

KUNG FU

Pilot

BY

Christina M. Kim

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TEASER

OVER BLACK as our sweeping score brings us to...

AN EXTREME CLOSE-UP: DETERMINED, FOCUSED EYES.

1 **EXT. YUANYANG VISTA -- DAWN**

1

They belong to our hero... **NICKY CHEN** (26, think young Constance Wu) sitting in the lotus position, deep in thought as a lone GRASSHOPPER jumps over the rock she sits on. \*

As the CAMERA CRANES AROUND, we see what she's contemplating... a seriously breath-taking view of the terraced rice paddies of Yuanyang in Yunnan Province, China.

She watches the farmers harvest the rice... it's arduous and back-breaking. This quiet tableau is interrupted by -- \*

PRE-LAP: CRACK! SLAM! SMASH!

2 **EXT. COURTYARD -- DAY**

2

STYLISTIC SHOTS: SPIN KICKS, TIGER PUNCHES, LOTUS SWEEPS...

**NICKY and ELEVEN OTHER YOUNG CHINESE WOMEN** in burnt orange uniforms move through powerful **MARTIAL ARTS STANCES** and **FIGHT MOVES**, breaking boards, spinning nunchucks, dodging each other's blows. *Also arduous and backbreaking.* \*

**SIFU (master) PEI-LING** (50 but could pass for 30) watches her disciples carefully, correcting stances, adjusting grips, poking and prodding. \*

She lands on Nicky practicing a spin-kick combo with a long BO STAFF. She executes the spin, but loses her balance as she lands and kicks, the staff DROPPING out of her hand and skittering across the ancient cobblestones.

PEI-LING  
(in Chinese)  
*Again.*

Undeterred, Nicky picks up the bo staff and moves into dragon stance. We wonder if this is some kind of intense state-run training facility. But as we look around at the ancient Chinese buildings and the **GOLDEN STATUE OF BUDDHA** overlooking the courtyard, we realize... \*

These are **SHAOLIN MONKS** practicing the ancient art of **KUNG FU**.

3      **EXT. FARMING VILLAGE -- DAY**

3

We're in a poor village... one dirt road runs down the middle of it with small cottages scattered about. The orange uniforms of the monks stand out against the drab concrete buildings as Pei-Ling and her disciples fix homes, deliver fresh produce, and assist the elderly.

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

Nicky helps an **OLDER FARMER** stack massive sacks of rice in his shed. As she heaves the bags over her shoulder --

*Note: Italicized dialogue in Chinese.*

                                OLD FARMER  
                    *(impressed)*  
                    *Even when I was young, this wasn't*  
                    *easy.*

Nicky's smiles, taking pleasure in helping --

4      **EXT. YUNNAN PROVINCE -- DIRT ROAD -- SUNSET**

4

Nicky sits in the back of the PICK-UP TRUCK with the monks on the long trip up the mountain to the monastery.

Everyone nods off from a long hard day of training and service... everyone except Nicky. She sits moving her hands through the combo she couldn't lick earlier in the morning. Practicing again, and again, and...

5      **EXT. COURTYARD -- NIGHT**

5

... Again. Nicky is on her own now. Everyone else fast asleep as she trains in the courtyard bathed in moonlight.

She's relentless and disciplined... finally nailing the spin kick for the first time. She smiles. Exhausted. But getting it right once isn't enough... she keeps going. In the shadows Pei-Ling watches...

\*  
\*  
\*6      **EXT. YUANYANG VISTA -- DAWN**

6

We're back where we started. Nicky staring off into the distance at the rice paddies... farmers in their tented hats getting an early start on the day's work.

                                PEI-LING  
                    *You sleep even less than I do.*

Nicky smiles as Pei-Ling joins -- she knows that isn't true.

                                NICKY  
                    *All those years in my family's*  
                    *restaurant... I never realized how*  
                    (MORE)

(CONTINUED)

NICKY (CONT'D)

*much work went into a single grain  
of rice.*

PEI-LING

*You have learned much since you joined  
us.*

NICKY

*Thank you, Sifu.*

PEI-LING

*But, to truly master Kung-Fu one  
must first have a quiet mind. I see  
how hard you've been working these  
last few years.*

NICKY

*I still have a long way to go.*

PEI-LING

*But that's not why you work so hard.  
(off Nicky)  
You push yourself to silence the  
anguish in your soul.*

NICKY

*Sifu...*

Pei-Ling turns to Nicky, switches to ENGLISH --

PEI-LING

*The purpose of the training is not  
to hide from your pain, Nicky.*

Nicky doesn't know what to say to that.

PEI-LING (CONT'D)

*You must find peace. Peace with  
your family.*

NICKY

*Peace and my family don't really go  
together.*

PEI-LING

*You believe you are the only one  
with a difficult family?  
(beat)*

*I had a very different life before I  
was your Sifu. You would not have  
recognized the old Zhang Pei-Ling.  
So much pain and anger... I too  
thought I could find sanctuary here.*

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

PEI-LING (CONT'D)

And for a while I did... but I was  
foolish... and the silent anguish  
grew like a cancer, not only inside  
me but in the ones I loved the most.  
By the time I realized what I needed  
to do...it was too late.

Nicky is taken aback that Pei-Ling is opening up this much.  
Nicky looks out into the field.

NICKY

Sifu...this is my home now. Don't  
make me go back.

PEI-LING

You make the path that you live.  
Your life. Your choice. But learn  
from my mistakes... for what is a  
tree without roots? The deeper into  
the earth the roots reach, the  
stronger the tree.

Nicky knows Pei-Ling is right, but doesn't know what to do.

7 **EXT. SMALL FARM HOUSE IN YUNNAN PROVINCE -- DAY**

Nicky delivers vegetables to an **ELDERLY CHINESE WOMAN**.

NICKY

*The usual... plus some mung beans to  
help with your high blood pressure.*

ELDERLY WOMAN

*Your Chinese is improving.*

NICKY

*I've been practicing so I can tell  
you to stop eating that salty eggplant  
you love so much. Too much sodium!*

ELDERLY WOMAN

*Ai-ya. Only a rude American would  
speak to an elder that way.*

Nicky and the Woman share a laugh. Nicky walks back to Pei-Ling's pick-up truck when... she sees an odd sight: a small caravan of luxury Mercedes SUV's has stopped in the road.

A tall, imposing CHINESE WOMAN we will come to know as **ZHILAN** 50s, talks to Pei-Ling. She has distinctive **TATTOOS** on her hands and is surrounded by two, large, **INTIMIDATING MEN**.

(CONTINUED)

ZHILAN

*(threatening)*

*Don't make this harder than it needs  
to be, Pei.*

Pei-Ling stares back, silently defiant as Nicky tries to  
defuse the situation in Chinese: --

NICKY

*Sifu? Is everything okay?*

Zhilan turns to Nicky, surprised by her accent. She switches  
to English.

ZHILAN

You're American.

NICKY

I am.

ZHILAN

Perhaps you can share some of your  
American pragmatism with your "Sifu".

*(a look to Pei-Ling)*

The world is changing. Gaibiàn knows  
no obstacle.

PEI-LING

*(in Chinese)*

*My answer is no. Your power and  
your reach do not intimidate me.*

Pei-Ling heads toward the pick-up. Nicky follows her lead.  
Zhilan and her goons walk back to their SUV's.

PEI-LING (CONT'D)

*Gaibiàn. She knows nothing of change.*

NICKY

*Gaibiàn? What is that? What did  
she want?*

PEI-LING

*It's not important...let's get back.*

8     **EXT. COURTYARD -- EVENING**

Nicky trains alone... but her expression is less determined.  
Thoughts of the mysterious woman and her own family weigh on  
her. Nicky sees Pei-Ling heading inside the main temple.

9     **INT. TEMPLE -- MOMENTS LATER**

Nicky finds Pei-Ling standing at the ALTAR in front of a  
golden statue of Buddha.

(CONTINUED)

She takes a key from around her neck and unlocks a HIDDEN COMPARTMENT revealing... an ANCIENT SWORD inlaid with jade on the carved handle.

NICKY

Sifu... the woman today... is this what she wanted?

Pei-Ling holds the sword up to the light.

PEI-LING

Centuries ago this sword was used by a Shaolin warrior named Liao to defeat rebels trying to destroy the Tang Dynasty. Legend has it that the sword gave Liao the strength of a hundred men. After his victory, he placed it here for safekeeping.

*(off Nicky)*

It is said that whoever possesses the sword cannot be defeated.

NICKY

The woman...she kept saying something about change...*Gaibiàn*...what did she mean?

Pei-Ling averts her gaze as she locks the sword back up --

PEI-LING

She is a misguided soul... has been for a very long time. She pursues the sword for the wrong reasons. One of many throughout history.

NICKY

Who is she?

But Pei-Ling brushes past Nicky --

PEI-LING

It's late. We must get some rest.

Pei-Ling heads out as Nicky follows, deep in thought --

10 INT. MONASTERY -- SLEEPING QUARTERS -- NIGHT

10

Nicky tosses and turns... a FAMILY PHOTO of her parents, brother, and sister by her bedside. She suddenly COUGHS and CHOKES... sitting up in bed to see the room is **FILLED WITH SMOKE!** She staggers outside...

11     **EXT. MONASTERY -- COURTYARD -- NIGHT**

11

Where **the entire building is going up in flames!** Holy Shit!  
Through the haze she hears SCREAMS. **MALE INTRUDERS attack**  
**the monastery as female monks run for safety... IT'S CHAOS.**

Nicky searches for Pei-Ling... desperate...

12     **INT. TEMPLE -- NIGHT**

12

Nicky races inside the temple to see Pei-Ling using her  
incredible skills to fend off **THREE INTRUDERS.** She spins  
and jumps, attacking with grace and power, taking down each  
intruder in an epic display of athleticism and artistry.

But suddenly -- Zhilan, the woman from earlier, appears behind  
her.

NICKY

Pei-Ling!

Pei-Ling spins out of the way of her powerful kick. Pei-  
Ling launches into an attack, a series of lightning-quick  
punches and jump-kicks. She drives Zhilan into the altar --  
it SMASHES to pieces, the Buddha statue crashing down,  
revealing... **THE ANCIENT SWORD.**

**Zhilan grabs the sword, and with one swift blow drives it**  
**through Pei-Ling's chest before she has time to react.**

NICKY (CONT'D)

Noooooo!

