

CALL SIGN DRAGON

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OVER BLACK --

RAPID, HEAVY-LABORED BREATHING -- POUNDING HEARTBEAT over military RADIO CHATTER from multiple sources in multiple languages.

The ROAR OF JET ENGINES as we...

SLAM TO:

EXT. AIRSPACE OVER SEA OF JAPAN -- DAY

The middle of a Dogfight -- two MIG-29 FULCRUMS swarm a single MIG.

INT. COCKPIT NORTH KOREAN FIGHTER AIRCRAFT -- SAME

RADIO CHATTER continues intermingled with the pilot BAI "DRAGON" LOONG'S HEAVY BREATHING and RACING HEARTBEAT.

Bai's right hand on the stick, STRUGGLING, SHAKING. Her left hand grips a wounded left thigh -- BLOOD EVERYWHERE.

BEEP -- BEEP -- BEEP

A WARNING activates -- the enemy has missile lock. Bai's helmeted head snaps all around -- searching the sky.

The right hand pulls back hard on the stick. Heavy G-forces press Bai into the ejection seat -- Blood gushes from the wound with the added pressure.

BAI  
(grunting)  
Unnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnn!

BEEP -- BEEP -- BEEP

Bai suddenly throws the stick full right -- A MISSILE SWOOSHES PAST the cockpit -- near hit.

The chaos BUILDS: RADIO CHATTER -- HEART POUNDING -- LABORED BREATHING -- BEEP -- BEEP -- BEEP --

Bai reaches for the mic and keys it.

SILENCE.

BAI (CONT'D)  
(calm, almost melodic,  
over radio)  
(MORE)

BAI (CONT'D)  
Red Crown, Red Crown. This is  
Dragon, over.

CUT TO BLACK:

OVER BLACK --

BEEP -- BEEP -- BEEP.

FADE IN:

EXT. LOONG FARM, GEORGIA -- MORNING (TEN YEARS EARLIER)

The eastern sky brightens as the sun approaches the horizon.

INT. YOUNG BAI'S BEDROOM - SAME

Models, posters, magazines of military fighter aircraft  
dominate the decor.

BEEP -- BEEP -- BEEP

Cell phone on the night stand says "Snooze" -- "Off".

A hand fumbles -- index finger taps "Snooze".

BAI LOONG (12) (Korean descent) falls back to sleep --  
twitches -- dreaming.

DREAM --

EXT. LOONG FARM, GEORGIA - DAY

A black sedan pulls into the driveway.

A husband, wife, and a little girl stand waiting outside the  
farm house's front door.

A younger Bai exits the back seat -- joins the DRIVER.

DRIVER  
Wait here.

Bai leans against the car -- head down -- eyes up stealing a  
peak.

The Driver walks to the trio at the front door.

He nods at the two adults and places a hand on the little girl's shoulder -- leads her back to the car.

Tears streak down the girl's cheeks -- fear in her eyes.

Roughly the same age, Bai is a head taller than the girl.

The Driver opens the back door of the car -- girl climbs in.

The Driver points at the little girl.

DRIVER (CONT'D)

(to Bai)

Do you see that? That's what failure looks like.

Bai looks sympathetically at the whimpering child.

The Driver slams the door.

DRIVER (CONT'D)

How do you succeed?

BAI

Fly the edge.

DRIVER

Go.

Bai grins wide -- runs toward the waiting couple.

She slams into the woman -- hugs her.

BAI

Mommy!

The woman seems surprised -- doesn't hug her back.

Bai breaks the embrace -- hugs the man tightly.

BAI (CONT'D)

Daddy!

The man frowns -- doesn't hug her back either.

END DREAM.

BEEP -- BEEP -- BEEP.

This time Bai slaps the "Off" button on her alarm.

Sits up in bed -- rubs her knuckles into her eyes.

Picks up a model F/A-18 Hornet -- studies it -- gently returns it to the night stand.

EXT. LOONG FARM, GEORGIA -- LATER

A sliver of the sun cracks the horizon.

Bai, wearing a tattered Northrop Grumman cap, eats a piece of dry toast -- walks toward a blue and yellow Air Tractor 502XP crop duster.

She does a quick preflight walk around.

Bai climbs into the aircraft -- flips a few switches -- the propeller turns as the Pratt & Whitney engine SPUTTERS to life.

Bai taxis -- takes off.

EXT. COTTON FIELD - LATER

The crop duster flies inches above a long field of cotton plants spraying pesticides.

INT. COCKPIT -- SAME

Bai's skinny, bare legs straddle the stick. Her small hand jerks back on the stick pulling the plane into the vertical.

BAI  
(grunting)  
Unnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnn.

When the airspeed has all but dissipated, Bai jams in full left rudder. The plane pivots -- now nose down -- she adds full power and begins another run down the cotton field in the opposite direction.

THUNDEROUS ROAR.

Bai ducks when a pair of Air Force F-15 Strike Eagles flash past from behind -- one on each side of her plane at nearly supersonic speed.

Her tiny aircraft shudders when the fighters' jet exhaust slams against her wings.

BAI (CONT'D)  
Holy shit!

She struggles to keep the plane from impacting the ground.

Once the buffeting subsides, Bai reaches for her crotch -- checks to see if she wet herself.

BAI (CONT'D)  
Whew! That was close.

Bai smiles from ear to ear.

BAI (CONT'D)  
That was shit hot!

EXT. FOREST GROVE MIDDLE SCHOOL -- LATER

Quiet -- crisp blue sky.

INT. MS. HENDERSON'S CLASS -- MINUTES BEFORE THE FINAL BELL

A classroom full of average tweens.

Ms. Henderson writes a homework assignment on a white board.

Two pupils -- Bai and TIM WYNN, sit on adjacent rows.

Tim's face and neck flush bright pink -- knuckles white gripping the sides of his desk -- LIP TWITCHES in a snarl -- stares at Bai.

She doesn't notice. She concentrates on sketching an aircraft on the back of her notebook -- just below the sticker depicting the insignia of the Navy Test Pilot School. Next to the sticker, she's written the words: "Fly the Edge."

She hears the HISS as Tim sucks air in and blows air out through his GRITTED TEETH.

Her NOSE WRINKLES -- smells something awful.

She glances at Tim's feet.

Dried PIG DUNG on Tim's shoes.

She grimaces.

BAI  
(to herself)  
I hate pigs.

Ms. Henderson writes -- "JANE EYRE, CHAPTER 9."

There's a distinct CLICK when the clock on the wall hits 3:14 p.m., Ms. Henderson turns to the class.

MS. HENDERSON

We will continue our discussion of Jane Eyre, so read up through Chapter 9 before class tomorrow.

Everyone in the class moans when MARTHA HANNAH, (teacher's pet grin), throws her hand in the air for a question.

MS. HENDERSON (CONT'D)

(whispering to herself)  
Question Twenty-three.

Tim sneers at Martha.

MS. HENDERSON (CONT'D)

Ms. Hannah, if you have already read chapter 9, read the next chapter.

Disappointment dominates Martha's expression as she slowly lowers her hand, but a second later the grin returns and her hand shoots back up again.

MS. HENDERSON (CONT'D)

(whispering)  
Twenty-four.

Ms. Henderson sighs.

MS. HENDERSON (CONT'D)

If you've read chapter 10, Ms. Hannah, take the night off.

Martha slowly retracts her hand while her lower lip swells into a pout.

At 3:15, the bell SOUNDS.

Tim flies toward the exit as if shot from a cannon.

Near the front of the room, Tim collides with CANDACE BROWN's crutch.

Ripped from her hand Candace's crutch CLANKS to the floor.

Tim doesn't even slow down, he's gone.

Candace opens her mouth to yell at Tim, but thinks better of it.

Bai gathers her books -- helps Candace recover her crutch.

As Bai steps into the hall, the relative quiet of the classroom is replaced by the NOISE generated by two hundred middle school kids pouring out of class.

Bai weaves her way through the tweens, being bumped and squeezed as she navigates the gauntlet until finally, she reaches the school's exit.

EXT. FOREST GROVE MIDDLE SCHOOL -- SAME

Bai closes her eyes -- turns her face to the sun -- breathes in deeply through her nose.

Students flow from the doors around her.

The CLAP of flesh meeting flesh.

BAI  
(to herself)  
I know you're down there, asshole.

After a few moments, she opens her eyes.

At the bottom of the stairs, Tim Wynn stands sneering up at her with his right fist pressed against his left palm.

For emphasis, Tim beats his left palm with his right fist a second time -- CLAP.

BAI (CONT'D)  
(muttering)  
You're so scary.

Behind Tim, his five minions -- laughing, smiling nervously.

BAI (CONT'D)  
(to herself)  
Don't you six assholes have  
anything better to do?  
(beat)  
Time to get this over with.

Bai pulls on her baseball cap.

After taking a deep breath, she walks purposefully down the stairs -- head down -- eyes hidden under the bill of her cap.

She makes a hard left turn in front of Tim.

Bai walks casually toward a line of waiting school buses.

The posse of six boys trail closely behind her.



Tim races ahead of Bai -- stops -- halts her progress.

The five other boys form a circle around her.

A middle school bystander pulls out a cell and starts recording video -- anticipating the pending trouble.

Spit flies from Tim's pie hole.

TIM  
Chink bitch!

CHASE VAN BROCK steps forward -- knocks the books from Bai's hands.

CHASE  
What are you going to do now?

BAI  
I yield. The victory is yours.

The boys trade glances.

WILL BENT  
(mocking)  
I yield. The victory is yours. Who talks like that?

BAI  
(mumbles)  
Sixteenth century duelists.

TOMMY JONES  
Stupid Chinks, that's who.

BAI  
(mumbles)  
Thank you for the clarification -- little racist bastards.

SONNY TOPPER slaps the bill of Bai's cap -- falls to the ground.

Bai doesn't flinch.

SONNY  
What did you say?

She has no time to answer. Her head snaps forward when Tim shoves her hard in Will's direction.

Will grips her tightly and pins Bai's arms to her sides.

She doesn't struggle -- looks through the strands of her hair that now cover her eyes.

Tim rushes toward her -- his cocked fist ready to fly.

Without warning, Bai draws both feet up off the ground -- thrusts them outward.

Ribs SNAP as both feet land squarely into Tim's chest.

Tim flies backward -- lands hard -- writhes in pain.

TIM  
Get that bitch.

The force of Bai's kick knocks Will and Bai backward to the ground.

Bai lands on top of Will but somehow, he hangs on.

BAI  
Enough of this shit.

Bai slams the back of her head into Will's nose.

Will releases his grip on Bai.

BLOOD pores from Will's smashed nose -- leaks between his trembling fingers.

WILL  
You broke my nose.

BAI  
Oops.

Chase looks at his fallen leader, then at Will's bloody nose.

CHASE  
I'm going to get you bitch.

Bai scrambles to her feet.

Chase charges -- throws a wild fist.

Bai side-steps the punch.

BAI  
Ole.

As Chase passes, she strikes his back with two open palms.

Chase stumbles into the arms of VINCE VANCE.

Vince grabs Chase, keeps him on his feet.

BAI (CONT'D)

Chase are you sure about this?

Chase comes at Bai again.

Bai stands calmly with her hands down at her sides.

Bai spins with lightning quickness -- heel strikes the side of Chase's head.

Chase's perspiration, spit, and blood spray the air.

Knocked out cold on his feet, Chase's arms and legs go rigid.

Dirt flies from the spot where Chase's face meets the ground, bounces, then smacks the ground again.

BAI (CONT'D)

That's for calling me chink bitch.  
I'm American asshole.

The three remaining boys go silent for a moment, looking at each other, not sure what to do next.

BAI (CONT'D)

You boys seen enough?

THOMAS JONES yelps.

Bedlam -- the three boys charge Bai.

Fists, arms, and legs flying everywhere.

Bai blocks the punch from Thomas with her left arm.

There is a distinct CRACK when Bai's right cross fractures his jaw.

Thomas goes down -- spitting blood and a broken tooth.

SONNY TOPPER prepares to swing.

Bai's leg sweep sends him sprawling -- twisting face first into an unfortunately placed patch of gravel lacerating his face and neck.

Sonny's hands cover his face as he rolls back and forth on the ground in pain.

Two are left standing -- Bai and Vince.

Vince looks at his fallen comrades strewn unceremoniously across the ground -- shaking, nervous, frozen.

BAI (CONT'D)

It's over.

Vince squeezes his bottom lip between his teeth -- throws a weak punch at her face.

Bai grabs his arm -- twists it over her shoulder -- thrusts her backside into his waist -- throws him with a hip toss.

Vince's BLOOD CURDLING-SCREAM of pain.

Vince's mangled, unnaturally positioned dislocated shoulder.

BAI (CONT'D)

That's so gross.

