawal formation! Form a wall!

CUT TO:

309. FIELD

Sato's men try to close ranks and keep the monks from spilling through to get at their leader-

CUT TO:

310. SATO

walking from the battlefield toward the trees, very stately, his two guards walking backwards to cover his back. Sato puts the Equal into his empty scabbard-

CUT TO:

311. RICK

ducking in and out of the melee on the field, reaches the tiger pit, looks in-

RICK

Mai!

Mai is braced with her sword ready to kill. She relaxes when she sees it is Rick, tosses the Equal up to him. He gives her a hand, pulling her up to the surface just as one of the soldiers makes a rush at him- Mai rolls under his legs, sending him flying, screaming into the tiger pit head-first. Another attacks- Rick spins him by his shield and Mai kicks him into the pit, lifting his sword as he goes by. They move out onto the field, both armed now, back to back. A soldier attacks from each direction- ZIP! ZIP! they both cut their attacker down, touch backs with each other again, then wait for the next comer-

CUT TO:

312. HILL

Sato and his guards are nearing the edge of the forest when Liu steps out with his four swordsmen. The guards look to Sato for guidance- he plunges ahead and they hurry to follow-

CUT TO:

313. FIELD, YANG

Yang stands in the middle of the battle, hardly moving, seeming to look in a middle distance, but whenever one of Sato's men approaches from any direction ZIP! he cuts him down. Suddenly there is a gunshot- Yang staggers backwards- Mora appears walking straight at him, pointing his automatic. He fires again- Yang falls to one knee. Wing comes running, slicing Mora down from behind on his way to Yang. He kneels by the master, looking into his eyes. There is an inward look to them- the old man makes an incredible effort and forces himself onto his feet again. He stands unsteadily- Wing doesn't try to support him.

YANG

(Chinese) Find Liu. Find my brother.

CUT TO:

314. HILL, CONFRONTATION, VARIOUS SHOTS

Sato's men and Liu's men face off, the two commanders staying back for the moment. The four Chinese swordsmen make quick work of Sato's guards, effectively double-teaming them, killing one outright and chasing the other one down and sticking him. They reform and walk toward Sato, fanning out to surround him. He waits calmly, hand on his sword but not drawing it yet, looking beyond the men and into Liu's eyes. Liu smiles slightly. Sato waits until the last possible moment then draws and WHACK! SLICE! CHOP! THRUST! takes care of the four men in an incredible display of speed and control. Liu bows to his talent, draws his sword. They circle each other, stepping over dead bodies-

CUT TO:

315. LIU & SATO FIGHT, VARIOUS SHOTS

this should be a classic Japanese versus Chinese style fight- Sato moving in straight lines, Liu in circles, both getting a chance to show their stuff in dodging and parrying the others blows. Finally Liu sucks Sato in by engaging him in a test of arm strength- letting Sato lock swords and push close as if he is going to muscle Liu down, when Liu pulls a short sword from his belt with his free hand and shoves it up into Sato's middle. Sato reels away, wheezing, stumbles, and falls, clenching the Equal in a death grip. Liu crosses and tries to pull the sword from Sato's hands- it won't come. He steps back and WHOOSH! downstrokes to cut it free. He lifts the Equal, hilt bloody, then sees that he is surrounded-

CUT TO:

316. HILL

ringing around Liu are the victors of the battle- maybe a dozen of the monks left, Yang being supported by Wing and Mai now, blood covering his front- and Rick, holding the other Equal-

LIU

That belongs to me.

RICK

(stepping forward) Come and get it.

CUT TO:

317. HILL, FINAL FIGHT, VARIOUS SHOTS

Liu takes the white crane style, Rick the cobra- Liu circling, feinting, thrusting, Rick doing all he can to keep from getting punctured, staying on top of Liu's every move, waiting. We see reaction shots of Yang, Wing, Mai, the monks. Liu begins to score on Rick- he cuts his arm, his chest, slices his cheek. Rick begins to lose his confidence, giving up ground too easily, loosing his foothold. The cruel smile comes back onto Liu's face as he feels the duel moving under his control-

CUT TO:

318. YANG

studying the fight, a frightening, death's-door intensity on his face-

YANG

(Chinese) The cobra. Think of the cobra-

MAI

Rick! The cobra-

CUT TO:

319. CU RICK

fighting for his life, Liu playing with him now, near-miss after near miss driving him down the hill-

CUT TO:

320. ECU RICK

another angle. He tires to concentrate-

CUT TO:

321. COBRA

a flash cut of a coiled cobra-

CUT TO:

322. FIGHT

Rick stops back up. Liu circles and circles, smiling, Rick pivoting to follow his movement. Liu lunges-

CUT TO:

323. COBRA

an almost subliminal flash-cut of a cobra striking-

CUT TO:

324. LIU, RICK

Rick strikes and slips at the same instant, throwing his sword and his body in opposite directions- Liu's thrust slices past his ear while he catches Liu under the lung and comes out high on the back of his shoulder. Liu looks at him disbelieving. Rick pulls the sword out- Liu drops the Equal and staggers back. He falls to his knees so that he is staring into the eyes of Yang, sitting on the ground now, his life ebbing away. They stare at each other a long moment, then Liu flops to the ground. Rick squats by Yang, pressing the two Equals into his hands-

324. cont.

YANG

(Chinese) Our lives- are in harmony.

He dies:

DISSOLVE TO:

325. INT. COURTYARD

the remaining monks kneeling, Wing leading them in a traditional Chinese mourning ceremony. Mai kneels with them at first, then looks over her shoulder- we FOLLOW as she gets up and crosses to the open gate where Rick stands staring out at the field (cleared of bodies) the Equals held in his hands.

MAI

What are you going to do with them?

RICK

(Looks at them) Leave them up here.

MAI

And what about you?

RICK

This isn't my family. I'm going down the mountain.

MAI

Oh.

They look out at the field together for a moment-

MAI

The death of a family as old as ours is no small thing in the world.

Rick nods-

RICK

New ones get started. Nothing to it.

MAI

Oh?

RICK

How'd you like to start a dynasty with me?

Mai smiles- he puts his arm around her. We TRACK AWAY from the two of them, gaining distance as we-

DISSOLVE TO:

326. THE EQUALS
blades crossed, male and female engravings visible-

END CREDITS OVER