As Pei-Ling falls, Zhilan runs off with the sword. Nicky  
rushes in, cradling her mentor in her arms --

NICKY (CONT'D)

I'm here. We need to get you to the  
hospital--

*(looks into her eyes)*

Stay with me...

PEI-LING

The sword... you must get it back.  
You must stop her.

Pei-Ling's body goes limp.

NICKY

Don't leave me... please!

ANGUISH overcomes Nicky as she slowly rests Pei-Ling's body  
on the ground. She looks down at her mentor and friend one  
last time... her heartbreak turning into fury...

13

**EXT. MONASTERY -- TREE-LINE -- MOMENTS LATER**

13 \*

Full of RAGE, Nicky catches up to Zhilan -- Nicky grabs her and tosses her to the ground, the Ancient Sword slipping out of Zhilan's hand and out of reach. She looks to Nicky --

ZHILAN

The American. You want to fight *me*?

NICKY

You killed Pei-Ling.

ZHILAN

I should have killed her long ago.

*(she takes a stance)*

Are you sure this is the cause you want to die for?

A beat as Nicky takes her in... and then IT'S ON. A FIGHT TO THE DEATH breaks out as the monastery burns.

Nicky pulls out every Kung Fu move she knows... ROUNDHOUSE KICKS, LEG SWEEPS, ELBOW STRIKES... **she's incredible!**

But Zhilan is also a skilled martial artist... and has been training longer than Nicky. She attacks with vicious kicks and jabs, taking Nicky to the ground, HARD. She GRABS THE SWORD off the ground.

ON A STUNNED NICKY, as she gets her bearings and sees Zhilan moving in, wielding the sword. In an instant, she grabs a STICK off the ground and jumps back on her feet, holding it like a bo staff.

Nicky goes on the attack, striking at her, but Zhilan is too quick, dodging each blow. Finally Nicky spins the staff over her head... the move she's practiced over and over... she jumps and kicks... but JUST MISSES Zhilan.

Nicky STUMBLES... quickly ROLLING out of the way as Zhilan SWIPES at her with the sword. But a sudden **HOT PAIN** rips through her shoulder... **she's been STABBED.**

BLOOD SPURTS through her clothes as she staggers up... and that's when she realizes **she's at the edge of a SHEER CLIFF.**

Zhilan **ESCAPES** into the night as **the rocks beneath Nicky's feet CRUMBLE... sending her PLUMMETING into the darkness below. A sudden and tragic end to our hero's journey.**

Our CAMERA hangs a beat in the silence... and then slowly TILTS DOWN the sheer rock face to discover... holy shit! **NICKY'S ALIVE!** Breathless and hanging on for dear life!

**SMASH TO THE TITLE:**

(CONTINUED)

KUNG FU14     **EXT. SAN FRANCISCO -- DUSK**

14

Establishing shots: The Golden Gate Bridge, Lombard Street,  
Fisherman's Wharf, The TransAmerica Pyramid...

15     **INT. EVAN'S APARTMENT -- DUSK**

15 \*

**EVAN HARDWICK** (28, Andrew Garfield) arrives home. He drops  
his keys, his bag, wrapping up a phone call --

EVAN

...because he defrauded his clients,  
because he lied to investigators,  
and... oh yeah...*because he's guilty.*

He hangs up.

NICKY (O.S.)

Evan.

Evan jumps, terrified, dropping his phone -- it smashes on  
the floor. He turns to find Nicky standing in his kitchen.

NICKY (CONT'D)

Sorry, I--

EVAN

Nicky?! How did you--

NICKY

I was gonna call, but I didn't know  
what to say and--

Evan hugs Nicky. She flinches from the wound in her shoulder.

EVAN

You okay? What's going on?

NICKY

I... I'm not really sure where to  
start.

EVAN

How about the part where you broke  
up with me out of the blue and then  
went on a "cultural tour" of China  
you never came back from?

NICKY

I was kinda hoping we could skip  
that part.

(CONTINUED)

EVAN

Sorry... you break into someone's  
apartment, it's house rules.

A look between them as Nicky figures out how to explain...

NICKY

I emailed you.

EVAN

Once. To say you were staying in  
China a *LITTLE* longer to "find  
yourself". That was *three years*  
*ago*.

NICKY

We didn't really have the internet  
where I--

*(off Evan's look)*

I'm sorry. I didn't handle it well.

EVAN

Nope.

NICKY

You know my family... all the  
pressure, the expectations... my  
*mom*...

EVAN

Yeah, I do. Very well. How many  
times did your mom try to kill me  
with her spicy jian pong soup,  
"testing my commitment" to you? Or  
all the dinners where she made  
everyone speak only Chinese so I'd  
feel left out?

NICKY

I should've stuck up for you more...

EVAN

I didn't care as long as we were  
together. But when you ran off,  
when you just gave up on us --

NICKY

I didn't give up... I... I freaked  
out.

*(off Evan)*

But there wasn't a day that I didn't  
think about you or miss you or wish  
that you were with me. I know that  
doesn't make it okay... and you have  
every right to hate me --

(CONTINUED)

EVAN

I don't hate you... I mean, I did...  
for a long time... if we're being  
really honest. But mostly I missed  
my best friend. And I was worried.  
I wanted to know you were okay.

He gently moves a strand of hair off her face --

EVAN (CONT'D)

So are you... okay?

A beat as Evan can see she's clearly not.

NICKY

There's something I have to tell  
you. The reason I came back.

CUT TO:

## 16 INT. EVAN'S APARTMENT -- LATER

16

Evan's stunned as Nicky catches him up over a drink.

NICKY

I pulled myself up from the cliff...  
made my way down to the hospital.  
Soon as they patched me up, I went  
to the closest police station.

## 17 INT. CHINESE POLICE STATION -- DAY (FLASHBACK)

17 \*

*Montage over voice over:*

NICKY (V.O.)

I made a full report. Gave them  
everything I had.

*- Nicky talks to the police in an interrogation room.*

*- Nicky draws a detailed rendering of Zhilan (she's a gifted  
artist), as well as the tattoos on her hands.*

NICKY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

But as soon as I mentioned something  
about "Gaibiàn" I could feel a shift  
happen.

*- A FEMALE OFFICER reacts but the Chief abruptly ends the  
interrogation, exchanging looks as they usher Nicky out...*

## 18 INT. EVAN'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

18

EVAN

*Gaibiàn?*

(CONTINUED)

NICKY

It means..."changes". Something  
about that word scared them.

19     **EXT. CHINESE VILLAGE -- DAY (FLASHBACK)**

*Nicky follows the FEMALE OFFICER as she heads home.*

NICKY (V.O.)

I found a police officer who was  
willing to talk. She told me if I  
wanted to find Zhilan, the woman who  
did this, I would need to go back to  
America, because that's where The  
Gaibiàn started.

20     **INT. EVAN'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT**

NICKY

I think it's a gang. I've tried to  
look into them, but I got nowhere.

EVAN

...Which is where I come in.

NICKY

You're dialed in with the cops and  
the D.A....

She pulls out the drawing of the woman and her tattoos.

NICKY (CONT'D)

This woman... Zhilan... she killed  
Pei-Ling. I need you to help me  
bring her to justice.

EVAN

*(taking in the sketch)*

I used to imagine the day you'd come  
back... but it never involved tracking  
down an assassin and some ancient  
sword.

NICKY

You're the only one I could turn to.  
Will you help me?

EVAN

On one condition. You never ghost  
me and blame it on bad Wifi again.

NICKY

Promise.

(CONTINUED)

She hugs him. They both smile at each other... ancient chemistry starting to bubble through to the surface.

EVAN

You need a place to crash?

A loaded moment as Nicky considers, then --

NICKY

I do... I mean... no. I'd like to, but there's somewhere I need to go.

EVAN

Do they know you're back?

NICKY

*(shakes head)*

I didn't want to tell them in case I changed my mind.

EVAN

They might have a totally messed up ass-backwards way of showing it, but underneath all the Chinese crazy is a lot of love. You know that, right?

Nicky forces a smile, not so sure, but appreciating the encouragement. She heads out --

21     **EXT./INT. CHEN FAMILY HOME -- NIGHT**

21     \*

Anxiety washes over her as she takes in her family home. The door opens to reveal... Nicky's father, **JIN CHEN** (50s, Chow Yun-Fat) who stares at Nicky in shock.

NICKY

Dad.

JIN

Nicky?!

He scoops her up in a BEARHUG, tears filling his eyes.

JIN (CONT'D)

I've missed you so much.

As Nicky steps into the foyer she notices Jin's BLACK EYE.

NICKY

What happened? Are you okay?

JIN

It's nothing... fell off a ladder.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JIN (CONT'D)

*(taking her in)*

You look like you haven't eaten in  
ages. Come in, everyone's here...  
tell us everything --

Nicky hears voices and laughter from the living room.

NICKY

Who's everyone?

JIN

The whole family. Althea's bridal  
gifts were just delivered.  
*(off Nicky's look)*  
She's getting married.

Before Nicky can react, she's interrupted by a SQUEAL as her  
big sister **ALTHEA** (29, Fan BingBing) rushes out and hugs her --

ALTHEA

NICKY!?

NICKY

You look amazing.

ALTHEA

Mom's pre-wedding regime. She has  
me on these Chinese herbs that taste  
like garbage... but I'm dropping  
pounds AND my hair is super shiny...  
totally worth it! Ohmygod. You  
haven't even seen *this*.

Althea shows off her MASSIVE ENGAGEMENT RING.

NICKY

Wow. I'm so happy for you --

ALTHEA

Wait... you don't know who, right?  
Dennis! Dennis Liu!

NICKY

The mathlete? From high school?

ALTHEA

*(smiling)*

He's changed a little since then...

Althea leads Nicky into the **LIVING ROOM** where she sees the  
very handsome **DENNIS LIU** (32, Henry Golding).

DENNIS

Nicky? Hi!

(CONTINUED)

NICKY

Oh... hi. Beautiful ring.