Bai covers her mouth -- nearly hurls.

Vince's continuing wales.

BAI (CONT'D)

Oh shit.

Bai sits down -- grabs Vince by the wrist -- positions his deformed arm between her legs -- places one foot under his arm and one foot on his neck.

Bai takes a deep breath.

BAI (CONT'D)

I hope this works.

Suddenly, Bai leans back with a jerk -- pulling his arm as hard as she can.

Another GUTTURAL SCREAM from Vince.

A loud POP as his humerus rejoins the scapula.

Vince goes silent -- grips his shoulder.

Bai climbs to her feet -- stands alone in the center of the six boys who lie on the ground injured or unconscious.

Bai's eyes move upward from her defeated foes.

Some members of the student body stare -- mouths agape -- others speed dial cells.

The bystander's camera still records.

Bai throws a mock salute at her classmates.

BAI (CONT'D)

Thanks for all the help, guys.

She grabs her cap -- pulls it onto her head.

She kneels -- quickly gathers her papers and books from the ground.

The HISS of the air brakes on a nearby bus being released.

BAI (CONT'D)

Shit. I can't miss that bus. Run.

Bai sprints off toward the row of school buses as one by one they pull away.

EXT. LOONG FARM -- THE SAME DAY

A rusty mailbox -- door dangles from the one remaining hinge -  
- faded white paint reads "Loong."

A yellow school bus SCREECHES to a stop.

Bai steps off the bus -- walks up the gravel and mostly mud driveway toward the old farmhouse.

INT. BAI'S HOUSE -- DAY

Bai enters the house -- kicks off her school shoes at the front door.

She walks directly to the kitchen where her mother works at peeling potatoes for dinner.

BAI

Hello, mother.

BAI'S MOTHER turns with a look of concern and sadness.

BAI'S MOTHER

Your father is waiting for you in  
the barn.

Her mother drops her eyes in shame -- turns back to her potatoes.

Bai smirks -- nods -- sucks in a deep breath.

BAI

Dammit.

Resolutely, she walks to the back door -- pulls on her rubber farm boots.

Bai pauses -- stares at the long leather strap hanging from a peg on the wall used as a coat rack.

She reaches up -- removes the worn, stained leather strap.

Her mother's head snaps around as Bai removes the strap.

Her mother's concern deepens.

BAI'S MOTHER

Bai, no.

She does not look back at her mother.

BAI

If I don't take the damned thing,  
he will send me back here for it.  
I'm just saving myself a trip.

She hangs her hat on the peg -- exits.

EXT. LOONG FARM -- CONTINUOUS

Bai trudges through the mud toward the barn.

As she walks, she doubles over the leather strap -- slaps it across her free hand.

She HISSES -- pain forcing her to suck in air.

A RED WELT forms on her palm as the blood rushes to the injured area.

BAI

(softly)  
My father, my enemy.

A repetitive THUD comes from the barn.

INT. BARN -- CONTINUOUS

BAI'S FATHER swings a heavy sledgehammer busting up a pile of rocks stacked on the barn floor.

He is bone, tightly wrapped in overlapping muscles. Sweat drips from his face -- glistens on his arms.

Seeing Bai, he drops the sledgehammer -- turns to face her with a disappointed sneer.

Bai stops a few paces away.

BAI'S FATHER  
You have been summarily expelled  
from school for fighting six boys.

Bai pursues her lips together tightly -- bows her head and steps forward -- offers the leather strap to her father.

The strap lies across both her hands which she extends, palms up.

BAI  
I have again brought shame upon  
your house.

Her father lifts the strap gently from Bai's hands with his index fingers -- eyes fixed on the strap.

Once Bai's father's trance on the strap is finally broken, he points to a splintered, knee-high wooden rail.

BAI'S FATHER  
Place one hand here, the other  
there.

He waits patiently for her to assume the position.

Bai's body tenses.

Hesitantly, Bai bends at the waist and rests each hand on the rail as instructed, her back now parallel to the barn floor.

BAI  
(whispering)  
Mother.

She draws in a deep breath -- holds it.

Time slows.

Her father pushes Bai's shirt slowly up to her shoulders exposing her bare back.

You can count the bones of her spine and ribs as her skin -- striped with dark lines from prior beatings -- draws tight around them.

She looks back into her father's eyes -- he doesn't notice.

He's completely focused on her exposed, vulnerable back.

Bai swallows hard -- stomach acid burns her throat.

BAI'S FATHER  
Count each lash out loud.

Bai manages a nod -- still holding the breath.

Her father leans way back -- then with lightning speed swings the strap -- SWOOSHES as it cuts through the air.

The SNAP of leather on skin -- roosting pigeons in the barn's rafters startled to flight.

The breath Bai was holding explodes from her lungs.

A GRUNT escapes Bai's lips as the air is expelled.

BAI  
One.

Bai struggles to breathe.

A WELT swells on her back -- turns fire red.

Bai's body quakes uncontrollably.

Her eyes go wide -- the warning SWOOSH as the strap again breaks the air -- followed a millisecond later by a SNAP.

Bai squeezes her eyes closed hard.

The second WELT rises.

BAI (CONT'D)  
Two.

Bai's father doubles the strap over on itself -- takes one end in each hand -- brings his hands together -- rapidly jerks them apart.

The two pieces of leather come together with a loud POP.

Bai flinches when the leather POPS in her father's hands.

SNAP -- leather on skin.

Bai's right knee buckles as she struggles to lock it out straight and remain upright.

BAI (CONT'D)  
Three.

SNAP.

BAI (CONT'D)  
Four.



SNAP.

BAI (CONT'D)

Five.

Tears, snot, sweat, and spittle leak from her face -- sweat glistens and stings her welted back.

SNAP.

Bai teeters on the edge of consciousness.

BAI (CONT'D)

Six.

BAI'S FATHER

One lash for each injured boy.

Her father tosses the strap onto the ground below Bai's face.

She collapses to her knees -- raises her face to the sky -- sucks in a huge gulp of air.

Resting on her knees, Bai continues to breathe heavily.

Her father leans down -- mouth close to her ear.

BAI'S FATHER (CONT'D)

What is your mission?

BAI

(voice hoarse)

Fly the Edge.

He straightens.

BAI'S FATHER

Return the strap to the rack,  
prepare yourself for dinner, then  
we will begin training at seven.

Her father turns away -- picks up the sledgehammer -- returns to his work busting rocks.

With his back turned, Bai's rage breaks through on her face.

Her father's powerful swings destroy the rocks.

Her eyes clinch closed upon the impact of metal on stone.

The pain takes over.

Bai picks up the strap -- uses the rail to assist herself to her feet.

Her knees quiver when she adds her weight.

EXT. LOONG HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

She stumbles out of the barn to a water hydrant.

Without warning, her abdomen convulses -- stomach contents explode from her mouth.

Sweat streams down her forehead -- tears down her cheeks -- snot from her nose -- vomit down her chin.

It takes all of her diminished strength to pull the hydrant's on-off handle, but finally, the water flows.

She places her face under the running water -- slowly washes away the fluids her body insists on purging.

Bai turns off the water -- wipes a hand across her wet face.

The front of her dirty wet shirt sticks to her skin.

Bai glares into the blackness of the barn.

She staggers -- limps back to the house on wobbly legs.

INT. FARM HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Inside the door, Bai starts to bend down to pull off her boots, sending an excruciating pain from her back to her brain.

Her mother rushes over -- kneels to help her with the boots.

                  BAI'S MOTHER  
                  See, that wasn't so bad now, was  
                  it?

Bai's battered body shudders.

She stares straight ahead.

                  BAI  
                  (whispers)  
                  No worse than I deserved.

Bai's mother slowly stands her eyes lowered.

Her mother steps away -- returns to her cooking.

As Bai raises her arms to return the leather strap to the coat rack -- her shirt rakes across the welts on her back.

She squeezes her eyes tight.

Tears stream uncontrollably down her face again.

Bai slowly shuffles her way through the house to her bedroom.

INT. BAI'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

She grabs the Hornet model -- throws it against the wall -- breaks the model into many pieces.

Grimacing, she reaches under her pillow -- pulls out a rolled-up sock -- stuffs it into her mouth -- uses it to gag herself.

The gag muffles her scream when she eases the grimy wet shirt off over her head.

Bai gently slides face down onto her bed -- presses her face deep into her pillow.

Her body tenses -- no one hears scream after scream after scream.

EXT. LOONG FARM -- AFTER DINNER

Bai stands outside the barn next to her father -- hat pulled down tight hiding her eyes -- her face devoid of emotion.

Both wear a belt tied at the waist and around the right thigh -- the traditional dress for Ssireum

BAI'S FATHER

Kata.

Bai and her father perform a martial arts kata in unison.

Every flex of Bai's back means shooting pain. She's unable to hide the river of tears.

BAI'S FATHER (CONT'D)

Sparring.

Her father grunts and assumes the Praying Mantas fighting position -- twists his feet into the ground -- locks them in place.

Her father cocks his head a bit when Bai steps into Eagle Claw, an offensive style of Kung Fu.

She attacks -- throws three lightning quick blows and kicks -- all effortlessly turned away by her father.

His feet remain unmoved.

His counterattack -- a hard, open palmed blow to the chest that sends Bai flailing backward and onto her aching back.

She gasps -- needs air.

BAI'S FATHER (CONT'D)  
(yelling)  
Again.

Bai climbs to her feet -- tosses her cap aside -- positions herself in Eagle Claw.

Her father cocks his head again.

BAI'S FATHER (CONT'D)  
Have you learned nothing?

Her next two kicks and two punches are parried by her father.

His kick to the back of one leg sends her spinning to the ground -- she lands flat on her face.

But before her father can say "again," Bai is back on her feet.

She spits dirt from her mouth -- readies for another assault.

BAI'S FATHER (CONT'D)  
Ssireum.

Bai spits again in disgust -- steps forward.

Her father grabs the belt around her waist with one hand and the belt on her thigh with the other.

Bai does nothing.

BAI'S FATHER (CONT'D)  
Unnnnnnnnt.

She exhales -- grabs his belts.

He hoists Bai high into the air -- tosses her to the ground.

Bai tries to push herself up, but it's no use. She collapses back down in a beaten exhausted heap.

Disappointedly, her father growls -- waves a dismissive hand at Bai.

BAI'S FATHER (CONT'D)  
Enough.

Bai watches as he walks away -- shakes his head in disgust.

Bai tries to force herself up, but her body fails her.

BAI

I'll just rest here a moment.

She lies in the dirt.

BAI (CONT'D)

(whispering)

I can survive anything.

She clumsily rises to her feet -- raises her face to the sky.

A B-52 Bomber's contrails mark the sky miles above.

BAI (CONT'D)

I've got to get out of this place.

She closes her eyes -- fake screams as she beats her chest like King Kong.

Bai stumbles sideways -- nearly falls.

BAI (CONT'D)

Too soon for King Kong.

Even though it's only a few yards away, the trek to the house once again seems like a far journey.

She slowly limps to the house.

EXT. SUNCHON AIRPORT, NORTH KOREA - 10 YEARS LATER - DAY

A Mig-29 takes off from runway three-two.

EXT. HEADQUARTERS 55TH AIR FIGHTER WING - SAME

The building has seen better days.

INT. WAR ROOM - SAME

GENERAL CHO and his brother SENIOR COLONEL CHO hover over a table with a map of the area from the eastern coast of China to the western coast of Japan.

YEFGHINI, a haughty Russian intelligence specialist, joins the brothers at the table.

YEFGHINI

What's this?

GENERAL CHO

My brother's pipe dream.

Senior Colonel Cho pokes an angry index finger into the table.

SENIOR COLONEL CHO

Not a dream. This is how we strike  
a blow to the Americans.

Yefghini raises an eyebrow.

YEFGHINI

I'm listening.

Senior Colonel Cho points out the pieces on the map as he explains the plot.

EXT. MARINE CORPS AIR STATION -- MIRAMAR, CA

An F/A-18 approaches the airfield for a touch-and-go.

Upon touchdown, the GROUND QUAKES as the pilot pushes the engines to full throttle.

EXT. VMFAT-101 -- DAY

The home of the Marine Corps Fighter Attack Training Squadron for the F/A-18 Hornet.

INT. READY ROOM -- DAY

A group of five young pilots sit listening to a briefing from TRIGGER, the Landing Signal Officer (LSO).

Among the five pilots sits 1st Lieutenant Bai Loong. The name tag on her flight suit reads "Dragon."

Trigger references a white board that reads: "Carrier Qual, BINKIE, LENNIE, FREAK, BULL, and Dragon."

Trigger looks at a slip of paper -- writes a score next to Binkie's name.

TRIGGER

Binkie, 2.63, you're a qual.

The ready room participants cheer.

TRIGGER (CONT'D)  
Lennie, 2.88, you're a qual.

More cheering.

TRIGGER (CONT'D)  
Freak, 3.15, you're a qual.

Cheers.

TRIGGER (CONT'D)  
Bull, 3.35, you're a qual.

Applause.

TRIGGER (CONT'D)  
Dragon, 3.65, not quite perfect,  
but pretty damn amazing, you're a  
qual.

More laughing, cheering, hugging, and congratulating.

ROB GORDON, cocky Lieutenant, calls out.

GORDON  
The four of you should be ashamed  
of yourselves. Out-flown by a  
little girl.

Gordon waves a dismissive hand as he exits.

GORDON (CONT'D)  
Embarrassing.

Trigger approaches Bai.

TRIGGER  
Really nice flying Dragon.

BAI  
Thank you sir. What's his problem?

TRIGGER  
Gordon? He was making bets all week  
against you versus the field. Lost  
a lot of dough.

BAI  
How about you? Bet on me or the  
field?

TRIGGER  
Gordon owes me twenty bucks. Hell,  
he owes everybody twenty bucks.

Bai smiles.

TRIGGER (CONT'D)

The XO said he would like to see  
you after the festivities die down.

BAI

That can't be good.

Trigger shrugs.

Bai gets up and exits the ready room.

INT. EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S (XO) OFFICE -- DAY

The XO sits behind his desk.

Bai enters -- comes to attention -- salutes.

The XO returns the salute.

XO

At ease.

Bai assumes the *at ease* position.

XO (CONT'D)

Dragon, these carrier qual numbers  
are outstanding.

BAI

Thank you sir.

The XO passes documents to Bai.

XO

You have orders. You are headed to  
VMFA-115.

Bai looks up.

BAI

There must be a mistake. I had  
orders worked out with my detailer  
for the test pilot school.

XO

Did you clear that through me?

She stiffens.

BAI

No sir.



XO

No one goes straight from flight training to the test pilot school. Even Georgia Tech Aerospace Engineers with 5,000 flight hours.

BAI

But Beaufort sir? Am I being punished?

XO

Punished? No. What's wrong with Beaufort?

BAI

Nothing sir. I was just hoping for Patuxent River.

XO

Well, VMFA-115 had first pick. They asked that I send them the top carrier qualifier and that's you.

BAI

Yes sir.

XO

Besides, you won't be heading straight to Beaufort. VMFA-115 is currently deployed aboard the USS Gerald R. Ford. You will catch a ride on a C-5 leaving tonight for Okinawa. From Okinawa, you will catch a ride on a C-2 to the carrier operating in the Sea of Japan.

BAI

Yes sir.

XO

You don't have much time to get your affairs in order, so get packed and catch that C-5 at 2200 hours.

BAI

Yes sir. Thank you, sir.

Bai comes to attention and salutes.

EXT. SEA OF JAPAN -- THE NEXT DAY

The USS Gerald R. Ford steams its way through some rough seas.

INT. C-2 GREYHOUND - SAME

Bai sleeps in the cargo area with her helmet on -- twitching -  
- lips moving -- dreaming.

DREAM --

INT. AUTOMOBILE - DAY

Young Bai sits in the back seat folding an airplane from an aluminum gum wrapper.

MALE VOICE (O.C.)  
What is your father's name?

BAI  
Lou.

MALE VOICE (O.C.)  
What is your mother's name?

BAI  
Lee.

MALE VOICE (O.C.)  
What is your date of birth?

BAI  
Twelve - seven - two thousand.

MALE VOICE (O.C.)  
Why have you changed so much?

BAI  
I had a growth spurt over the summer.

MALE VOICE (O.C.)  
What is your recall code?

BAI  
Ao Run.

END DREAM.

Bai jerks awake when the C-2 slams into the flight deck.

EXT. FLIGHT DECK -- SAME

The C-2 makes an arrested landing -- taxies to a parking spot at the direction of a yellow shirt.

EXT. FLIGHT DECK - MOMENTS LATER

Bai shields her eyes from the blinding sun -- she steps off the cargo ramp from the back of the C-2.

The rear of the flight deck rises obscuring the sea.

As is typical, the flight deck is hectic.

The pitching deck, wind, and jet blast make standing and walking difficult.

CAPTAIN BLUE "MARLIN" FISH, wearing a white shirt and vest stamped LSO, meets Bai at the rear of the plane.

One of the C-2's flight crew tosses Bai's two duffle bags onto the deck.

Marlin picks up one duffle, Bai the other.

MARLIN

Follow me.

Bai nods.

Marlin leads Bai to a hatch at the base of the island -- throws it open -- allows her to enter.

Marlin slams the hatch closed behind them.

INT. HANDLER'S DOMAIN -- SAME

When the hatch closes, the noise is cut in half.

Bai takes a look at the Ouija board, a mock up of the flight deck. The Handler uses scale models to track the movement of all aircraft on the flight deck at all times.

Bai follows Marlin through a hatch and into a passageway -- takes off her helmet.

MARLIN

I'm Marlin. LSO for the 115.

BAI  
Nice to meet you Captain.

MARLIN  
I hear you've had kind of a long trip.

BAI  
Left Miramar about 16 hours ago.

MARLIN  
Now, you are a half a world away in the beautiful Sea of Japan. Who did you piss off?

BAI  
I know, right? I asked the XO if I was being punished and he denied it.

Marlin leads Bai down through a maze of ladders and passageways.

MARLIN  
We'll drop your gear at your room and then I will take you to the ready room to meet with the CO.

When they reach her room, Marlin taps on the door.

After no one answers, he motions Bai to go on in.

Bai scans the room designed for two officers but both beds are empty.

MARLIN (CONT'D)  
Looks like you get your pick. I think there are two other female pilots on board in the room next door. If another joins the ship, you'll get a roommate.

Bai tosses her duffle on a bunk.

MARLIN (CONT'D)  
I'll wait outside while you freshen up and throw on a flight suit.

BAI  
Thank you.

Marlin exits -- Bai begins to undress.

INT. PASSAGEWAY -- LATER

Marlin leans against the wall.

He has retrieved an apple and a banana and holds one piece of fruit in each hand.

Bai opens the door and enters the passageway.

Marlin holds out the apple and the banana.

MARLIN

Your choice.

Bai accepts the apple.

BAI

Thank you.

Marlin heads down the passageway with Bai in tow.

MARLIN

Trigger sent me your carrier qual results. Nice job.

BAI

It's hard to believe that happened less than 24 hours ago.

MARLIN

Things are not going to get any less hectic for you. First, you will meet with the CO. CAG called and wants to fly tonight and wants you on his wing. Get any rest on the flight?

BAI

Plenty. Did you say I am flying tonight?

MARLIN

With CAG. Normally, we would work you in a bit more slowly, but CAG asked for you. The CO really likes to keep CAG happy.

As they reach the ready room door, Marlin pauses.

MARLIN (CONT'D)

You'll need to stay focused. You saw the pitching deck. The weather's not going to get any better.

(MORE)

MARLIN (CONT'D)

After the CO, I'll take you down to the para loft so they can check out your flight gear. After that you will brief the flight with CAG.

Bai nods.

MARLIN (CONT'D)

Take a deep breath.

Bai takes a deep breath.

Marlin throws open the ready room door -- motions Bai through.

EXT. FLIGHT DECK -- EVENING

CAG's Hornet sits on CAT 1 at full power -- he completes his final flight control checks.

The rudders flap full left and full right -- the ailerons move up and down in response to his commands.

Bai performs the same checks as she prepares to launch from CAT 2.

With final checks complete, CAG salutes the shooter.

The Shooter pauses while the ship's bow and the flight deck angle downward due to the rough seas.

As the bow approaches the horizon, the Shooter pushes the button launching CAG's aircraft from CAT 1.

Bai salutes the Shooter -- the plane lurches forward -- airborne.

CAG begins a gradual left turn.

Bai moves in quickly to a position off of CAG's left wing -- drops her plane down and crosses underneath CAG's plane -- takes up her final position on CAG's right wing.

CAG flashes Bai a hand signal as they accelerate.

INT. CAG'S HORNET -- LATER

An aircraft pops up on CAG's radar.

CAG

Red Crown, Ace two-seven.

Red Crown is the call sign of the Airborne Early Warning aircraft, the venerable E-2.

RED CROWN  
Go ahead, Ace two-seven.

CAG  
Ace two-seven showing a bogey  
passing through 10,000 feet at 15  
miles and closing.

RED CROWN  
Roger Ace two-seven. Bogey  
identified as friendly, King 111.

CAG  
Roger, friendly.

CAG continues to monitor the path of King 111 as the aircraft continue to close on one another.

CAG switches to another frequency.

CAG (CONT'D)  
Ace two-eight, you tracking the  
friendly.

BAI  
Roger. South Korean Air Force F-15  
Slam Eagle.

CAG  
Affirmative. Probably coming over  
to wave hello.

As King 111 reaches 2 miles, it fires off an air-to-air missile.

Simultaneously, a fishing trawler about ten miles from the aircraft carrier launches an anti-ship missile at the Ford.

CAG (CONT'D)  
Break right.

Bai slams her stick hard right.

CAG breaks left.

CAG (CONT'D)  
Red Crown, two missiles fired.

RED CROWN  
Tracking. Michigan, Red Crown,  
launch the alert 5.  
(MORE)

RED CROWN (CONT'D)  
Incoming missile bearing 2-7-0,  
range 8 miles and closing.

MICHIGAN  
Roger.

Bai looks back over her left shoulder -- the missile impacts CAG's aircraft -- creates an enormous fire ball.

BAI  
Ace two-seven going down, repeat  
Ace two-seven is down.

King 111 fires off a second air-to-air missile at Bai.

She takes evasive action -- narrowly avoids missile impact -- banks left toward King 111.

The two aircraft close head on and pass seconds later within feet of each other.

BAI (CONT'D)  
Red Crown - visual on the bogey -  
MIG-29.

Bai banks hard right -- pulls serious G's.

She strains to look over her right shoulder in an attempt to reacquire the hostile aircraft.

She picks up King 111, also in a hard right turn.

The Hornet's radius of turn gives Bai a slight advantage over the MIG.

Bai hears the TONE signaling she has target lock -- fires a missile.

BAI (CONT'D)  
Fox one.

RED CROWN  
Roger, fox one.

Moments later, Bai's missile shears through the right wing of King 111.

The MIG spins out of control.

Bai sees the pilot eject.

BAI  
Splash 1. Pilot ejected one half  
mile north of my position.



RED CROWN  
Roger, splash 1. Alerting Search  
and Rescue.

Bai banks hard right and rolls the aircraft upside down.

She grunts -- pulling some serious g's again.

BAI  
There you are.

Bai spots the fishing trawler.

She points the nose of the aircraft at the trawler and rolls level.

BAI (CONT'D)  
Ace 28, engaging surface target.

RED CROWN  
Clear to engage.

Tracer rounds pass the cockpit as the trawler's crew fires AK-47's at Bai's aircraft.

Bai fires her cannon -- strafes the trawler.

Banking hard left, she sees the trawler explode.

BAI  
Red Crown, surface target  
destroyed.

RED CROWN  
Roger. Ace 28, second bogey ten  
o'clock high, closing supersonic.

Bai sees the bogey on her radar, but he's put himself between her and the sun, making visual sighting impossible.

She hits the afterburner sending the Hornet scorching through the sky.

The aircraft close on each other at 3,000 knots.

Bai receives the tone for target lock a split second before the warning BEEP -- BEEP -- BEEP.

Bai fires her missile a millisecond before the MIG.

BAI  
Fox two.

She executes a snap roll to her right.

Her missile destroys the second MIG.

The MIG's missile swooshes harmlessly past her cockpit.

RED CROWN  
Ace 28, confirm second bogey  
destroyed?

Bai looks at her shaking hands.

She's drenched in perspiration.

Her lungs pump hard -- she can hear her heartbeat in her ears.

BAI  
Splash 2.

Bai takes a couple of deep breaths in an attempt to calm down.

BAI (CONT'D)  
Red Crown, my radar is clear,  
please confirm.

RED CROWN  
No bogeys in the area.

A low fuel warning light flashes on the dash.

BAI  
Ace 28, bingo fuel, requests vector  
direct to Texaco.

RED CROWN  
Ace 28, come left heading two-five-  
zero descend and maintain angels  
11.

Bai spots the MQ-25 Aerial Refueling Drone -- moves the aircraft slowly in for a hook-up.

She rams the refueling nozzle into the basket -- the fuel gauge begins to rise.

RED CROWN (CONT'D)  
Ace 28, switch to tac 5.

Bai changes the presets on her radio to tac 5.

BAI  
Ace 28, over.

MARLIN

Who did you piss off this time?