DENNIS

Your sister picked it out.

Nicky sees a table with fruits piled high as decoration in the Chinese tradition. In the center of the table are ornate GIFT BOXES covered in colorful silks.

RYAN (O.S.)

You miss every family event the last three years, but show up for the presents. Power move, sis.

Nicky turns to see her brother **RYAN** (23, young Ross Butler) in a WHITE LAB COAT. He hugs her.

NICKY

You-- what's with the lab coat?  
You're not a doctor yet...?

RYAN

Few more years. Volunteering at the community center clinic.

*(taking Nicky in)*

Where's your robe and the shaved head? This is such a let-down.

ALTHEA

Thank god... I'd have to give her extensions for the wedding!

RYAN

*(stage whisper)*

Meet Bridezilla.

ALTHEA

Heard that.

RYAN

So really... why are you back? And don't tell me it's for bridesmaid duty...

There's an edge to Ryan's attitude and Nicky feels it.

NICKY

I... I...

ALTHEA

Does she need a *reason* to come home?

*(shoots Ryan a look)*

There's a gift with your name on it.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ALTHEA (CONT'D)

Dennis' mom has *amazing* taste. I  
can't wait to see what she got you.

DENNIS

She was going to send it to you in  
China...

RYAN

To what address? We've had no idea  
what rock she's been meditating on  
the last three years.

Jin tries to defuse the tension.

JIN

You've come at a good time. The  
next event is this weekend... we  
pick the wedding date!

RYAN

Super low key... a fortune teller  
and two hundred of our closest  
friends. Full Chinese banquet.

Nicky's mom, **MEI-LI** (50's, Michelle Yeoh) comes in from the  
kitchen with dumplings -- the whole room stops.

JIN

Your daughter is home.

MEI-LI

My daughter died three years ago.

Mei-Li turns around and heads back into the kitchen. A beat.

ALTHEA

That honestly went better than I  
thought it would.

Off a gut-punched Nicky --

22 INT. CHEN FAMILY HOME -- KITCHEN -- NIGHT

22

Mei-Li preps tapioca pudding as Nicky enters.

NICKY

Mom... I'm sorry --

MEI-LI

"Sorry"? For what? For disappearing  
and making us worry for your life?  
What did we do that made you hate  
home so much?

(CONTINUED)

NICKY

It wasn't that I hated home... you  
know why I stayed away, what you did --

MEI-LI

What I did was make sacrifices for  
you. All the tutors, gymnastics  
camps, coaches, piano, fencing,  
soccer, Chinese...

*Wow. She's been holding onto this for years.*

MEI-LI (CONT'D)

I could've used that money for new  
shoes or a face-lift like Mrs. Lee  
or Mrs. Yang.

*(shaking her head)*

I would've thought living in China  
would make you see: "Sorry" is an  
American idea. One simple word isn't  
the magic eraser.

NICKY

I know that...

MEI-LI

And if you were so miserable... why  
didn't you speak up?

NICKY

Because I was obedient and respectful.  
The way you wanted me to be.

MEI-LI

You're so full of blame. Why come  
back? Why are you here?

NICKY

I... this was a mistake.

Nicky turns and heads out...

23     **INT. CHEN FAMILY HOME -- FAMILY ROOM -- NIGHT**

23

Nicky walks past her family toward the front door...

JIN

Nicky, don't leave.

NICKY

She doesn't want me here.

JIN

I'll talk to her.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JIN (CONT'D)

Come by the restaurant later tonight,  
or tomorrow. Please -- just don't  
run away again.

\*  
\*

NICKY

Yeah okay. Okay.

Nicky heads out with one last look to her family...

24     **EXT. CHEN FAMILY HOME -- NIGHT**

24

Nicky explodes onto the street, completely overwhelmed. She  
looks back at her family home and then takes off...

\*  
\*

25     **EXT. SAN FRANCISCO STREETS -- NIGHT**

25

A quick, DISSOLVING MONTAGE of Nicky RUNNING -- through  
Chinatown, to the Wharf, through the Marina to the Presidio...

\*  
\*

26     **EXT. CRISSY FIELD -- NIGHT**

26

...Nicky finds herself at this quiet spot overlooking The  
Golden Gate Bridge, catches her breath --

\*  
\*

NICKY

*(quietly, to herself)*

I shouldn't have come.

And then she hears --

PEI-LING (O.S.)

You had to. The answers are here.

\*

Pei-Ling steps into frame beside her. Holy shit! Is this a  
ghost? A figment of Nicky's imagination? Whatever it is,  
Nicky isn't startled or even surprised... but is *comforted*  
by its presence. She looks at the vision of her old mentor --

NICKY

I'm going to find your killer. I  
won't sleep until she pays.

\*  
\*

PEI-LING

Vengeance is a water vessel with a  
hole. It carries nothing but the  
promise of emptiness.

\*

NICKY

You told me to stop her...but who is  
she? Why does she hate you so much?

\*  
\*

But of course Pei-Ling doesn't give up anything that Nicky  
doesn't already know. This is just her subconscious talking.

\*  
\*

(CONTINUED)

PEI-LING

You will find the answers. But right  
now, your family is hurting. Just  
like you are. You must heal.

\*

NICKY

It was so much simpler at the  
Monastery, Sifu. I wish I could go  
back.

\*

PEI-LING

There is nothing to go back to...

Cut wide to reveal Nicky alone in the park.

27     **EXT. CHINATOWN STREET -- NIGHT**

27

Nicky approaches Lucky Dumplings, her family's restaurant.  
A LIGHT is on inside. As she heads around the side, she  
sees -- **TWO CHINESE MEN beating up an OLDER CHINESE MAN.**

\*

\*

\*

NICKY

HEY! STOP!

The Shaolin in Nicky RUSHES in, ready to defend the victim.  
One of the Attackers sees her and quickly disappears, but  
the second Attacker continues to pummel the man. As Nicky  
comes closer, she's STUNNED to see... the victim is HER DAD!

\*

\*

\*

\*

The Attacker punches Jin and he hits the ground with a THUD.  
Nicky quickly GRABS the Attacker from behind and then launches  
into a series of powerful SNAP KICKS and PALM CHOPS. The  
Attacker takes off running as Nicky looks down to see her  
dad is UNCONSCIOUS.

\*

\*

\*

She holds him in her arms --

\*

NICKY (CONT'D)

DAD! DAD!! Wake up!

Off a panicked Nicky -- *what the hell is going on?!*

\*

**END OF TEASER**

ACT ONE28     **INT. HOSPITAL -- WAITING ROOM -- NIGHT**

28

Nicky sits on one side of the waiting room, her mother sits on the other. Ryan and Althea take up the neutral space in-between. The DOCTOR (40s, female) approaches...

DOCTOR

Mrs. Chen? The surgery went well...  
your husband had a subdural hematoma.  
But he's fine now... we stopped the  
bleeding with no complications.

\*

MEI-LI

Can we see him?

DOCTOR

He's resting... he's had a lot of  
trauma to the body so he's going to  
be quite sore. My suggestion is you  
all go home and get some sleep...

Everyone looks to each other relieved. But something's been  
on Nicky's mind. As they head out --

NICKY

Dad's black eye... was that really  
an accident?

ALTHEA

What do you mean? He fell.

\*

NICKY

This whole thing is just strange. I  
feel like I'm missing something.

RYAN

Yeah, about three years.

\*

Althea shoots Ryan a look but he continues --

RYAN (CONT'D)

A lot of stuff happened while you  
were gone... stuff we've all had to  
deal with while you were in the lotus  
position.

\*

\*

\*

\*

NICKY

Ryan...

RYAN

You have no right to come back and  
suddenly pretend to care.

\*

\*

\*

(CONTINUED)

Ryan storms out followed by Mei-Li. A beat, then --

ALTHEA

Nice to not be under the hot lights  
for a change. This is good for me.

*(off Nicky's look)*

Joking. You need to get some sleep.  
You're staying with me.

29     **EXT. SAN FRANCISCO -- MORNING (ESTABLISHING)**

29

30     **INT. ALTHEA'S GUEST ROOM -- DAY**

30

Nicky sits on the bed, same clothes from the night before,  
SKETCHING a detailed picture of the sword. Althea enters  
with coffee as Nicky quickly puts the journal away.

ALTHEA

Still take it black?

NICKY

Haven't had caffeine in three years...

ALTHEA

Great! You'll be wired and stressed  
out -- like you never left home.

NICKY

How do you do it?

*(off Althea)*

You're always so chill. Dad's in  
the hospital, mom's breathing down  
your neck about wedding stuff, I  
show up out of nowhere and you're in  
full makeup with a smile at 7 am.

ALTHEA

Priorities. Plus an edible.

NICKY

So I should be more vain and medicated  
and life will be good?

Althea makes a face at her sister.

ALTHEA

Your problem was you always wanted  
to please mom. She took that and  
ran with it.

NICKY

Someone had to. Ryan was the hothead  
she couldn't control...

(CONTINUED)

ALTHEA

*(rolls her eyes)*

... Yet would never complain about  
because he was the only son.

NICKY

And you were never down for mom's  
crazy so she never even tried.

ALTHEA

Oh she tried. Remember ballet? I  
threw such an epic tantrum during a  
recital once -- mom burned all of my  
tutus. Literally. In a wok.

NICKY

Well I'm jealous you figured out  
life at the age of five.

*(beat)*

Is work still going well?

ALTHEA

Quit six months ago...

NICKY

*(surprised)*

I thought you were going to branch  
off into that software start-up --

ALTHEA

I'll probably go back to it, but you  
only get married once... hopefully.  
I have a big fat Chinese wedding to  
plan.

Nicky notices a framed photo -- it's of herself and Ryan arm-  
in-arm... a reminder of when they were inseparable.

NICKY

Ryan's been mad at me before, but  
never like this.

ALTHEA

He was a mess for a long time after  
you left. You were his best friend.

*(off Nicky)*

It's not too late.

Off Nicky realizing where she has to go --

31     **EXT. SAN FRANCISCO STREETS -- DAY**

Nicky hops off a trolley as she heads through the famous  
Dragon Gate of Chinatown, talking on her cell --

(CONTINUED)

NICKY

... Dad's in recovery. We were really lucky.