BAI

You sure know how to make a newbie feel welcome.

MARLIN

Yea. How you holding up kid?

BAI

Hanging in there. Did the missile hit the ship?

MARLIN

It was destroyed by the Phalanx CIWS.

BAI

Good.

MARLIN

Take on a full load of fuel. With the pitching deck we are seeing a lot of wave-offs and bolters.

BAI

I'll top her off.

MARLIN

Stay focused. Make this night landing on a pitching deck and then I'll buy you a slider.

Bai smiles.

BAI

You're on.

MARLIN

Remember, small corrections. I'll be with you all the way.

BAI

Roger.

Bai disconnects from the tanker.

RED CROWN

Ace 28, Red Crown, turn left heading 3-3-0, descend and maintain 5,000 feet.

Red Crown vectors Bai to a position behind the ship at about 3 miles for a straight in carrier controlled approach.

At one mile, the ship's lights are barely visible.

MARLIN

Ace 28, Paddles, call the ball.

Bai picks up the Fresnel Lens System with its yellow MEATBALL lined up slightly above the horizontal green reference lamps -  
- slightly above the targeted glide-slope.

BAI

Ace 28, Hornet ball, 4.7.

MARLIN

Roger ball, Hornet.

Bai's hands feed in multiple power and flight control corrections every second.

She takes a little power off -- the aircraft settles onto the proper glide slope. She eases a little power back on centering the yellow meatball perfectly.

It's so dark that she can't see the pitching deck.

Marlin anticipates that Bai's aircraft will settle slightly as it passes through the turbulence of the rooster tail created by the Ford's tower structure, the island.

MARLIN (CONT'D)

Little power.

Bai presses on a little power for a fraction of a second.

The aircraft buffets slightly as it passes through the rooster tail.

Bai flies the Hornet into the two wire -- jams on full throttle.

The tail hook catches the wire -- the aircraft decelerates rapidly.

AIR BOSS

Ace 28, Boss.

BAI

Go ahead.

AIR BOSS

Welcome back.

BAI  
Thank you , sir.

Bai follows the directions of the yellow shirt -- maneuvers the plane around the deck to a parking spot.

A small crowd gathers around her plane -- aircraft landings continue on the flight deck.

Bai looks down and recognizes the CO and Marlin.

As she reaches the bottom of the ladder, Marlin hugs her in a long tight embrace.

MARLIN  
You Ok?

Before she can answer, the CO has her in a bear hug and lifts her off her feet.

CO  
You OK?

Bai nods.

Everyone congratulates Bai and gives her a slap on the back.

BAI  
(to Marlin)  
Can you show me how to get back to the ready room?

Marlin smiles wide.

MARLIN  
Absolutely. Come on. I owe you a slider.

INT. READY ROOM -- LATER

Bai enters the ready room and finds herself surrounded. The Ship's Captain, Deputy CAG, and Flag Admiral join her squadron's pilots to greet her.

Bai scans the room -- surprised.

MARLIN  
You're an instant celebrity.  
You're going to have to tell it.

BAI  
Now, in front of everybody?

Marlin nods -- leads Bai to the front of the room -- hands her a bottle of water.

Bai opens the bottle -- takes a long drink.

The crowd quiets down and settles in.

Bai looks at the CO -- he gives her a nod.

BAI (CONT'D)  
Hello everyone. I'm Bai Loong.

Marlin yells out.

MARLIN  
Dragon.

BAI  
Yes, Dragon. Thank you for making my first day aboard a quiet one.

Laughter.

BAI (CONT'D)  
OK. So, here we go. Approximately thirty minutes after takeoff, CAG identified a bogey on his radar --

INT. READY ROOM - LATER

BAI  
... I fired my second missile and took evasive action. After that, I don't remember anything.

Everyone laughs.

Bai smiles. She sees the conflict of everyone's emotions. The thrill of the fight, but the loss of a fellow pilot.

An enlisted man enters the room -- leans down and whispers into the Flag Admiral's ear.

The Flag Admiral nods -- stands next to Bai.

FLAG ADMIRAL  
Unfortunately, your stay aboard the Ford will be short lived. The President wants you to debrief him in person tomorrow.

BAI  
The President of what, sir?

FLAG ADMIRAL

The President of the United States.  
I would assume the Joint Chiefs as  
well.

The news sinks in slowly.

BAI

Where sir?

FLAG ADMIRAL

Washington D.C. My aid is working  
on your orders and itinerary now.  
You will take a helicopter tonight  
to Okinawa. The rest is still being  
worked out.

BAI

Glad I didn't unpack.

The Flag Admiral smiles -- slaps her on the back.

FLAG ADMIRAL

Really fine work. A truly great  
bit of flying.

The crowd slowly starts to disperse.

Marlin approaches.

BAI

What was my grade on that landing?

Marlin smiles ear to ear.

MARLIN

OK all the way! On the LSO  
platform, it was unanimous.

Bai chuckles.

BAI

Look. I hate to keep doing this,  
but --

Marlin waves.

MARLIN

Come on. I'll show you the way.

Bai follows Marlin from the ready room.

EXT. HEADQUARTERS 55TH FIGHTER WING - DAY

INT. GENERAL CHO'S OFFICE - DAY

The General, disheveled, sits at his desk, leaning forward resting his head on a hand.

Yefghini sticks his head in the door.

YEFGHINI

How did it go?

GENERAL CHO

We shot down one American fighter.

YEFGHINI

That's good, yes? The carrier?

GENERAL CHO

The missile was intercepted. My brother and the other pilot were shot down - killed - by some American girl.

YEFGHINI

American girl?

GENERAL CHO

Bai Loong. She single-handedly foiled the attack.

Yefghini raises an eyebrow.

YEFGHINI

Bai Loong. I know this name.

GENERAL CHO

What? How?

YEFGHINI

She is one of yours.

EXT. WHITE HOUSE -- MORNING

The sun peeks over the roof of the White House.

A black government sedan pulls up near the south gate.

Bai steps from the automobile in her full dress blue uniform and yawns.

As she approaches the gate, a MASTER SERGEANT and a PRIVATE snap salutes.



MASTER SERGEANT  
Good morning, ma'am.

Bai returns the salute.

BAI  
Good morning, Master Sergeant.

MASTER SERGEANT  
May I see your ID? It's just a formality. Everyone knows who you are.

BAI  
Excuse me?

Bai passes the Master Sergeant her military ID.

MASTER SERGEANT  
You shot down two fighters and sunk a ship. You're famous.

BAI  
That just happened yesterday.

The Master Sergeant turns to the Private who still stands rigidly at attention.

MASTER SERGEANT  
Private, can you identify this Marine?

PRIVATE  
(barking it military)  
That's 1st Lieutenant Bai, the Dragon, Loong, Master Sergeant.

MASTER SERGEANT  
Indeed it is. Told you.

The Master Sergeant returns Bai's ID along with a visitors badge.

Bai clips the badge to her lapel.

The White House Press Secretary, MARTHA WALLACE, walks down the pathway all smiles to greet Bai.

The Master Sergeant and Private snap Bai another salute.

Bai returns the salute.

BAI  
Thank you, Master Sergeant.

Wallace extends a hand for a shake.

WALLACE

1st Lieutenant Loong, I am so honored to meet you. I am Martha Wallace, the White House Press Secretary.

Bai takes Wallace's hand and shakes.

BAI

Pleasure to meet you Ms. Wallace?

WALLACE

It's just Wallace.

Wallace hands her a sheet of paper.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

Here's your itinerary for today.

Bai accepts the document and looks it over.

Wallace walks up the path toward the White House.

BAI

I'm not sure what half of this stuff means.

WALLACE

Don't worry Lieutenant, I won't be more than a few feet away from you all day. Let me know if you need anything.

BAI

Yes, ma'am.

WALLACE

Just call me Wallace. Everyone does. The President is so anxious to meet you.

BAI

He is?

WALLACE

He was so upset. He wanted to meet you at the gate, but the Secret Service refused to let him. I haven't seen him this excited in the three years I've worked here.

Wallace leads Bai into the White House -- through security -- up to the Oval Office.

BAI

I see on the itinerary that I am meeting with the President. Who else will be at that meeting?

WALLACE

At first, it will just be you and the President. He wants to hear the story from you before anyone else. The Joint Chiefs are steaming.

BAI

Is that a good thing?

WALLACE

He loves to tweak them. Eventually, he will allow them to join the two of you in the Oval Office. The Commandant of the Marine Corps wanted to escort you in, but the President would have no part of that. But don't worry, it's all in good fun.

Wallace nods at Ellen, the President's assistant, sitting at her desk outside the Oval Office.

BAI

I think I'm getting a little nervous.

Wallace stops -- faces Bai as they reach the door of the Oval Office.

WALLACE

Lieutenant, less than twenty-four hours ago you shot down two fighter jets and sunk a ship that had fired on the Ford. You have more warrior in you than all of those Joint Chiefs combined. So, don't you worry about a thing.

Before Wallace can knock, the PRESIDENT opens the door.

Bai salutes the President -- he returns the courtesy.

PRESIDENT

Wallace, what took you so long?  
The Master Sergeant said you left  
the gate fifty-eight seconds ago.

The President flashes a smile at Wallace.

WALLACE

Very sorry, Mr. President.

The President steps aside -- gestures for Bai to enter.

INT. OVAL OFFICE -- SAME

The President sits in his chair, flanked by two couches.

PRESIDENT

Please have a seat. Can I get you  
anything?

Bai sits on one of the couches.

BAI

No thank you, Mr. President.

The President sits on the edge of his seat.

PRESIDENT

Please tell me this incredible  
story.

BAI

The CAG and I had just launched  
from the carrier . . .

The President holds up a hand.

PRESIDENT

I'm sorry. Can I stop you right  
there? Please tell me everything  
beginning about forty-eight hours  
ago.

Bai smiles.

BAI

Two days ago, I finished my final  
carrier qualifications. I had no  
more than learned my results, when  
I was summoned to the XO's office  
and told I had orders to the Sea of  
Japan . . .

INT. OVAL OFFICE -- LATER

The President remains on the edge of his seat -- captivated by the story.

BAI

By now, it was pitch black. Thank goodness, that way I couldn't see the pitching deck. I trapped on the Ford. What a relief.

The President just stares at her for a long moment.

PRESIDENT

All in the span of thirty-six hours?

BAI

Yes, Mr. President.

The President leans back and gets comfortable.

PRESIDENT

I have to tell you when I first heard the story, I thought someone was pulling my leg. Then the story just grew and grew, and I thought this is turning into some embellished tall tale. But it's really all true, isn't it?

Bai sits there motionless.

BAI

I don't know. I only tell it like I remember it, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT

Never embellish it. The truth of it just makes the thing that much more incredible. What do you want to be when you grow up? Do you want to be the Commandant of the Marine Corps, or maybe you want my job? You're on the fast track for either one, or both.

BAI

I had orders to test pilot school. That was my dream job.

The President sighs heavily.

PRESIDENT  
Ah, the next Chuck Yeager.

BAI  
Something like that.

PRESIDENT  
Well, you're obviously a damn good pilot. Now, over the next several days, or weeks, or years, you will be on every television show and magazine cover in the world. I have to ask you something that I really hate to ask. Will you be honest with me Lieutenant?

BAI  
Yes, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT  
Do you have any skeletons in your closet?

Bai thinks on the question for a long time.

BAI  
I got kicked out of a public middle school for fighting when I was twelve.

The President slams his hands down on the arms of his chair -- springs to his feet startling Bai.

PRESIDENT  
I knew it.

The President does a lap around his chair.

BAI  
It was a long time ago.

The President turns to Bai -- smiles -- returns to his chair.

PRESIDENT  
No. No. No. The intelligence folks have been snooping into your background and you know what they found?

BAI  
No.

PRESIDENT  
That you had a fight when you were  
twelve. That was it.

BAI  
Why were they looking into my  
background?

PRESIDENT  
Because I am going on television  
today and declaring you a national  
hero. I don't want to find out  
tomorrow that you are a serial  
killer.

Bai nods.

The President stands again.

PRESIDENT (CONT'D)  
I think I've kept the Joint Chiefs  
waiting long enough.

The President walks to his desk -- presses the intercom  
button on his phone.

PRESIDENT (CONT'D)  
Ellen.

ELLEN (V.O.)  
Yes, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT  
Please ask the Joint Chiefs to step  
in here please.

ELLEN (V.O.)  
Yes, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT  
(to Bai)  
You're going to have to tell the  
story again. Tell it the same way  
you told me.

BAI  
Yes, Mr. President.

Bai stands -- pops a salute as the Joint Chiefs enter the  
Oval office.

The Commandant of the Marine Corps returns the salute.

COMMANDANT  
At ease Lieutenant.