32 INT. DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE -- DAY

32

INTERCUT with Evan on the phone, surrounded by files.

EVAN

Thank god for that.

NICKY

Any more information on "Zhilan"? A last name, a location?

EVAN

My contacts are running everything you gave me about her through the system. But in the meantime, my guy at the FBI did give me some intel on this "Gaibiàn."

NICKY

He'd heard of it?

EVAN

It lines up with a new American Triad they've been tracking. He's sending over what he's got.

NICKY

That's great. I made some new sketches of the sword too. Maybe we could track it... contact auction houses or work with customs in case it was smuggled out of China.

EVAN

Send it over. I'll look into it.

NICKY

Should we meet up in a couple of hours? Go over everything your FBI friend sends you?

EVAN

We'll be lucky if he gets us anything *this week*. These things take time.

Nicky is crushed. That feels too long.

EVAN (CONT'D)

You're not alone in this...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

EVAN (CONT'D)

(beat)

When you disappeared, I realized you  
must've felt like you had no one to  
turn to. But I was always here for  
you --

She stops in the street, the old feelings for him returning.

NICKY

I know you were.

Nicky arrives outside the Chinese Community Center.

NICKY (CONT'D)

Hey... Ev, I have to go.

33 INT. CHINESE COMMUNITY CENTER -- CORRIDORS -- DAY

33

As Nicky walks through the building we see the Center is a  
vital part of the community:

**ELDERLY CHINESE-AMERICANS** play Mah-Jong in the **REC ROOM**.  
**STRESSED-OUT STUDENTS** do their homework in the **LIBRARY**.  
**RECENT IMMIGRANTS** get a hot meal in the **DINING HALL**.

Nicky makes her way to the **CLINIC** where she sees RYAN talking  
to a **PATIENT**. He comes outside...

NICKY

Can you talk?

RYAN

Not really.

NICKY

Come on. They still have Ping-Pong  
around here?

(off Ryan's nod)

Forehand topspin still your weakness?

Ryan gives her a look. It's on.

RYAN

(yells to his team)

Be back in a few.

They walk down the corridor, passing the **EXERCISE STUDIO**  
where a **TAI CHI** class ends and **OLDER STUDENTS** stream out....

NICKY

Listen, about last night, I know--

**HENRY CHU** (32, Harry Shum), the hot instructor, also comes  
out of the studio and sees Nicky.

(CONTINUED)

HENRY

Hello.

NICKY

Oh, hi...

RYAN

Henry...this is my sometimes sister,  
Nicky.

Nicky throws a look to Ryan at the not-so-subtle dig.

HENRY

Heard you trained with the Shaolins--

They're interrupted by one of the TAI CHI LADIES --

TAI CHI LADY

*(re: Henry and Nicky)*

Very nice looking couple.

\*

They're both embarrassed at her assumption --

HENRY

Oh... no, we're not --

TAI CHI LADY

*(to Nicky)*

Don't waste time. You won't be gold  
forever.

The Woman walks off as Ryan looks to Nicky --

RYAN

Tick tock. Not long before you're  
worth a penny on the wife market.

\*

\*

Nicky rolls her eyes at Ryan who's clearly enjoying this.

\*

HENRY

Sorry. I get a lot of unsolicited  
advice from my Tai Chi crew.

NICKY

I'm sure.

HENRY

Hey... if you ever need a studio...  
or someone to train with--

\*

RYAN

Easy, man. Doubt she'll be here  
very long.

\*

Nicky throws her brother a look, then --

\*

(CONTINUED)

NICKY

I appreciate the offer.

Nicky and Henry smile -- a hint of the chemistry to come.

34

**INT. CHINESE COMMUNITY CENTER -- PING PONG ROOM -- DAY**

34

The Chinese national past-time. Nicky and Ryan show off their skills as they face off in a competitive game...

NICKY

... All the "stuff" that happened...  
what were you talking about?

RYAN

Everything fell apart after you left.  
You were the golden child... the  
star athlete, the one with the perfect  
grades.

*(as they rally)*

When you disappeared, mom was a month  
shy of having birthed a 'Ha-ba-deu'  
[Harvard] graduate. Instead she had  
a college drop-out who had a meltdown  
and went missing.

NICKY

That's one way of putting it.

RYAN

Mom took it out on Dad -- instead of  
father-daughter fishing trips, he  
should've been doing more flashcards.  
But Dad gave it right back -- he  
blamed her for being a hard-ass Tiger  
Mom who drove you away.

Nicky hits a backhand winner down the line.

RYAN (CONT'D)

They fought night and day... but  
eventually they just... stopped.

NICKY

Stopped fighting?

RYAN

Fighting, talking... they withdrew  
from all of us.

NICKY

So mom blames me for starting this  
whole spiral... and you blame me  
because you were left to deal.

(CONTINUED)

RYAN

I did everything I could. I was the mediator, the counselor, I turned down Brown to go to SF College.

NICKY

*(stunned)*

Brown was your *dream*...

RYAN

Yeah, well, Althea was off locking down Dennis...

NICKY

... And I was in the lotus position.

RYAN

You left me here without an ally. You were the only one who knew everything.

Nicky can see the pain behind Ryan's eyes.

NICKY

You haven't told them you're gay?

RYAN

I sat them down a year ago... but dad got all weird and mom's still trying to find me a wife...

NICKY

Good old Chinese denial.

*(a beat)*

I'm sorry -- I should've been here for you. I know I let you down.

Ryan looks to his sister, slowly reconnecting again --

RYAN

You're back now. Maybe you can find out what the hell's going on with Dad. You're the only one he'd ever talk to.

35 INT. HOSPITAL ROOM -- DAY

35

ON JIN... bruised and bandaged in bed as the NURSE finishes taking his vitals. He sees NICKY in the doorway.

NICKY

Dad... how are you feeling?

(CONTINUED)

JIN

The doc says no dancing, but I'll  
make it to Althea's banquet.

\*

NICKY

That's not still happening, is it?

JIN

Your mother would wheel in my corpse  
before she'd cancel.

Nicky and her father share a small laugh. A beat, then --

NICKY

Dad, whatever's going on. No matter  
what it is... you can tell me.

(taking Jin's hand)

My sifu always said there are three  
things that cannot be hidden. The  
sun, the moon, and the truth. I can  
help if you let me in.

\*

\*

\*

\*

\*

\*

\*

\*

Jin softens, seeing how much Nicky cares. A beat.

\*

JIN

I'm sorry... for making you worry...  
for making you come home to this --

\*

\*

\*

But they're interrupted by --

\*

MEI-LI (O.S.)

I never meant to put you in danger.

They turn to see Mei-Li in the doorway looking at Jin.

MEI-LI (CONT'D)

They raised our rent... expenses  
kept going up. I was desperate...  
so I took a loan from a longtime  
customer, Tony Liu.

\*

\*

\*

\*

36 **INT. LUCKY DUMPLINGS -- DAY -- FLASHBACK**

36

MOS FLASHBACK. In slow motion, **TONY LIU**, (40's, big,  
charming) smiles and comforts Mei-Li.

\*

\*

MEI-LI (V.O.)

I thought I could trust him.

\*

37 **INT. HOSPITAL ROOM -- DAY**

37

Mei-Li looks to her husband --

\*

(CONTINUED)

MEI-LI

I didn't tell you because I knew  
you'd say it was time to sell. This  
was our dream.

NICKY

How much did you borrow?

MEI-LI

\$100,000. But I couldn't keep up  
with the payments. I've been taking  
catering jobs, asking everyone I  
know for help...

JIN

And now it's \$350,000.

Mei-Li and Nicky turn to Jin, STUNNED.

JIN (CONT'D)

Tony came to me two months ago. I  
tried to handle it. I knew you were  
scared and ashamed...

MEI-LI

The black eye... it was Tony...

JIN

He's not the man you think he is --  
he's a dangerous criminal.

NICKY

If you'd just talked to each other --

MEI-LI

*(realizing)*

Your father was protecting me...  
like I was trying to protect him.

A look of understanding between husband and wife... that  
through it all they were acting out of love and respect.

MEI-LI (CONT'D)

What do we do now?

JIN

We have seventy-two hours... or  
they'll destroy the restaurant and  
come after all of us.

We go off a gutted Mei-Li and Nicky --

**END OF ACT ONE**

ACT TWO38     **INT. DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE -- DAY**

38

We're TIGHT ON a stress ball being squeezed to death by Evan --  
as we reveal he's pacing in front of Nicky.

EVAN

I don't even know what to say. First  
this Gaibiàn thing and now you're  
telling me your mom borrowed money  
from Tony Liu?

NICKY

My dad said he's a criminal...

EVAN

More like THE criminal. He runs  
Chinatown. Money laundering, drugs,  
guns...

NICKY

Great. So arrest him. Game over.

EVAN

He's too insulated. We arrested one  
of his associates a few weeks ago...  
someone we hoped we could turn. Two  
days later, witness ended up dead,  
and Tony's guy was back on the  
streets.

NICKY

So we build a case then. This guy's  
a street thug preying on innocent  
people. You're telling me there's  
nothing you can do?

EVAN

We've been trying... but no one will  
talk to us, the community doesn't  
trust the police, and honestly I  
don't blame them.

Nicky takes this all in...

39     **INT. LUCKY DUMPLINGS -- DAY**

39

An emergency family meeting has been called. Nicky catches  
Althea and Ryan up on what's been going on.

RYAN

Can't Dennis pay them off? He's  
loaded right?

(CONTINUED)

NICKY

No. People like this... you pay  
them 350, they'll make it 500.

ALTHEA

Not sure we have a choice.

NICKY

If he's squeezing mom and dad, he  
must be doing it to other people in  
the community.

RYAN

It's a pretty solid business model.

NICKY

We need to find his other victims.  
They'll talk to us and we can get  
that information to Evan... help him  
build a case.

RYAN

Why would they open up to us?

NICKY

We look like them, speak the same  
language, grew up here...

ALTHEA

One of the few times not being white  
has its advantages.

NICKY

Let's go out into the community...  
see what we can find out.

ALTHEA

Shouldn't we get the police involved?