The Joint Chiefs take seats on the couches.

COMMANDANT (CONT'D)  
Lieutenant, I think I speak for all  
of us here, you did one hell of a  
job yesterday.

BAI  
Thank you, sir.

The Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Miller, leans forward.

ADMIRAL MILLER  
I served with Captain Robertson on  
the Roosevelt. He was a good man.

BAI  
I'm sorry but I didn't know him  
well. I wish I could have done  
more.

COMMANDANT  
If half of the debrief I received  
is true, you cleaned up a pretty  
big mess out there.

ADMIRAL MILLER  
Tell us what happened.

Bai leans forward -- recounts the events of the last forty-eight hours.

The group hangs on her every word.

EXT. OVAL OFFICE -- LATER

The Joint Chiefs talk softly among themselves as they exit.

Bai exits behind the Joint Chiefs -- just ahead of the President.

Wallace takes Bai by the arm and leads her down the hall.

WALLACE  
Next you face the vultures.

Bai flashes a wary glance at Wallace.



WALLACE (CONT'D)

The press. The President will speak first. After he introduces you, you will make a statement.

The President trails closely behind.

PRESIDENT

You'll tell that story just like you told me.

WALLACE

Then the press will have the opportunity to ask you some questions. Pay attention to the questions and keep the answers simple. If a question is asked and you don't know the answer, say you don't know.

Bai nods.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

The Commandant will step in and answer any question that you do not have direct knowledge of or is a matter of national security.

Bai nods again.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

If things get completely out of hand, I will end the press conference and pull you out of there. OK?

BAI

Got it.

WALLACE

Can I get you anything?

BAI

Do we have lunch planned in there somewhere?

WALLACE

I'll take care of it.

BAI

Thank you.

INT. PRESS ROOM -- SAME

Camera shutters click as the Joint Chiefs, Wallace, Bai, and the President enter the press room.

Reporters yell out questions at Bai.

The President takes the podium.

PRESIDENT

First, our condolences go out to the family of Captain Tim Robertson, United States Navy. Captain Robertson was the Carrier Air Wing One Commander a position commonly known as CAG. He is survived by his wife Ida and two children, Norman and Lila. Captain Robertson was killed in action while flying a mission in the Sea of Japan.

The President looks back at Bai.

PRESIDENT (CONT'D)

Next, I would like to introduce 1st Lieutenant Bai Loong. The Lieutenant was flying Captain Robertson's wing when he was shot down by an aircraft of unknown origin. Few details are known at this time regarding the attack. Lieutenant Loong will come forward and give you the details of her last forty-eight hours.

Bai steps up to the podium.

BAI

Two days ago . . .

INT. WALLACE'S OFFICE -- LATER

Wallace scans the news sites on her computer.

Bai sits across from her scarfing down a ham and cheese sub.

WALLACE

The vultures are loving you. That press conference was a big win.

BAI

Any news on the affiliation of those MIGs?

WALLACE

The North Korean's completely deny any prior knowledge of the attack and have publicly and unequivocally denounced the action. Kim Jong-un says he's not missing any MIGs.

Bai chews a large bite.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

The President was on the phone with him within a minute of receiving word of the attack.

BAI

He works fast. Within 30 minutes of trapping on the Ford, they were kicking me off the ship to come meet him here in D.C.

Bai takes another bite -- wipes her mouth.

WALLACE

Alright. Next up today is a reception in the Rose Garden.

BAI

For who?

WALLACE

For you Lieutenant. Until further notice, if it is on your itinerary it is about you.

Bai nods.

BAI

When can I expect to return to my unit?

Wallace gives her a blank stare.

WALLACE

I know there has not been a lot of time to process all of this. Your life has been interrupted. Whatever your goals were forty-eight hours ago are now on hold.

Bai hangs her head.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

Keep your head up. It won't be so bad. In a few weeks, you will be able to write your own ticket.

BAI

That doesn't really happen, does it?

WALLACE

For a very select few, and you may be one of the few. Now, the reception will be very low key. There will be alcohol, but don't drink any. After the reception, you will ride with the Commandant to the Pentagon for further debriefing.

Ellen, the President's secretary, taps on the door.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

Ellen, come on in.

Ellen steps inside with her hands full.

ELLEN

Lieutenant, it is such an honor to meet you.

BAI

Nice to meet you.

Ellen begins handing items to Bai.

ELLEN

I've assigned Sidney Jones to you as a personal assistant. This is her contact information. She is on her way here now. She will basically be in charge of where you are supposed to be and when. I can't emphasize enough, if you need anything, tell Sidney.

Bai nods.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

Here is your credit card. You have an unlimited expense account for food, travel, entertainment, and lodging. Sidney will have her own card, so again, if you need anything, tell Sidney.

Bai accepts the credit card.

Ellen hands her a second card.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

This is your access card. It will get you through most, but not all, doors in government buildings here in Washington.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

Do you prefer a backpack or a satchel?

BAI

Backpack I guess.

Ellen hands Bai a backpack that's pretty full.

ELLEN

Inside the backpack is your new cell phone, laptop, some snacks, and supplies. Keep in mind that someone will see everything you put on the credit card, social media, and laptop. In other words, avoid porn sites or you may have to answer some uncomfortable questions. The user names and passwords for all the devices are on a note in the backpack as well. Do you have any questions?

BAI

Thousands.

Ellen turns and exits.

ELLEN

Good.

Bai looks at Wallace.

WALLACE

You will get used to it, I promise. Sidney is the best, you will love her. Ok, so let's debrief the press conference a little bit. You did great. When the military brass are around or your at the Pentagon, you're fine doing the military thing. When your on a talk show, loosen up, smile, be friendly.

(MORE)

WALLACE (CONT'D)

We're selling America here, after all.

Bai nods.

BAI

I'll do my best.

WALLACE

You are going to be great.

SIDNEY (20's) arrives at the door dressed like a sexy librarian and comes right in.

SIDNEY

Lieutenant, I'm Sidney. So nice to meet you. Thank you for your service.

Bai gives Sidney the once over.

BAI

Thank you. So nice to meet you.

Sidney turns to Wallace.

SIDNEY

Hey Wallace, I checked in with Ellen and she let me know you guys were down here.

WALLACE

Hello Sidney. Take good care of the Lieutenant.

SIDNEY

Are you all done here?

WALLACE

Yes.

SIDNEY

Great. We'll see you at the reception.

WALLACE

See you there.

Bai stands.

BAI

Thank you Wallace.

WALLACE  
It was my pleasure.

Bai and Sidney exit.

EXT. ROSE GARDEN -- LATER

A crowd of about one hundred people sit waiting for the President to take the podium.

The President walks out, with Bai, Wallace, and Sidney following behind.

Sidney takes up a position a discreet distance away.

PRESIDENT  
My fellow Americans, a couple of hours ago, we were able to introduce you to 1st Lieutenant Bai Loong. She is truly a remarkable person and a brilliant pilot.

The President picks up a small box from the podium and flips it open. Inside lies a set of Captain's bars. The President removes the bars.

PRESIDENT (CONT'D)  
1st Lieutenant Loong, please step forward.

At first, Bai is caught a bit off guard. Then, she marches forward and comes to a position of attention in front of the President -- snaps a salute.

The President returns the salute.

PRESIDENT (CONT'D)  
1st Lieutenant Loong, I hereby promote you to the rank of Captain in the United States Marine Corps.

The President removes her 1st Lieutenant bars -- replaces them with Captain's bars.

PRESIDENT (CONT'D)  
Captain Loong is the first American female fighter pilot to down an enemy aircraft in aerial combat and she got two of them.

The crowd applauds.

The President opens a second box on the table -- removes a medal.

PRESIDENT (CONT'D)  
 Captain Loong, I award you the  
 Distinguished Flying Cross for  
 heroism and extraordinary  
 achievement while participating in  
 aerial flight.

The President pins the medal to Bai's chest.

More applause.

Bai salutes the President.

The President returns the salute.

Bai executes an about-face -- returns to her former position.

PRESIDENT (CONT'D)  
 Congratulations Captain Loong.  
 Now, let's enjoy some refreshments  
 and celebrate the accomplishments  
 of our newest Marine Captain.

The President leaves the podium.

The crowd stands and mingles.

Everyone maneuvers for a selfie with Bai.

EXT. ROSE GARDEN -- LATER

Bai sips on a lemonade -- a pair of Korean men approach her --  
 SHO KIM, dressed to the nine's -- LIM MING looks like a  
 beggar who found a tattered suit.

Sho Kim extends a hand.

SHO KIM  
 Sho Kim, I am the South Korean  
 Ambassador.

Bai shakes his hand.

SHO KIM (CONT'D)  
 This is Lim Ming, he is the  
 Permanent Representative of North  
 Korea at the U.N.

Bai raises an eyebrow -- shakes his hand.



LIM MING  
(in Korean)  
Congratulations on your great  
triumph.

BAI  
Thank you.

LIM MING  
(in Korean)  
It would be a great honor if you  
would be my guest at the Mission.

BAI  
Well, if I'm ever in New York, I'll  
look you up.

LIM MING  
(in Korean)  
Do you happen to have any cash on  
you that I could borrow?

Sho rolls his eyes.

BAI  
Excuse me?

LIM MING  
Cash?

After a second of shock, Bai pulls out her Ridge wallet and  
unclips the cash -- reluctantly extends the money.

Lim snatches it from her hand.

Just as quickly, Sho grabs the cash from Lim and returns it  
to Bai.

SHO KIM  
You promised you wouldn't do that  
if I flew you down here.

Lim gives Sho a side-eyed scowl -- Sho attempts to lead him  
away by the arm.

LIM MING  
(in Korean)  
But she's the Ao Run.

Bai grabs Lim's other arm.

BAI  
What did you say?

Lim looks her dead in the eye.

LIM MING

Ao Run.

Sho tugs him away.

SHO KIM

Not Dragon King, just Dragon.

The two men wander off.

Bai bites her bottom lip.

Sidney approaches Bai.

SIDNEY

What was that about?

BAI

Dude asked if he could borrow some cash.

SIDNEY

What the hell?

BAI

I know right.

SIDNEY

The Commandant's car will be arriving in ten minutes. Would you like to freshen up before we head out?

BAI

No. I'm good.

Sidney starts to turn away.

BAI (CONT'D)

Sidney, stay and keep me company.

Sidney smiles.

SIDNEY

You've picked up some nice hardware today.

Sidney scans the crowd.

BAI

Yes. I was not expecting that. How long have you been a --

SIDNEY  
Personal assistant? About nine  
months.

Bai observes that Sidney continues to scan the crowd.

BAI  
So, how does it work?

SIDNEY  
I am on call. I usually get  
assigned to assist someone for a  
couple of days. It's fun, I like  
to meet new people.

Sidney brings her glass of iced tea to her lips.

Bai notices the missing skin on Sidney's red knuckles.

BAI  
You're a fighter.

SIDNEY  
Excuse me.

BAI  
Your knuckles. I recognize the  
look.

Sidney checks her knuckles.

SIDNEY  
Tae Kwon Do.

BAI  
Maybe we will get a chance to spar  
sometime.

SIDNEY  
What discipline?

BAI  
Kung Fu.

Sidney nods.

SIDNEY  
I'm always up for a good fight, but  
I have to admit, I've never fought  
my boss before.

BAI  
Then this will be a fun first time.  
Put it on the schedule.

SIDNEY

Will do.

Sidney takes another scan of the area.

BAI

Sidney, while we are working together I want you to be honest with me.

SIDNEY

Of course.

BAI

Loyal to me.

SIDNEY

OK, I will.

BAI

Are you some sort of security or a spook?

SIDNEY

What?

BAI

You scan the crowd like your searching for potential assassins.

Sidney takes a long look at Bai.

SIDNEY

Private security contractor.

Bai nods.

SIDNEY (CONT'D)

You're pretty observant.

Bai shrugs.

BAI

I wasn't buying the whole frumpy librarian disguise.

Sidney checks her outfit.

SIDNEY

Frumpy?

(beat)

Come on. Let's go hitch a ride with the Commandant.

BAI  
Lead the way.

The two women make their way toward the gate.

INT. COMMANDANT'S CAR -- LATER

The Commandant's driver, a SERGEANT, sits in the driver's seat -- Sidney sits in the front passenger seat -- Bai and the Commandant sit in the rear.

COMMANDANT  
Sergeant, can you give me and the  
Captain a bit of privacy?

SERGEANT  
Yes sir.

The Sergeant presses the button that raises the privacy screen between the front and rear of the vehicle.

The Commandant flashes Bai an inquisitive glance.

COMMANDANT  
I saw money trade hands between you  
and the Korean officials.

BAI  
The Permanent Representative for  
North Korea asked if he could  
borrow some money.

COMMANDANT  
What for?