RYAN

No way. Liu owns the cops. You  
don't take over Chinatown without  
backup. We have to do this ourselves.

(beat)

We need all the help we can get --  
I'll reach out to Henry.

Off Nicky, Althea, and Ryan heading out on a mission --

40 INT./EXT. CHINATOWN -- DAY

40

MONTAGE -- Nicky, her siblings, and Henry in the community.

CHINATOWN TEAHOUSE: Nicky approaches the OWNER behind the  
counter.

(CONTINUED)

**CHINESE SEAFOOD RESTAURANT:** Ryan sits at the counter and chats up the WAITRESS.

**MODEST CHINATOWN APARTMENT:** Henry sits down with an OLDER COUPLE... who become nervous when he starts asking questions.

**CHINATOWN NIGHTCLUB:** Althea flirts with the BARTENDER.

41 EXT. CHINATOWN STREET -- DAY

41

Nicky comes out from a NAIL SALON, frustrated -- she's getting nowhere. She takes a moment to regroup, staring into a store window when she hears...

PEI-LING (O.S.)  
Faith makes the impossible possible.

Nicky looks to see PEI-LING'S REFLECTION in the store window.

NICKY  
But we're running out of time. What  
if I can't save my family... just  
like I couldn't save you?

PEI-LING  
Concern yourself with only what you  
can control... the future.

Nicky turns around to face Pei-Ling... but she's GONE. A beat as she contemplates her words... just as Henry comes out of a hardware store and joins...

HENRY  
Hey... any luck?

NICKY  
Nothing so far.

As Henry passes people, they wave and give him smiles.

NICKY (CONT'D)  
You're like the mayor.

HENRY  
It's not me, it's all my grandma...  
she raised me -- everyone in Chinatown  
knew her. She was a seamstress for  
the silk shop on Grant Street.

NICKY  
I think my mom got my cheongsam made  
there for my first birthday.  
(beat)  
She raised you?

(CONTINUED)

HENRY

My parents died when I was twelve.  
Car accident.

*(off Nicky)*

My grandma pushed me into martial  
arts. To focus on something other  
than my reality, I guess.

Nicky looks to Henry, seeing a new side to him. One she can  
really relate to.

NICKY

Peace through fighting... my mentor,  
Pei-Ling, used to say that to me.

They share a smile as they join up with Ryan on the corner.

RYAN

Anything?

Henry shakes his head as --

NICKY

No one's talking.

RYAN

Same... I busted out.

Althea comes around the corner, joins --

ALTHEA

I got something.

Everyone turns to Althea, surprised.

ALTHEA (CONT'D)

The bartender's cousin owns the 99  
cent store around the corner. Her  
name's Cindy Deng and she's a single  
mom. She's been asking family and  
friends for loans. Could be  
something...

As they head toward the store --

RYAN

*(to Nicky)*

You should go in.

ALTHEA

I'm sorry, did Nicky squeeze herself  
into a dress from her clubbing days  
to get the dirt?

(CONTINUED)

RYAN

I just think Nicky will have better  
luck... she's...  
(off Nicky's look)  
What? I was gonna say approachable.

ALTHEA

And I'm not?

RYAN

You can come off a little... fancy.

ALTHEA

What does that even mean?

RYAN

Althea. We're canvassing the 'hood.  
Why are you wearing heels?

Henry watches the sibling dynamic, amused --

HENRY

I'll let you guys sort this one out...  
I'm going to try the liquor store.

As Henry splits off, Ryan and Althea look to Nicky.

NICKY

Okay fine... me and my practical  
shoes will handle this.

42     **INT. CHINESE 99 CENT STORE -- DAY**

42

Nicky pretends to shop as she watches Cindy stocking shelves.  
Cindy glances over at her daughter, BRENDA (12) who's secretly  
watching a video on her Phone.

CINDY

Brenda! No Youtube until you finish  
your homework!

Cindy shoots her daughter a stern look and she promptly puts  
away the phone. Nicky makes her way over to Brenda --

NICKY

I used to hate Chinese homework too.  
Can I show you a trick?

Nicky grabs a pencil and draws a STICK FIGURE.

NICKY (CONT'D)

Think of Chinese characters as little  
people drawings. See.... this little  
guy's running.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

NICKY (CONT'D)

Make his leg stick out... the bottom  
part of the character for "run".

BRENDA

*(getting it)*

Can you show me more?

Cindy watches on, impressed that Nicky's connected with her  
daughter and got her to do her homework. We cut back outside --

43     **EXT. CHINESE 99 CENT STORE -- CONTINUOUS**

43

... Where Ryan and Althea are waiting.

RYAN

... Swans... like live animals...?

ALTHEA

They symbolize peace and prosperity.

RYAN

Or bacteria and disease... you really  
want those things flying around your  
reception?

ALTHEA

They're *trained*...

ANGLE ON: **TWO CHINESE HEAVIES** coming around the corner where  
they spot Ryan and Althea. Heavy 1 pulls out his phone.

CLOSE ON PHONE: PHOTOS of Ryan at the seafood restaurant and  
Althea at the club.

Clearly they've been watched. As the heavies approach...

44     **INT. CHINESE 99 CENT STORE -- CONTINUOUS**

44

Nicky helps Brenda as Cindy approaches, grateful.

CINDY

Good trick. Thank you.

*(beat)*

I'm Cindy.

NICKY

Nicky Chen. I grew up around the  
corner. My parents own Lucky  
Dumplings.

CINDY

I heard about your father. Is he  
okay?

\*

(CONTINUED)

NICKY

He's in the hospital... we were  
fortunate. This time.

Cindy realizes the real reason Nicky's here and moves her  
away from her daughter, keeps her voice low --

CINDY

They're taking over our city.

NICKY

Which is why we have to fight back.  
I know you've been affected too.

CINDY

*(tenses)*

You shouldn't be here.

\*

NICKY

I have people who can help us.

\*

CINDY

They said they'd kill me if I talked.  
I have to look out for my daughter.

NICKY

She'll never grow up free of all  
this if you don't take a stand.  
I've seen it with my own family...

\*

A beat as Cindy considers, looking to her daughter, then --

CINDY

I-- I can't.

And that's when... SOMETHING CATCHES NICKY'S EYE outside --  
the two Chinese HEAVIES confront Ryan and Althea. Suddenly  
one of the heavies pulls a KNIFE! Nicky takes off --

45     **EXT. CHINESE 99 CENT STORE -- DAY**

45

... Where she finds Heavy 1 with a knife on a terrified Althea --

NICKY

Let go of my sister!

The man turns as Nicky JABS his solar plexus with her heel,  
knocking the wind out of him. It's just enough of a window  
to KICK AWAY THE KNIFE and KNOCK him to the ground.

\*

RYAN

*(grabbing Althea)*

You okay?

But as Althea gasps for breath... Heavy 2 attacks.

(CONTINUED)

Althea and Ryan watch in AWE as Nicky engages in a HAND-TO-HAND battle with Heavy 2 -- VICIOUS KICKS, ELBOW JABS, AND FINALLY AN ARM BAR that breaks his bone. He scurries away as a breathless Nicky looks to her siblings who stand frozen.

\*

RYAN (CONT'D)

I totally underestimated what you  
were doing at that monastery...

But just then, **TWO MORE ATTACKERS** (Shaven Head Man and Tall Man) come around the corner.

NICKY

Get back!

Nicky shoves her siblings into the alley. They turn to protest, but it's too late. Nicky's gone into FULL ATTACK MODE. She CHARGES the Attackers head-on.

Ryan frantically calls 911 as Althea watches her sister bust out more Kung Fu moves. But suddenly Shaven Head Man reaches into his pocket... Althea sees the **GLINT OF METAL**.

ALTHEA

Nicky! Gun!

Nicky turns to see the man pull his gun... he has her in his sights and is about to pull the trigger when...

**HENRY comes in from behind**, TWISTS Shaven Head Man's arm at an unnatural angle, the GUN DROPPING.

\*

\*

Nicky and Henry work in unison: Henry fighting Shaven Head Man and Nicky taking on Tall Man. Nicky's Kung Fu moves perfectly complement Henry's Wing Chun sequences.

But Shaven Head Man won't go down easy. He CHARGES Henry. Nicky takes down Tall Man and turns to see Shaven Head Man about to CHOKE Henry out. She RACES in with a HIGH-KICK HEEL JAB to Shaven Head Man's throat. As he drops --

HENRY

Thanks for the assist.

Sweaty, breathless, and RELIEVED... she smiles at him.

NICKY

Right back at you.

Off Nicky and Henry, their bond growing stronger as Althea and Ryan come out from the alley, stunned and relieved...

\*

**END OF ACT TWO**

ACT THREE46     **INT. CHEN FAMILY HOME -- KITCHEN -- DAY**

46

Nicky sits at the kitchen table, icing her wounds as Althea  
and Ryan talk to Mei-Li at the kitchen sink --

\*  
\*

ALTHEA

... The guy wasn't gonna let me go.  
If Nicky hadn't come in when she  
did...

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

Althea gets emotional as she looks to her little sister --

\*

RYAN

It was pretty incredible. She did  
this crazy high-kick-combo-punch...  
took down a guy twice her size.

MEI-LI

(to Nicky)

Quite the hero you've become.

\*

NICKY

I don't know about--

MEI-LI

A *foolish* hero... going after these  
people even when you knew how  
dangerous it was. I almost lost  
your father... are you trying to  
make me lose my children too?

Mei-Li moves to walk out, but Nicky stands firm --

\*

NICKY

We're in this situation because of  
you and all of your secrets.

\*  
\*  
\*

Mei-Li freezes -- this is the FIRST TIME Nicky has ever spoken  
back to her like this. Everyone braces for Mei-Li's response,  
but to their surprise, she stammers --

\*  
\*  
\*

MEI-LI

You're right... this is all my fault.

\*  
\*

Mei-Li walks out of the room, defeated. Off everyone's stares --

\*

47     **INT. CHEN FAMILY HOME -- CORRIDOR/MASTER BEDROOM -- DAY**

47

Nicky heads down the hall to find her mom when she catches a  
glimpse of Mei-Li in her bedroom. She watches her a beat,  
then enters where we see... Mei-Li is pulling out jewelry  
and other family heirlooms.