BAI  
I don't know sir. He asked for  
cash. I was in shock or something  
and handed over what I had.

COMMANDANT  
You most likely shot down two of  
their planes and they send that  
worm down here to gloat.

Bai looks out the side window.

BAI  
The North Koreans are still denying  
involvement?

COMMANDANT

We still don't know the point of origin. Their flight paths were hidden from our radar some how.

BAI

You don't think they have some sort of stealth technology?

COMMANDANT

No. In fact, that may indicate that the attack came from someone else.

BAI

The Chinese?

COMMANDANT

They've been itching to poke us for years.

Bai nods.

COMMANDANT (CONT'D)

Anything else?

BAI

He said it would be a great honor if I paid him a visit.

COMMANDANT

Sounds like he wants something.

BAI

Maybe just cash.

The Commandant chuckles.

COMMANDANT

Maybe.

(beat)

When we arrive at the Pentagon, everyone is going to swing by to meet you. There's a lot of brass. After they filter through, I will bring in the Office of Naval Intelligence on this and see what they make of it.

Bai nods.

BAI

Yes, sir.

The Commandant presses the button that lowers the privacy screen.

COMMANDANT  
Do you like ice cream?

BAI  
Yes, sir.

COMMANDANT  
Sergeant, the Creamery drive-thru  
if you please.

SERGEANT  
Yes, sir.

The Sergeant signals -- turns right into the Creamery.

EXT. PENTAGON -- LATER

No sign of the 9/11 attack remains on the exterior of the structure.

INT. PENTAGON CONFERENCE ROOM -- SAME

Twenty generals and admirals sit around a long table in a large crowded conference room. Their staffs sit along the wall.

On one end of the conference room, a 3-D CGI animation of Bai's flight plays on a large screen t.v.

Bai's radio traffic during the event plays over the animation.

The animation finishes -- the video from Bai's gun camera rolls -- also dubbed with the audio.

INT. PENTAGON CONFERENCE ROOM -- LATER

The brass and their staffs exit the conference room.

The Commandant waits patiently at the table.

Bai's all smiles.

As the last general files out, two agents from the Office of Naval Intelligence enter the conference room.

COMMANDANT  
Captain Loong, meet COMMANDER  
VINCENT and LIEUTENANT COMMANDER  
HACKNEY.

BAI  
Nice to meet you sirs.

All trade handshakes.

COMMANDANT  
I will excuse myself and let you  
get to it.

The Commandant exits leaving Bai alone with the two naval  
officers.

VINCENT  
Captain, it is very nice to meet  
you. Your response to the attack  
was truly incredible.

BAI  
Thank you, sir.

HACKNEY  
How are you holding up?

Bai rubs her jaw.

BAI  
I think my smile is broken.

Both men laugh.

HACKNEY  
From what I hear, you better get  
that smile in shape.

VINCENT  
Lots of t.v. appearances tomorrow.

BAI  
Seriously? I haven't seen the  
schedule yet.

VINCENT  
You are making the rounds; CNN,  
Fox, Good Morning America.

HACKNEY  
Do you need anything or are you  
ready to get started?



BAI

Can I have a sheet of paper and a pen?

Vincent tears a sheet from his notebook -- hands her a pen.

Bai writes "is this room secure" -- shows it to the two men.

HACKNEY

Yes. The entire building is swept twice daily.

VINCENT

But you should assume that outside this building nowhere is secure.

Bai nods -- looks away from the two men -- bites her bottom lip.

VINCENT (CONT'D)

What is it?

BAI

I have trust issues.

Vincent and Hackney share a glance.

VINCENT

Bai, you can trust us.

BAI

Is it a crime to lie to the President?

HACKNEY

Probably. I guess so. He is your commanding officer after all.

VINCENT

What lie did you tell the President?

BAI

He asked if I had any skeletons in my closet.

Hackney leans back.

HACKNEY

She didn't tell him about the fight.

BAI

I told him about the fight.

HACKNEY

What then? You have a top secret clearance. You've been vetted by the NSA, CIA, and FBI and none of them found a thing.

BAI

I apologize. This is going to be one of those life story kind of deals.

VINCENT

Go ahead.

BAI

I was born in North Korea.

MONTAGE

Five-year-old Bai pulled from the arms of her parents.

BAI (V.O.)

When I was five, the government took me from my parents.

Seven-year-old Bai sits in a class.

BAI (V.O.)

I was sent to Russia to the International Lenin School where I was taught to be an American.

Ten-year-old Bai replaces the little girl on the Loong farm.

BAI

I was sent to Georgia and became Bai Loong.

END MONTAGE.

BAI

The rest of the story you know.

Bai chews on her bottom lip -- waits for a reaction.

HACKNEY

Ha. You had me going there for a second with that whole Black Widow back story.

Bai's eyes dart between Vincent and Hackney.

VINCENT

Are you saying you're a spy?

BAI

No. I was trained to be a spy but I was never asked to do anything.

HACKNEY

Was yesterday the first time you were approached by the North Koreans?

BAI

Other than the couple that raised me, yes.

HACKNEY

We should have them picked up.

VINCENT

They're dead.

BAI

Car accident three years ago. Hit a cow in the road.

HACKNEY

A cow?

BAI

That's Georgia farm country.

HACKNEY

You're a North Korean spy.

Bai slaps the table.

BAI

I'm an American -- end of story.

VINCENT

The couple that raised you, were they North Korean?

BAI

Technically, South but they had close family in the North that were under threat of death if they didn't comply.

HACKNEY

I don't get it. The guy asked you for a hundred bucks. So what? You were in the clear. Why tell us now?

Bai swallowed hard.

BAI  
I've been recalled.

VINCENT  
What? How?

BAI  
When I was ten, I was given a recall code. If I get the code, I am supposed to return to North Korea, as fast as I can, and by any means necessary. The dude that asked for the one hundred dollars, said the code.

HACKNEY  
One hundred dollars was the code?

BAI  
No. He said Ao Run. Dragon King.

Hackney and Vincent look at each other.

BAI (CONT'D)  
What happens now?

VINCENT  
Well, we tell our C.O. and it goes up the chain of command.

BAI  
Who ultimately makes the decision about what happens to me?

HACKNEY  
It will go up the chain until someone *nuts up* and says that's far enough.

Bai's head snaps to Vincent.

BAI  
Is he serious?

VINCENT  
That's the way it works.

BAI  
So, you two could *nut up* right here and now and that's as far as it goes?

HACKNEY

Well, theoretically.

BAI

Theoretically? What happened to Bai  
you can trust us? Do you two have  
nuts or not?

Vincent stands -- motions for Hackney to follow him to the  
opposite end of the table.

Hackney talks in an animated whisper.

Vincent continuously shakes his head.

Bai smiles when Hackney grips his nuts.

Vincent's head stops shaking and they return to their seats.

BAI (CONT'D)

Well?

VINCENT

We are your handlers. You are our  
asset. Otherwise, we send it up the  
chain.

Bai's giddy.

BAI

I don't know what that means, but  
yes. I'm yours. One hundred  
percent. How many assets are you  
two working?

HACKNEY

Now, today?

BAI

Yes.

VINCENT

One.

EXT. PENTAGON LOBBY -- EVENING

Sidney sits on the floor typing on her laptop -- spots Bai --  
stows her gear.

Hackney escorts Bai through security to the lobby.

Bai notices that Hackney and Sidney give each other a knowing  
glance.

HACKNEY  
Captain, once again, nice job.

Bai nods.

Hackney turns to depart -- hesitates.

HACKNEY (CONT'D)  
Can I -- never mind.

Hackney turns away again.

Bai smiles.

BAI  
Sidney would be happy to take our  
picture.

Hackney stops -- turns -- looks at Bai -- then at Sidney.

HACKNEY  
I wouldn't want to break your smile  
or anything.

SIDNEY  
Yeah, sure, I'll be happy to take  
your picture.

Sidney accepts Hackney's phone -- Bai moves into position  
next to him.

Sidney snaps the photo -- returns the phone.

HACKNEY  
That was dumb, but thank you.

BAI  
Anytime.

Hackney turns -- finally leaves.

BAI (CONT'D)  
Please tell me we are done for  
today.

SIDNEY  
You have a bunch of party and  
dinner invites, but no commitments.

Bai blows out a long breath.

BAI  
I am beat.

SIDNEY

We can go over the invites in the car and see if anything sounds interesting.

The two women exit the Pentagon.

SIDNEY (CONT'D)

MARCUS is our driver. I've worked with him before and he's good. Marcus and I gathered up your gear and got you checked in.

BAI

Am I at the Bachelor Officer Quarters?

SIDNEY

What? No. Nobody famous stays at the BOQ. Ellen told you about the unlimited expense account, right?

BAI

Yes.

SIDNEY

We are at the Sofitel Washington D.C. Lafayette Square.

BAI

Sounds swanky.

SIDNEY

It's beautiful.

BAI

Hey, they played a computer animation of my flight and the video of the gun camera footage at the meeting. Do you think you can scrounge me a copy?

SIDNEY

I'll see what I can do.

The two women enter the waiting sedan.

SIDNEY (CONT'D)

Captain Loong meet MARCUS, Marcus Captain Loong.

MARCUS

Captain it is a pleasure.

BAI  
It's Bai you two.

MARCUS  
Ah. I wanted to call you Dragon.

Bai smiles.

BAI  
I'll answer to either.

SIDNEY  
Marcus, let's head toward the  
hotel, but we may change our mind  
on the way.

Marcus puts the sedan in gear -- drives away.

Sidney types on a tablet.

SIDNEY (CONT'D)  
I just sent tomorrow's itinerary to  
your phone.

Bai digs out the phone -- looks at the screen for about one  
second -- puts her phone away.

BAI  
I've seen enough.

SIDNEY  
What?

BAI  
6:00 am, Sidney fight to the death,  
was all I needed to see.

Bai settles back smiling.

SIDNEY  
It's like that, is it?

BAI  
It will feel good to mix it up a  
little bit.

MARCUS  
Dragon, you're going to tangle with  
Sidney tomorrow?

SIDNEY  
I'll go easy on her.



BAI  
Greatly appreciated.

Marcus laughs.

MARCUS  
To my knowledge, Sidney has never  
taken it easy on anyone.

Sidney hands Bai the tablet.

SIDNEY  
Just press play.

Bai watches the video she requested from the Pentagon  
briefing.

BAI  
That was fast.

Sidney shrugs.

SIDNEY  
Mind if I watch?

Bai angles the screen so that Sidney can watch also.

EXT. THE GYM -- EARLY MORNING

The sedan sits on a quiet street in front of The Gym.

INT. THE GYM -- SAME

Marcus sits on bleachers outside the boxing ring.

Bai stretches out -- all geared up.

Sidney gets her second glove tied on by her trainer, JOE --  
nose smashed flat from too many fights.

Both women wear sparring helmets and gloves.

Joe steps to the center of the ring.

JOE  
I suggest you just start out slow  
and kind of feel each other out.

Bai stands -- hands at her sides.

BAI  
Sidney, you just set the pace.

An instant after Bai gets the last word out, Sidney executes a spinning back fist aimed at Bai's head.

Bai easily leans back -- the blow misses by a fraction of an inch -- Bai follows with a left hook at lightening speed.

Bai stops the punch with her glove resting against Sidney's cheek.

Marcus covers his mouth.

MARCUS

Oh shit.

Bai backs away, so they can begin again.

Sidney bounces on her toes.

Again, Bai's hands drop to her sides.

Sidney attacks.

Bai dodges left to avoid the first blow -- dodges right to avoid the second.

Bai hops over a leg sweep.

Sidney moves forward -- throws a hard right hand.

Bai dodges the blow -- simultaneously executes a front kick that stops with Bai's foot resting against the center of Sidney's chest.

Marcus claps.

JOE

I think she's had a little training.

Bai slowly recoils her foot from Sidney's chest -- returns her foot to the mat.

Not one to give up easily, Sidney throws a sweeping left hook.

Bai ducks below the punch -- moves in close -- throws a flurry of rabbit punches to Sidney's abdomen, each one landing with a feather touch.

Bai bounces backward.

Sidney looks bewildered. She's got no answers for Bai's defense and attacks.

SIDNEY

Thank you for not killing me.

Bai leans back against the ropes.

BAI

What about you Joe?

Joe looks at Sidney, then at Bai.

Joe smiles -- shakes his index finger at Bai.

JOE

Don't get too cocky now, I may just have to take you down a notch or two.

BAI

I don't mean just you. I mean both you and Sidney.

Joe looks at Sidney.

Bai punches her gloves together.

BAI (CONT'D)

No pulling punches this time.

Joe shakes his head.

JOE

I guess a girl shoots down a couple of fighter jets and sinks a ship, she thinks she can take on the world.