\*  
\*

(CONTINUED)

NICKY

Mom... what are you doing?

*(eyeing the jewelry)*

The necklace from dad... and grandma's  
jade ring... the engagement presents  
from Dennis's family...

\*  
\*

MEI-LI

I can get \$10,000 for all of this,  
maybe more.

\*

NICKY

You can't sell these...

As Mei-Li contemplates the jade her mother gave her --

MEI-LI

My parents always told me it would  
never work... coming to this country  
to chase after my dream.

NICKY

What are you talking about? Nainai  
and Yeye were so proud of you.

MEI-LI

Eventually... after the restaurant  
was a success. But they still  
reminded me how I left China against  
their wishes...

NICKY

You ran away?

MEI-LI

Of course not. I would never do  
that to my parents.

*(off Nicky, touché)*

But I didn't follow their plan for  
me. They didn't speak to me for  
years... not until Althea was born.

NICKY

So grudge-holding is genetic.

Mei-Li gives her a look...

MEI-LI

You and I... we're the same. I  
shouldn't have been so surprised  
when you ran away.

NICKY

You told me you were sending me on a  
cultural tour of China...

48     **EXT. GREAT WALL OF CHINA -- DAY (FLASHBACK)**

48

Nicky stands with her TOUR GROUP, all wearing matching tee-shirts, all Chinese-American as their guide teaches them about the Great Wall.

NICKY (V.O.)

But that's not what it was. You  
sent me half-way across the world to  
land a Chinese husband.

49     **INT. RESTAURANT -- DAY (FLASHBACK)**

49

Nicky walks into the modest restaurant and is stunned to find the room has been set up with small tables with place-cards on them. One male and one female per table.

The TOUR GROUP LEADER (30s, Chinese-American, female) explains--

\*

TOUR GROUP LEADER

Welcome to speed dating! When you  
hear the bell...rotate! Good luck!

Nicky's face fills with horror. This is a MATCH-MAKING TOUR!  
WTF?! Nicky starts breathing hard, FREAKING OUT.

TOUR GROUP LEADER (CONT'D)

You okay?

NICKY

(gasping for breath)

I... I need air...

Nicky RACES out of the building... and out into the now familiar village of Yuanyuang. She sees the giant TOUR BUS parked out front and RUNS... AWAY from it to the end of the village, hopping in the back of a beat-up PICKUP truck to HIDE just as she spots Tour Leader looking for her.

Nicky remains hidden until... a FIGURE gets in the cab to drive. Nicky stays perfectly still -- she's trapped. If she gets out, the Tour Leader will see her.

The Figure starts the engine... and then turns back to face Nicky as we see... **IT'S PEI-LING!**

NICKY (CONT'D)

Please. Don't say anything.

PEI-LING

Why would I make a decision that  
would impact your life?

(off Nicky)

You make the path that you live.  
Your life. Your choice.

(CONTINUED)

*Nicky REACTS to those words as we cut back to...*

50

**INT. CHEN FAMILY HOME -- MASTER BEDROOM -- DAY**

50

Nicky looks to her mom --

NICKY

That was the first time anyone told  
me I had a choice in anything.

MEI-LI

This is nonsense --

NICKY

You made me learn the Harvard fight  
song on the piano when I was five!

*(off Mei-Li)*

Every sport, every instrument... it  
was all engineered by you so I'd get  
into *your* dream school.

*(beat)*

And you knew I loved Evan, but all  
you cared about was that he was white,  
so you pushed me to break up with  
him just in time for you to pick my  
Chinese husband.

Mei-Li looks to her daughter, finally at a loss for words.

NICKY (CONT'D)

In that moment on the back of that  
truck, I got clarity.

51

**EXT. MONASTERY -- DAY (FLASHBACK)**

51

*Pei-Ling drives as Nicky sits shotgun up the windy road...  
finally arriving at the monastery gates. Pei-Ling leads  
Nicky inside where she's struck by the QUIET SERENITY.*

NICKY (V.O.)

Pei-Ling offered to let me stay at  
the monastery that night while I  
arranged my plane ticket home...

*Pei-Ling leads Nicky through the main courtyard where the  
monks practice Kung Fu. Nicky watches, MESMERIZED.*

NICKY (CONT'D)

But I saw something that I wanted to  
be a part of... and I didn't want to  
leave... I couldn't leave...

*(beat)*

These women were warriors... so  
powerful...

52     **INT. MONASTERY -- TEMPLE -- DAY (FLASHBACK)**

52     \*

*Nicky watches as the monks meditate in SILENCE a beat.*

NICKY (V.O.)

... And at peace with their own  
selves. They knew who they were.  
And I wanted to be like them.

*Nicky joins, self-conscious, but then she CLOSES HER EYES...*

NICKY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I thought I would stay for a week,  
maybe a month... that I'd find  
something in the silence up there.  
That maybe away from the pressure to  
be what you wanted me to be... that  
I'd finally figure out what I wanted.

53     **INT. CHEN FAMILY HOME -- MASTER BEDROOM -- DAY**

53

Nicky looks to her mom --

NICKY

But even at my happiest, I knew I'd  
caused a lot of pain. Right before  
she died... Pei-Ling told me to come  
home... to try to heal... but I've  
somehow managed to do the opposite.  
(beat)

I've put us all in danger, just like  
you said. I thought I was Shaolin...  
that I could help the weak fight the  
powerful... but maybe I was wrong.

Mei-Li takes this all in... clearly moved and pained by  
hearing this, finally understanding Nicky's struggle.

MEI-LI

Nicky --

She's about to say something when -- Nicky's phone rings.

MEI-LI (CONT'D)

You should take it.

NICKY

No. It can wait.

MEI-LI

It's Evan, it could be important.

Mei-Li exits. Nicky answers.

(CONTINUED)

NICKY

Evan?

54 INT. DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE -- DAY

54 \*

INTERCUT with Evan on the phone at his desk, studying a file on his computer.

EVAN

I think I found your mystery woman.

NICKY

Zhilan?! Who is she?

EVAN

If the ID is right, she's one of Interpol's most wanted criminals. Details are sketchy, but she's suspected of running criminal ops around the world. Everything from arms deals to assassinations. Zhang Zhilan has big plans.

NICKY

Wait. What's her name?!

EVAN

Zhang. Zhang Zhilan.

**QUICK FLASH to the rice fields as Pei-Ling opens up to Nicky:**

**PEI-LING**

***I had a very different life before I was your Sifu. You would not have recognized the old Zhang Pei-Ling.***

**QUICK FLASH to the burning monastery:**

ZHILAN

***I should have killed her a long time ago...***

Back to Nicky, STUNNED, as she realizes --

NICKY

Oh my god... Zhang... they must be related.

EVAN

What?!

NICKY

Pei-Ling and Zhilan were sisters!  
(piecing it together)  
Pei-Ling spoke about her difficult past... what drove her to the monastery. It was because of Zhilan.

(CONTINUED)

EVAN

Talk about opposites -- a peaceful  
monk and a vicious assassin willing  
to kill her own sister.

NICKY

*(realizing)*

Pei-Ling ran from her family and  
found sanctuary at the monastery...  
just like I did.

*(off Evan)*

She had a lot of regret about it...  
that's why she kept pushing me to  
fix things at home.

EVAN

Man, and you thought your family was  
messed up.

As this all lands and Nicky realizes why Pei-Ling felt such  
a deep connection to her, Althea peeks her head in --

ALTHEA

You won't believe who's here.

55     **CHEN FAMILY HOME -- FAMILY ROOM -- DAY**

Nicky enters to find CINDY from the 99 cent store.

NICKY

Cindy --

CINDY

I'm sorry to come to your home.

NICKY

Is everything okay?

Cindy looks to Nicky --

CINDY

I saw what you did to protect your  
brother and your sister... the way  
you stood up to those men.

NICKY

I was just doing what I could--

CINDY

No. Please don't be modest. I've  
been praying for someone like you to  
show up...

*(off Nicky)*

I want to help. I'll tell you  
everything I know about Tony Liu.

Off Nicky, finally feeling HOPE --

**END OF ACT THREE**

**ACT FOUR**56     **INT. DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE -- DAY**

56

Nicky and Evan meet in his office. Through the glass window  
we see Cindy giving a statement to one of the ADAs.

\*  
\*

NICKY

You have everything you need, right?  
Evidence Tony Liu used Cindy's store  
to launder money *and* cc footage of  
Liu's guys... plus Cindy's willing  
to testify.

EVAN

It's an incredible break...

NICKY

I'm sensing a "but" here...

\*

EVAN

All of this helps, but Liu's weaseled  
his way out of charges before. We  
need a smoking gun.

\*  
\*  
\*

NICKY

The only undeniable thing is that we  
have 48 hours until Liu comes after  
my entire family... *if* they're even  
sticking to that timeline. You said  
it yourself, the last witness that  
tried to go after Liu ended up dead.

\*  
\*  
\*

EVAN

I'll arrange for protective custody  
and a detail on your house. In the  
meantime, I'll see if I can connect  
the dots with some of my leads.

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

NICKY

What kind of leads?

EVAN

Secret bank accounts, shell  
companies... these guys have all  
kinds of ways of hiding their money.

\*

NICKY

Let me take a look... you know I'm  
good with numbers...

\*

EVAN

These are classified documents. If  
they get out, I lose my job, my  
career, everything...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

EVAN (CONT'D)  
(*off Nicky's despair*)  
... Which is why you need to guard  
them with your life.

Off Nicky, determined -

57 INT. CHEN FAMILY HOME -- KITCHEN -- NIGHT

57 \*

ON A CRAZY MURDER BOARD: MUG SHOTS OF CRIMINALS, POST-ITS,  
RED STRING CONNECTING EVIDENCE TO EACH OTHER...

Nicky studies her creation as Althea, Ryan, and Evan peruse  
files at the table. Mei-Li brings in hot food --

MEI-LI  
Scallion pancakes. You must eat to  
think.

As she heads out --

ALTHEA  
Just like high school... mom feeding  
us late-night, Nicky making crazy  
visual aids, Ryan making "thinking  
face", Evan making grand romantic  
gestures...  
(*off Evan's look*)  
... Or just being a good friend.