SIDNEY

Come on Joe.

JOE

OK. Let's do this.

Joe pulls on his gloves.

Sidney and Joe circle Bai from opposite directions.

INT. THE GYM -- LATER

Marcus sits with his arm over his eyes -- body cringing.

In the ring, Bai tends to Sidney's bloody nose.

Joe's flat on his face -- motionless.

A moment later, Joe rolls over -- sits up -- dazed.

BAI

Marcus.

Marcus peaks from under his arm.

BAI (CONT'D)

See if you can find a towel or something.

Marcus scrambles from his seat in search of a towel.

Bai passes a bottle of water to Joe.

Marcus tosses a white towel into the ring.

Bai gently wipes the blood from under Sidney's nose.

Sidney looks into Bai's eyes -- smiles.

SIDNEY

You are the real deal.

JOE

That's an understatement.

BAI

I'm sorry Sidney. I shouldn't have redirected Joe's punch into your face.

Sidney cocks her head.

SIDNEY

You can control that?

BAI

I don't know. I never thought about it. I don't get to take on multiple opponents often.

MARCUS

The two of you got your asses totally kicked.

Bai turns and sneers at Marcus.

BAI

Marcus, get in here. It's all three of you next round.

Marcus steps back -- raises both hands in surrender.

MARCUS  
I'll be waiting in the car when you  
are ready to go.

Marcus hustles out the door.

SIDNEY  
How bad is it?

BAI  
Nothing's broken. I hope you won't  
need sun glasses.

Bai helps Sidney up first -- then Joe.

Bai puts her hand behind Joe's neck -- firmly pulls their  
faces close -- stares into his eyes.

BAI (CONT'D)  
Are we good?

Joe nods.

JOE  
We're good.

Bai nods.

Bai's newly issued government phone rings with an incoming  
call.

Bai jumps down from the boxing ring.

She answers.

BAI  
Lieutenant -- I mean Captain Loong.

SHO KIM (V.O.)  
This is Ambassador Kim.

Bai removes the phone from her ear.

BAI  
Sidney, can you give me a moment.

Sidney nods -- leads Joe to the other side of the gym.

BAI (CONT'D)  
How did you get this number?

SHO KIM (V.O.)  
Meet me at the coffee shop at the  
corner of First and Central in  
twenty minutes.

BAI  
I --

The call disconnects.

BAI (CONT'D)  
What the --

Bai dials Hackney's number.

HACKNEY (V.O.)  
Hackney.

BAI  
The South Korean Ambassador just  
called and told me to meet him for  
coffee.

HACKNEY (V.O.)  
When?

BAI  
Twenty minutes.

HACKNEY  
What does he want?

BAI  
I don't know. Should I go and find  
out?

HACKNEY  
Do it.

Bai ends the call.

EXT. STARBUCKS -- DAY

Bai's sedan pulls up -- she exits alone.

The car pulls away.

Bai enters the Starbucks.

INT. STARBUCKS -- SAME

Bai walks to the counter -- orders a coffee -- spots the Ambassador.

The Barista grins -- brings Bai a cup of coffee with Dragon written on the side.

BARISTA  
On the house.

BAI  
Thank you.

She takes a seat at his table.

SHO KIM  
Representative Lim would like to know if you understood his invitation.

Bai takes a sip of coffee -- nods slightly.

SHO KIM (CONT'D)  
He would like to know the date and time he can expect you to visit.

BAI  
I don't know. I haven't been able to get away.

Kim reaches across the table and places a firm grip on Bai's forearm -- anxious.

SHO KIM  
Let's go now. I will escort you.

Bai looks down at his hand and then straight into Kim's desperate eyes.

BAI  
Who do they have?

His grip tightens.

BAI (CONT'D)  
You picked a crowded spot. Do you want me to make a scene?

Kim looks around -- releases his grip.

Bai stands.

SHO KIM  
What should I tell the  
Representative?

BAI  
Not to hold his breath. It might be  
awhile.

MONTAGE

Bai appears on morning shows.

Bai appears on late night talk shows.

Bai interviews with all major news outlets.

END MONTAGE

INT. SEDAN - THREE DAYS LATER

Bai's head lies back -- relaxes -- frowns -- adjusts her wool  
jacket.

She rolls her head to the side -- watches Sidney type on her  
laptop.

Scans Sidney's red sun dress.

Sidney glances at Bai -- goes back to typing.

Bai smiles.

BAI  
I'm jealous.

SIDNEY  
I'm sure.

BAI  
No, seriously. It's 90 degrees  
outside. You're wearing that cute  
little dress and I'm wearing this  
wool furnace.

Sidney opens her mouth -- closes it without speaking.

BAI (CONT'D)  
What?



SIDNEY

I was about to tell you what you  
are wearing is cute too, then  
decided I couldn't pull off the lie  
with a straight face.

Bai laughs.

BAI

All of these t.v. shows, will it  
ever end? Wouldn't it be easier if  
I just had my own show?

Sidney places the back of her hand on her forehead.

SIDNEY

Oh, the anguish of celebrity.

BAI

I'm not that dramatic.

SIDNEY

But I do have some good news, no  
t.v. tomorrow.

BAI

I could kiss you right now.

Marcus straightens -- eyebrows rise in the rearview mirror.

BAI (CONT'D)

Figure of speech Marcus.

He relaxes -- disappointed.

SIDNEY

You're speaking at the U-S-N-T-P-S.  
Whatever that is.

Bai sits up straight.

BAI

The test pilot school. Really?

SIDNEY

Ah. Test pilot school. Why didn't  
they just say so.

Bai's wheels turn.

BAI  
Sidney, be honest. On a scale of one to ten, how demanding am I compared to the other people you have assisted?

SIDNEY  
Other than getting you a copy of that video which took about a minute, you've asked for nothing. You're a one.

BAI  
I'm about to make a huge ask.

SIDNEY  
You want to fly tomorrow.

Bai looks shocked.

BAI  
Yes. I want to strap into a hornet tomorrow.

Sidney shrugs.

SIDNEY  
I already put in the request.

Bai gives Sidney a peck on the cheek -- sits back smiling.

SIDNEY (CONT'D)  
Marcus did you see that?

MARCUS  
See what?

Sidney's eyes go wide.

SIDNEY  
Bai just kissed me and you missed it?

MARCUS  
What? Do it again please?

The ladies giggle -- shake their heads.

EXT. WHITE HOUSE -- DAY

INT. OVAL OFFICE -- DAY

The President meets with staff.

Ellen enters with a note -- hands it to the President.

The President reads the note -- smiles.

PRESIDENT

Get me the Commander of the test  
pilot school on the telephone.

ELLEN

It's Navy Captain Will Buckley. I  
called him and he's holding on line  
one.

The President gets up -- moves to his desk -- hits line one.

PRESIDENT

Captain Buckley, how are things out  
there at Patuxent River?

The President listens for a moment.

PRESIDENT (CONT'D)

I need you to do something for me.

EXT. NAS PATUXENT RIVER, MARYLAND -- MORNING

CAPTAIN BUCKLEY greets Bai and Sidney as they exit the sedan.

Bai salutes the Navy Captain.

BUCKLEY

Captain Loong, it is an honor to  
meet you.

BAI

Thank you for having us sir.

Bai and the Captain walk toward the hangar -- Sidney follows  
along behind.

BUCKLEY

I received a call from the  
President of the United States.

Bai looks back coyly at Sidney.

Sidney smiles.

BAI  
Is that so?

BUCKLEY  
Do you know how many calls I've  
received from the President?

BAI  
No sir.

BUCKLEY  
Exactly one. But it's good to know  
that he knows we're here.

As they approach the hangar, Buckley stops -- turns to Bai.

BUCKLEY (CONT'D)  
When you get in here, there is  
going to be a lot of giddiness, a  
lot of questions, and a lot of back  
slapping. I'm sorry.

Bai shrugs.

BAI  
No worries. It's part of the gig.

As they walk forward, a bunch of eager aircraft mechanics,  
ground crews, and flight crews surround her.

She shakes hands -- takes photos.

INT. TEST PILOT READY ROOM -- DAY

The ready room at full capacity with pilots.

Bai stands at the front of the ready room -- watches the  
video animation and her gun camera footage play.

Once it's completed, Buckley steps forward.

BUCKLEY  
Now, we will have COLONEL ROBBINS  
come up and analyze this video for  
us.

Bai raises a hand.

BAI  
Excuse me Captain. Do you mind if I  
make a few comments before we get  
to the Colonel's analysis?

BUCKLEY

Please, go right ahead.

Bai picks up the remote -- starts the video.

BAI

Look, you've got to give me a break. It was my first real day on the job. There are at least three things that I should have done differently.

She pauses the video near the beginning prior to CAG's plane exploding.

BAI (CONT'D)

My first mistake was assuming that bogey number one was not a hostile, even though it was originally identified as a friendly. From now on, I will treat every aircraft that doesn't have one of my shipmates in it as a foe. The lack of preparedness may have cost me a full second. I don't think it would have saved CAG, but it's no excuse.

Bai plays then pauses the animation.

BAI (CONT'D)

Right here, I'm pulling about 6.5 G's. As you know, the Hornet's radius of turn is superior to the Mig-29, so I get my nose around inside him. To help get the nose around into a firing position, I slowly fed in some right rudder and when I got missile lock I fired. My second mistake was not feeding in the rudder soon enough or hard enough. I estimate that mistake delayed reaching missile lock by about one-half second.

Bai advances the animation a few frames further to the point right where the missile comes off the rail.

BAI (CONT'D)

With the rudder in, the Hornet was yawing to the right as the missile came off the rails.

(MORE)

BAI (CONT'D)

The better action would be to get all that rudder in and then let it out so that the plane is not yawing when the missile is fired. You can see that the missile didn't run up his tailpipe, but instead clipped his wing. He may have made a last second maneuver causing the missile to impact a little off target, but at the time, I did not perceive that to be the case.

Bai advances the animation to acquisition of the second enemy aircraft.

BAI (CONT'D)

When the second bogey was identified, I was in a terrible position. Let me run this to the gun camera footage and you will see what I'm talking about.

Bai runs the video to a point where all you can see is white.

BAI (CONT'D)

There we were, nose to nose, approaching 3,000 knots of closure, and that's what I can see. A big ball of burning fire. He had placed himself in the perfect position between me and the sun. So, what did I do . . .

Bai shrugs.

BAI (CONT'D)

I slammed it into afterburner.

The crowd chuckles.

BAI (CONT'D)

Now, I'm closing at 3,500 knots on a target I can't get a visual on. I think to myself, afterburner? There had to be a better way.

Bai runs the video forward to the point the missile is fired.

BAI (CONT'D)

I received missile lock and fired about a millisecond before I heard the warning tone. I slammed the stick hard left and got really lucky.

Bai takes a step back.

BAI (CONT'D)

Colonel.

Colonel Robbins steps forward.

ROBBINS

You just made this briefing a heck of a lot easier. Let me just give you some numbers. In the first turn you estimated 6.5 G's, actual was 6.6. You estimated that the slow rudder input cost you about half a second. Our computer simulation put it at .433 seconds. She pulled 5.7 G's inverted during the attack run on the ship. The closure rate on the second bogey reached a maximum of 3,227 knots.

Everyone whispers among themselves.

ROBBINS (CONT'D)

Let's talk a moment about the decision to go into afterburner. I think that I can speak for all of the instructors, we hated that decision. But we ran 1.3 million computer simulations without a single victory for the good guys. It was a one in a million.

The Colonel steps back.

BUCKLEY

Questions?

PILOT 1

How were you lucky enough to be on that flight?

BAI

Lucky, that's funny. I understand that CAG flies with every new pilot. My turn just happened to come an hour and a half after I stepped off the C-2.

PILOT 2

Were you nervous?

BAI

Honestly, I had no time to be nervous. During the battle itself, the training took over. I had a huge surge of adrenaline. The G-suit was really squeezing, but I was grunting like hell to force blood into my brain. After it was over, my hands were shaking and I had sweat completely through my flight suit. All in the span of about 30 seconds.

ROBBINS

26.3 Seconds.

Bai nods.

BAI

I had time to take two deep breaths and then the low fuel warning illuminated. I went straight to the tanker, which went smoothly, thank goodness. Then I was vectored around for a night landing with the seas around six feet.

ROBBINS

8.2.

BUCKLEY

OK, so I know you all have a lot of questions. Dragon hasn't been in the cockpit for about a week, so she's going to fly a sortie and then we will reconvene at the O-Club at 1700 hours.

The pilots stand talking and laughing with each other. Many swing by to pay their respects to Bai.

EXT. WASHINGTON D.C. -- LATER

Two hornets fly in formation low over the city on a tour of the monuments.