Nicky turns from the board --

NICKY  
We know Cindy sent all the fake  
earnings to a company called "Flinders  
Enterprises"...

EVAN  
So if we follow the money trail, it  
should lead us right to Liu.

ALTHEA  
Let me take a look at those  
transactions again.

Althea does some quick typing as Nicky stands up to stretch.  
She notices the BACKGROUND on Evan's phone... a CABIN.

NICKY  
That cabin... it looks just like the  
one we used to sneak into.

EVAN  
It is... except it's mine now.  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

EVAN (CONT'D)

*(off Nicky)*

My aunt left me a little money when she died... got it dirt cheap and fixed it up. Our old climbing tree's gone, but I planted a new one in its place.

Nicky smiles at the memories as --

RYAN

Okay, Gatsby.

ALTHEA

*(reacts while typing)*

Wait a sec... think I got something! Looks like Flinders has been on a spending spree today... lots of international wire transfers.

EVAN

You hacked in?

ALTHEA

I prefer "creative firewall jumping."

NICKY

*(to Evan)*

You didn't hear that.

ALTHEA

I'm seeing payments for rented dock space, trucks, private security...they dropped a lot of cash six hours ago.

RYAN

Something's going down...

*(to Evan)*

If he's using the docks, it could be for anything. Smuggling weapons, drugs, people, right?

But Nicky sees Evan's conflicted.

NICKY

I'll call in an anonymous tip. You can follow up from the inside.

EVAN

Okay. I'll make sure the police scope out the docks tonight.

(CONTINUED)

RYAN

Wait... you're gonna hand this over  
to the same cops that let Liu take  
over Chinatown? You're joking, right?

EVAN

It's time to bring in the authorities.

Ryan is outraged, his temper rising --

RYAN

The cops are gonna turn a blind eye.  
(off everyone's looks)  
Do you have any idea how many people  
come into the clinic with knife wounds  
and torture marks... they abuse women,  
Even children. These people are  
animals.

NICKY

We don't have a choice. Evan's on  
the inside and can see this through.

RYAN

And if he can't... then what?

Ryan throws up his arms as Nicky looks to Evan --

EVAN

I'll keep you posted.

58    **EXT. SAN FRANCISCO -- ESTABLISH -- NIGHT**

58

59    **INT. HOSPITAL ROOM/CORRIDOR -- NIGHT**

59

ON A GRATEFUL JIN lying in his hospital bed looking to Nicky --

JIN

Thank you.

NICKY

Don't thank me yet, but it looks  
promising.

Jin looks over to a hopeful Mei-Li and Althea.

MEI-LI

More good news. The doctor says you  
can go home tonight.

ALTHEA

We'll go deal with the paperwork.

As Althea and Nicky head out --

(CONTINUED)

NICKY

Have you heard from Ryan? He was  
supposed to meet us here after he  
checked in at the clinic.

ALTHEA

No... I sent him a text too.  
(takes out her phone)  
I'll track him.

NICKY

You can do that?  
(off Althea's look)  
Right. Probably a lot easier than  
breaking into the international  
banking system.

ALTHEA

I gave Ryan his phone... I can see  
where he is anytime I want.

NICKY

That's not creepy.

ALTHEA

(typing)  
Oh no, no, no... He's down at the  
docks. What's he thinking?! He's  
going to get himself killed!

Nicky takes off.

ALTHEA (CONT'D)

Wait! Nicky! You can't go alone --

But Nicky's gone.

60     **EXT. DOCKS -- NIGHT**

60

Nicky arrives at deserted Pier 32... looking around for any  
sign of Ryan. She heads inside the warehouse building...

61     **INT. WAREHOUSE ON THE DOCKS -- NIGHT**

61

Nicky searches through storage rooms and corridors... nothing.  
She comes around a corner, sees a FIGURE up ahead. She comes  
up from behind in stealth mode and GRABS HIM, spinning him  
around and pinning him in an ARM BAR as we reveal... **RYAN!**

NICKY

You can't be here. We have to go!

She sees he has a bag with CAMERA EQUIPMENT.

(CONTINUED)

RYAN

I'm getting the evidence we need. \*

NICKY

This is a slam dunk for the police. \*  
They'll be here. Let's go.

RYAN

Don't you get it... we're invisible. \*  
They don't care. Not about us.

They're interrupted by... A PANEL VAN pulling into the building. Followed by a BLACK SUV... driven by Tony Liu! SHIT! Nicky and Ryan QUICKLY DUCK into a dark corner as...

**FOUR CHINESE HENCHMEN** unload CRATES from the VAN. Tony goes to inspect the goods with his **TWO HEAVIES** who open the crates.

INSIDE WE SEE...**HIGH POWERED WEAPONS! AK-47s, AR-15s, enough ammo and clips to start a small war...**

Ryan snaps photos -- all the evidence they need to go straight to the press when... **A HENCHMAN SPOTS THEM!** \*

HENCHMAN

OVER THERE! \*

Nicky and Ryan **DUCK FOR COVER** as the Henchmen grab their GUNS, **SHOOTING** at them.

Off Nicky grabbing her brother as they dodge bullets, **RUNNING FOR THEIR LIVES --**

**END OF ACT FOUR**

**ACT FIVE**62     **INT. WAREHOUSE ON THE DOCKS -- NIGHT**

62

ON NICKY AND RYAN racing through the bowels of the building.

NICKY

This way!

\*

Nicky races off first toward an exit, but as Ryan goes to follow, he's cut off by a HENCHMAN who rounds the corner and COLD COCKS him with the butt of his GUN.

\*

Nicky turns around just in time to see Ryan go down HARD.  
The Henchman aims his gun, about to shoot to kill Ryan --

NICKY (CONT'D)

NOOO!!

She CHARGES... RUNNING and JUMPING into A POWERFUL KICK... KNOCKING the weapon out of the Henchman's hand... sending him FLYING back.

She FACES off with the Henchman in a brutal hand-to-hand fight. She PUNCHES -- BAM! ELBOWS -- SLAM! And DEFLECTS as a FINAL LEG SWEEP catches the Henchman off guard and he lands flat, his neck snapping back as his head hits concrete.

Nicky races to her brother on the ground --

NICKY (CONT'D)

Ryan! Ryan! We have to go!

But as she tries to shake Ryan awake...

THREE MORE ATTACKERS suddenly surround her... just like Pei-Ling was surrounded at the monastery.

ON NICKY AS WE FLASH TO:

THE MONASTERY: Pei-Ling eyes her Three Attackers.

THE WAREHOUSE. Thoughts of Pei-Ling strengthen Nicky's resolve as she takes on the Henchman one-by-one.

In a series of STYLISTIC INTERCUT SHOTS, Nicky's moves echo Pei-Ling's as if her mentor is there guiding her.

QUICK FLASH TO THE MONASTERY: Pei-Ling takes down an Attacker with a vicious high kick to the jaw...

BACK IN THE WAREHOUSE: CRACK! Nicky knocks out her Henchman with the same move.

(CONTINUED)

**FLASH TO THE MONASTERY:** Pei-Ling EXTENDS HER HEELS in a SIDE HEEL KICK catching her Attacker off guard. \*

**IN THE WAREHOUSE:** Nicky takes her Attacker off his feet with a similar SNAP KICK TO THE KNEES, using a nearby CHAIR as an improvised weapon and SMASHING it over his head.

Nicky rushes back to the spot where Ryan was knocked unconscious... only he's not there!

Nicky looks around in horror when something catches her eye...

Ryan chasing after Tony Liu on the other end of the warehouse as he tries to escape.

Nicky RACES after them outside to...

63      **EXT. DOCKS -- MOMENTS LATER**

63

Where Ryan faces off with Liu on the pier. As Liu pulls his gun, Ryan uses a discarded **WOOD BEAM** like a bat, knocking the GUN out of Liu's hands. They get into a scrappy **FISTFIGHT...**

Nicky approaches wielding an **OLD METAL PIPE** like a bo-staff... just as Liu puts Ryan in a **CHOKEHOLD**.

NICKY  
Get away from him!

Liu looks up to see Nicky holding the metal pipe over her head. He releases Ryan who CHOKES and GASPS FOR BREATH as he collapses onto his knees. \*

Nicky SPINS the improvised staff and then attacks, but Liu is a trained fighter and deflects her moves. Nicky is relentless, attacking with the bo-staff until... her foot suddenly gets caught... she looks down to see the wood on the pier is rotted.

She manages to pull her foot out, along with the splintered beam leaving a HOLE in the pier. Liu now has the advantage. He grabs the discarded WOOD BEAM Ryan was using and swings HARD at Nicky... she JUST manages to duck... ROLLING into crouch stance. Ready to strike.

Liu and Nicky face off again. Liu takes a swipe at Nicky, pushing her closer to the rotted wood. We see she's dangerously close to getting her foot caught again... but she quickly rotates as she SLAMS the staff into Liu's torso.

Liu reels back, the wind knocked out of him... as Nicky attacks again, a final SCISSOR KICK sending him down into a pile of crates as she hurls herself on top of him. \*

(CONTINUED)

Liu grabs one of the splintered pieces of wood to take a swipe at Nicky. **He makes contact with her shoulder... the same one that was sliced by Zhilan in the monastery attack.** Nicky SCREAMS in agony, BUT she manages to PIN HIM DOWN.

TONY LIU

You may have stopped me, but you'll never stop us. We know no obstacle.

Nicky reacts... the familiar words echoing as we flash to...

64 **EXT. SMALL FARM IN YUNNAN PROVINCE -- DAY (FLASHBACK)**

*Pei-Ling faces off with Zhilan who warns --*

ZHILAN

*... Gaibiàn knows no obstacle.*

65 **EXT. DOCKS -- NIGHT**

Nicky is STUNNED as she realizes...

NICKY

You're Gaibiàn. How big is this thing? How many of you are there?

As Nicky reels, Liu makes one last desperate move, HEAD-BUTTING NICKY to free himself and LUNGING for the gun that skittered away earlier.

He SPINS AROUND, gun trained on Nicky, but she's too quick -- she's grabbed that old pipe off the ground. Sheer determination on her face as she SPINS it, working her way up to that same combo she's been struggling with... the one she couldn't land to take down Pei-Ling's killer.

Nicky spins and connects a POWERFUL KICK to Liu's throat. **She FINALLY nails it**, finishing him off with a whack to the torso with the bo staff sending Liu FLYING BACK...

But in one last desperate move, he CHARGES back toward her... only **the rotting wood underneath his feet SUDDENLY GIVES WAY... CRAAACK!**

**Liu looks down just as the wood beams splinter, sending him PLUMMETING down to the HARD CONCRETE BOAT LANDING below.**

Nicky races over to look through the hole in the dock to see **Liu's lifeless body** below. Off a shocked Nicky, we hear...

The haunting sounds of a bamboo flute and erhu as we...

66 **EXT. SAN FRANCISCO -- DUSK**

... Fly over the water, past Alcatraz and the Golden Gate Bridge and over the city down into the streets of Chinatown.

(CONTINUED)

The sweeping and emotional music bringing us to...

67     **INT. BANQUET HALL -- NIGHT**

67     \*

A banquet hall filled with RED LANTERNS, RED PARASOL FLOWER  
ARRANGEMENTS, and RED PLACE SETTINGS... the room is bathed  
in the color of good fortune. Nicky, dressed in a TRADITIONAL  
CHINESE SILK DRESS, helps her dad, also in TRADITIONAL GARB  
inside. He stops just inside the entrance, looks to Nicky --

JIN

I want you to know... you've given  
our family a second chance.

Nicky nods, appreciating her dad's words, but deflecting--^

NICKY

Just glad Althea didn't have to cancel  
this.

*(pointing)*

Are those dragon dancers?

Jin realizes Nicky isn't comfortable with the praise. He  
looks where she's pointing --

JIN

I believe they're fire-eaters.

Nicky leads Jin to Mei-Ling who stands beside Althea, Dennis,  
and Dennis' family (all in traditional dress) sitting at the  
HEAD TABLE beside the FORTUNE TELLER (male, 60s).

The GUESTS gather around as the Fortune Teller consults his  
calendar and a thick CHINESE ALMANAC... matching up birthdates  
and times, the position of the moon... until...

FORTUNE TELLER

May 30, 2022 at 3:30 in the afternoon  
is the most auspicious date and time  
for Althea and Dennis to wed!

The party erupts into applause as Dennis kisses his bride.  
Right on cue, the MUSIC KICKS UP and the CHINESE RIBBON  
DANCERS begin to perform on stage. Mei-Li approaches Nicky  
who rubs her sore shoulder. She hands her a CLEAR COCKTAIL --

MEI-LI

Baiju... better than Advil.

Nicky takes a sip of the strong Chinese drink.

MEI-LI (CONT'D)

You should stay at home... I can  
help you look after your shoulder.

(CONTINUED)

Nicky realizes she's extending an olive branch as Jin joins -- \*

NICKY \*

I, uh... I don't know if -- \*

MEI-LI \*

Althea is a terrible cook. You'll  
starve to death there. \*

*(off Nicky)* \*

You decide. Our door is open. \*

Jin looks to Mei-Li -- \*

JIN \*

Are you feeling okay? \*

*(to Nicky)* \*

Did your mom just extend a warm  
invitation that didn't include a  
backhanded compliment? \*

Mei-Li shoots her husband a look as we see a glimpse of their  
old dynamic slowing returning. \*

JIN (CONT'D) \*

There we go... the death look.  
Classic Mei. \*

Nicky laughs as Mei-Li looks around -- \*

MEI-LI \*

Has anyone seen Althea? We need her  
for the tea ceremony. \*

Nicky makes eye contact with Ryan across the room -- \*

NICKY \*

We'll find her. \*

68 INT. BANQUET HALL KITCHEN -- NIGHT

68 \*

ON ALTHEA at the staff's table as the CHEF brings her  
dumplings, lobster, and other delicacies hot off the stove.  
She looks up at Nicky and Ryan mid-chew, BUSTED -- \*

ALTHEA \*

I'm faint from bowing. \*

NICKY \*

No one's judging... but you should've  
gotten us! \*

Nicky and Ryan join her, digging in -- \*

(CONTINUED)

RYAN

Just like the old days at the restaurant. Party's going off and we're in the back eating the good stuff.

ALTHEA

You think everyone's having fun?

NICKY

Mom and dad are smiling... at each other. And Dennis' mom can party! She got mom to do a lychee shot!

RYAN

Oh god. Drunk mom is not good.

ALTHEA

If she takes over the mic and starts singing Chinese opera in front of my future in-laws I'm gonna die.

Ryan's phone buzzes with a text. He types back.

RYAN

You guys enjoy that.  
(*getting up*)  
I gotta go meet a friend...

ALTHEA

You mean *boyfriend*.

Nicky looks to Althea and then back at Ryan.

NICKY

Wait... what?

ALTHEA

Like he said... a lot happened while you were gone.

NICKY

Not cool, guys. What's his name?!

RYAN

All in due time, sis.

Ryan heads out as Nicky calls after him --

NICKY

Just one question -- is he Chinese?

Ryan just smiles as Althea gets up --

(CONTINUED)

ALTHEA

Help me do up this dress again for  
the tea ceremony.

69 INT. BANQUET HALL -- NIGHT

69 \*

The stage has been set up for the TRADITIONAL TEA CEREMONY.  
As Althea takes her place beside Dennis we find...

Nicky smiling as she sees Henry making his way toward her.

HENRY

Cheongsam looks great on you.

NICKY

Haven't worn one since I was a kid.

HENRY

Ryan filled me in... you okay?

NICKY

Could've used another assist.

HENRY

Sounds like you did just fine.

*(off Nicky)*

So now that you're done saving the  
world, what are you gonna do?

NICKY

I was going to see if you're hiring  
by any chance...

*(off Henry)*

I'm a college drop-out with no  
references or prior job experience,  
but I'm pretty decent at Kung Fu.

HENRY

You really need to work on your sales  
pitch. But lucky for you I might  
have an opening. I'm just a little  
worried it could create a conflict...

*(off Nicky's look)*

... You know... in case I ever want  
to ask you out to dinner...

But Before Nicky can react, the Fortune Teller interrupts --

FORTUNE TELLER

Nicky! Now that you're back, it's  
important to set yourself on a good  
path. Tell me your birthday...

(CONTINUED)

NICKY

My mom put you up to this, didn't  
she?

FORTUNE TELLER

Every mother wants to see their  
daughter find happiness.

Nicky exchanges a look with Henry.

NICKY

June 16th 1994.

HENRY

*(to Nicky, sotto)*

You just made it... '94 is the cut-  
off for gold status.

As Nicky smiles at Henry, enjoying his company, the Fortune  
Teller points to a page in his almanac --

FORTUNE TELLER

Ah... you will be pulled in two  
directions... Difficult choices --

They're interrupted by an urgent voice --

EVAN (O.S.)

Nicky.

*(sees Henry and the  
fortune teller)*

Sorry to interrupt.

FORTUNE TELLER

We'll continue this later.

Nicky watches the Fortune Teller take off...

NICKY

Evan, this is Henry.

EVAN

Right, of course... good to finally  
meet you.

Evan and Henry shake hands, sussing each other as --

EVAN (CONT'D)

*(to Nicky)*

We need to talk... alone.

HENRY

Go ahead. I'll be here.

Off Henry watching Nicky leave with Evan.

70

**EXT. BANQUET HALL -- ROOFTOP -- MOMENTS LATER**

70

Nicky and Evan find a quiet area on the rooftop overlooking the San Francisco Bay.

EVAN

You were right... Tony Liu was  
Gaibiàn.

*(off Nicky)*

My FBI friend ran Liu and his men  
through the database -- they're all  
affiliated with different Triad  
groups...but get this...they're all  
uniting under one powerful leader...

NICKY

Zhang Zhilan.

*(beat)*

So the triads have stopped warring...  
and Gaibiàn means "change." This  
new peace must be what they're  
referring to. A new era.

EVAN

Yeah, not good. Nicky, you've escaped  
death twice already. Let the D.A.'s  
office take over -- this case just  
became our top priority --

NICKY

That's great, but you know the  
reality. You need someone who knows  
the language and the culture...  
someone people will trust.

EVAN

You can't fight against an army alone.

NICKY

I'm not alone... I have you... right?

EVAN

Always. But that's not enough.

NICKY

We have my family... and our  
community. We can make our own army.

EVAN

There isn't really anything that's  
gonna change your mind, is there.

NICKY

Pei-Ling always said fate brought me  
to the monastery. I never really  
believed it. But she taught me what  
I needed to come back home and take  
down The Gaibiàn.

*(MORE)*

*(CONTINUED)*

NICKY (CONT'D)

*(off Evan's look)*

Zhilan was willing to kill her own  
sister for that sword. Why? It  
can't just be a trophy, there must  
be something more...

Off Evan, moved, but uneasy about the dangerous task ahead --

71 INT. PENTHOUSE SOMEWHERE -- NIGHT

71 \*

CLOSE ON: THE ANCIENT SWORD... inscribed with complicated  
and unrecognizable characters. We pull back to reveal Zhilan  
and a **PROFESSOR** (Chinese, female, 40s) examining the hilt.

PROFESSOR

These characters are unlike any I've  
encountered. It must be some sort  
of Shaolin code. I need to speak to  
someone from the monastery.

ZHILAN

*(frustrated)*

Well, you can't. I killed them all  
because you said you could translate  
it on your own.

As the professor bristles, A HENCHMAN comes in with a TABLET --

HENCHMAN

I got the footage from the docks.

CLOSE ON TABLET: Super grainy footage of Nicky and Tony Liu's  
epic final fight. Recognition washes over Zhilan's face...

ZHILAN

*The American...* how did you survive?

HENCHMAN

Who is she?

ZHILAN

One of my sister's misguided  
disciples. She may be the only one  
who can help us decode the writings  
on the sword.

*(beat)*

Turn the city upside down... *burn it*  
*down if we need to. Find me that*  
*girl.*

Off Zhilan determined to take down our hero. IT. IS. ON.

END OF PILOT.