The plane on the wing of the lead has a dragon painted on the nose cone -- below the dragon, two red stars painted with an X stamped over the top of each star -- signifying Bai's two kills.

EXT. HEADQUARTERS 55TH AIR FIGHTER WING - DAY



INT. GENERAL CHO'S OFFICE - DAY

GENERAL CHO meets with Yefghini.

YEFGHINI

So, she has refused your recall order.

Cho's face flushes.

GENERAL CHO

She killed my brother. She thwarted two years of planning. I need her back here so I can put her head on a spike.

YEFGHINI

Don't be hasty. She may still be of value. With the American interference stalling our progress in Ukraine, leadership is looking for ways, let's say, to interfere with the U.S.

GENERAL CHO

Can you help?

Yefghini shrugs.

YEFGHINI

I will see what I can do.

EXT. OFFICER'S CLUB -- LATER

Two families with small children play at the pool.

INT. OFFICER'S CLUB -- EVENING

The club's bar -- loud -- wall to wall with pilots having a beer -- telling war stories.

Sidney gets a lot of attention from the fliers.

Pilots line up five deep to get a moment with Bai.

The crowd parts as Buckley makes his way to Bai.

BUCKLEY

You guys back up and give Dragon a little air.

The pilots move away and talk among themselves.

BAI

Sir, thank you again. Your people in the parachute shop, the dragon painted on the nose, everyone was just outstanding. I apologize because I know it was a lot of work for one sortie, but everyone treated me fantastic.

BUCKLEY

You are very welcome. You should consider us as a duty station. Hard to come by anyone with any actual air-to-air combat experience.

Bai shrugs.

BAI

I had it worked out to come here straight from flight school. But, you know, needs of the Marine Corps and all that jazz.

BUCKLEY

Perhaps your friend the President can help you out with that.

BAI

I'll be old news by tomorrow. Thanks again. It was a great feeling strapping in after a week of running from one television show to the next.

BUCKLEY

When the President called, he said that I should order you to go straight back to Washington and thank him personally.

Bai smiles.

BAI

Yes sir.

BUCKLEY

I got the feeling that the President may be your biggest fan.

Bai looks at the line of pilots waiting to speak with her, then back to Buckley.

Buckley looks at the line.

BUCKLEY (CONT'D)

And then again, maybe not.

The two trade smiles -- Bai gets back to talking dog fights with the guys.

EXT. PENTAGON -- DAY

INT. PENTAGON CONFERENCE ROOM -- DAY

Vincent, Hackney, and Bai sit at the conference table.

HACKNEY

You're going to North Korea.

Bai sits up straight -- shocked.

BAI

I thought we decided that was a bad idea.

HACKNEY

You've been invited to be the first American to fly a MIG-29K and land it on a Russian carrier.

Bai's mouth drops.

BAI

I shot down two North Korean aircraft. I refused their recall order. We are at war with Russia in the Ukraine. Whose bright idea was this?

VINCENT

The President's.

BAI

You know if I go there, I'm never coming back.

HACKNEY

They've guaranteed your safe return.

BAI

They denied that I shot down their planes. Forgive me if I'm skeptical about their guarantee.

VINCENT

It will be a chance for you to figure out how those two MIGs you shot down evaded our radar.

BAI

Sure. After they waterboard me for a year to obtain what I know, which is nothing that you can't find online, I'll get a message to you about how their stealth technology works.

HACKNEY

They use smoke.

BAI

What?

HACKNEY

They don't waterboard. They use smoke. They stick a pipe in your mouth and blow smoke into your lungs until you pass out -- or die.

Bai's flabbergasted.

BAI

How is that helpful?

HACKNEY

Just trying to be accurate.

BAI

Does the President know I'm a double agent?

VINCENT

Double agent?

BAI

I'm the spy from North Korea, remember?

HACKNEY

No one knows that except the three of us.

Vincent pushes a large binder toward Bai.

BAI

What's that?

VINCENT

They sent an operations manual for  
the MIG-29K.

Bai opens the binder -- thumbs through the pages.

BAI

Seventy-five percent of this has  
been redacted.

HACKNEY

You wanted to be a test pilot,  
right? Here's your chance.

BAI

Do I have a choice?

VINCENT

Sure. Go, and take your chances  
that the North Koreans are telling  
the truth, or refuse, and spend the  
rest of your life at Leavenworth  
for espionage.

HACKNEY

We still waterboard.

BAI

Guys, I thought we were friends.  
You two are worse than the North  
Koreans.

Bai stands.

BAI (CONT'D)

Any other surprises? I probably  
have a meeting with someone  
important in a few minutes.

Vincent shakes his head.

HACKNEY

No. That's it.

Hackney stands.

VINCENT

Thank you. What you are doing is  
greatly appreciated.

Bai shakes her head.

BAI

It's madness.

EXT. PENTAGON -- MOMENTS LATER

Bai pulls out her cell and makes a call as she walks toward her car.

SHO KIM (V.O.)

Sho Kim.

BAI

(in Korean)

Tell them I'm coming in.

Bai ends the call.

EXT. SOFITEL -- NIGHT

INT. BAI'S HOTEL ROOM -- NIGHT

Bai enters the room -- flops down on the bed -- lies there looking at the ceiling for a moment.

Bai grabs pen and paper from the night stand -- scribbles a note.

She crosses -- knocks on the door separating her room from Sidney's adjoining room.

Sidney opens the door -- Bai holds up the note that reads: "have you swept my room for bugs?"

Sidney holds a finger in the air, signaling Bai to wait a moment.

She disappears into her room -- returns with a small bug detecting device -- checks the room.

Bai sits -- scribbles a second note.

Sidney sweeps the entire room -- turns to Bai and gives a thumbs up.

Bai stands -- shows Sidney the second note which reads: "are you wearing a wire?"

Sidney tilts her head to the side.

Each woman's eyes locked on the others.

After a moment, Sidney begins removing her clothes.

Bai grabs one of her t-shirts -- takes a seat on the edge of the bed.

Sidney reaches her bra and panties -- holds her arms out -- turns around to show Bai she's clean.

Bai signals for Sidney to remove all her clothing.

Reluctantly, Sidney complies -- removes her bra and panties -- executes another spin move.

BAI  
Throw those clothes in your room  
and close the door.

Sidney follows Bai's instructions.

Bai motions for Sidney to join her on the bed.

SIDNEY  
It's tempting. But I don't think  
that's a good idea.

BAI  
I'm not going to screw you, silly.  
Just come sit down and talk.

Bai tosses Sidney the t-shirt -- strips down to her white t-shirt and panties.

Sidney slides on the t-shirt -- takes a seat next to Bai.

Bai interlocks her fingers with Sidney's.

Sidney swallows hard.

BAI (CONT'D)  
(softly)  
I'm not coming back.

SIDNEY  
I know.

Bai cuts her eyes at Sidney.

BAI  
Thanks for being so positive.

Sidney squeezes Bai's hand.

SIDNEY  
Don't look at me like that. They're  
throwing you into the lion's den.

BAI  
You don't know the half of it.

SIDNEY

What? That you're from North Korea,  
that you were trained in Russia,  
that you were planted in Georgia  
when you were twelve, that the  
North Koreans are pissed because  
you refused to be recalled.

Bai sits up releasing Sidney's hand.

BAI

How do you know that? Vincent?  
Hackney?

Sidney grabs Bai's hand -- holds her there.

SIDNEY

What they don't know is that the  
plan to sink the aircraft carrier  
was two years in the making.

BAI

Sink the carrier?

SIDNEY

The missile from the trawler. Their  
own spy -- you -- spoiled their big  
plan and they are really pissed.

BAI

How do you know this?

SIDNEY

One of the pilots you shot down has  
a brother -- a General -- they were  
very close.

BAI

Why are you telling me this?

SIDNEY

There's more. The Russian's don't  
want you blabbing about your  
training at the Lenin School  
either.

Bai rubs her head.

BAI

This is too much.

SIDNEY

I'm sorry. I don't want you to go  
in there blind.

(MORE)



SIDNEY (CONT'D)

You've got to know the whole story  
to know what you're getting into.

Sidney tugs on Bai's hand -- encourages her to sit close again.

Bai moves back beside her.

BAI

I should run. Disappear.

SIDNEY

With the Russians, North Koreans,  
and Americans on your tail, you  
wouldn't stand a chance.

BAI

So, this is it. My last night in  
the good ole U.S.A.

Sidney squeezes her hand reassuringly.

BAI (CONT'D)

You don't know everything about me.

SIDNEY

I know more than those clowns at  
the Pentagon.

Bai moves her legs off the side of the bed -- sits -- looks over her shoulder back at Sidney.

BAI

Want me to show you?

SIDNEY

Yes.

Bai turns away -- reaches back - pulls her t-shirt off over her head.

Sidney gasps -- covers her mouth.

The dark stripes from Bai's childhood lashings crisscross her back.

Sidney touches Bai's bare shoulder with a fingertip.

Bai reflexively jerks away.

SIDNEY (CONT'D)

Sorry.

BAI  
No. It's OK. Go ahead.

SIDNEY  
Who did this to you?

Bai just shakes her head.

Sidney unhooks Bai's bra and slips it off her shoulders.

Bai lets the bra drop to the floor.

Sidney runs her finger along each of the twelve stripes, one at a time, from one side of Bai's back to the other.

Bai's lips move as she silently counts each stripe as Sidney traces it.

When she's finished, Sidney leans forward and places her lips softly on Bai's shoulders.

Hairs stand on end as goose bumps form on Bai's skin.

Sidney's tears drip -- streak down Bai's chest.

Bai turns her face toward Sidney's -- they kiss.

EXT. JOINT BASE ANDREWS, MARYLAND - THE NEXT MORNING

An enormous Russian cargo plane waits on the tarmac.

A Russian AIRCREWMAN leads Bai toward the plane.

Bai looks back toward the terminal.

Behind the glass, Sidney raises a hand in an awkward wave.

Bai nods.

INT. RUSSIAN CARGO PLANE - SAME

The Aircrewman leads Bai up the ramp to a wide open cargo area.

He points her to a seat along the wall across from the plane's only other passenger, Yefghini.

The Aircrewman hands each a bottle of water.

BAI  
What's the inflight meal service  
like on these things?

Yefghini laughs.

The Aircrewman shakes his head and walks away.

YEFGHINI  
(in Russian)  
You Americans think everything's a  
joke.

Yefghini cracks the seal on his water and takes a long swig.

The ramp closes and the plane taxis for takeoff.

BAI  
You know who I am?

Bai opens her water and drinks.

YEFGHINI  
(in Russian)  
Indeed. You are the sweet little  
girl that destroyed the plans of  
one of our closest allies. You've  
made many people very angry.

Bai takes another drink.

BAI  
It's been a long time since  
somebody called me sweet.

YEFGHINI  
Bitch -- Whore -- Cunt. These are  
the names I've heard you called  
recently.

The aircraft accelerates -- airborne.

BAI  
Ah. You know my North Korean  
friends?

The plane buffets -- Bai reaches for her head -- terror in  
her eyes.

YEFGHINI  
Indeed I do. General Cho mourns the  
death of his brother.

Bai's eyelids are heavy -- hard to hold open.

BAI  
What did you do?

YEFGHINI

General Cho is very anxious to meet  
you.

Bai's head droops -- unconscious.

EXT. SUNCHON AIRPORT - EVENING

Three MIG-29's sit outside an open hangar.

INT. HANGAR - SAME

Bai's now dressed in a North Korean flight suit and harness --  
tied to a chair -- still unconscious.

A brutal slap to her face snaps her back to life.

General Cho, dressed in a flight suit and harness, steps  
forward.

GENERAL CHO

So, this is the great American  
pilot.

BAI

Good enough to beat your brother.

A second slap topples Bai and her chair to the side.

Cho's head and neck burn red with rage.

The General grabs her by the front of her flight suit and  
yanks her up to a seated position.

Blood trickles from the corner of her mouth.

The General pulls the Paektusan semi-automatic pistol from  
its holster and presses it to Bai's head.

Yefghini steps forward.

YEFGHINI

Remember the plan, General.

The General hesitates -- removes the pistol from her head --  
yells.

GENERAL CHO

Cut her loose.

The SECOND PILOT steps forward and cuts the bindings.

Bai stands and Cho buries a fist into her abdomen.

Bai drops to her knees -- drags herself back to her feet.

Cho looks at Yefghini.

YEFGHINI

She's a tough one. You saw the scars on her back.

BAI

What did you assholes do to me?

Yefghini motions to Bai with both hands in a calming motion.

YEFGHINI

Don't worry. I supervised your clothing change. You were not violated in any way.

Cho picks up a flight helmet and jams it into Bai's chest.

BAI

What's that for?

GENERAL CHO

To see if you can do it again.

BAI

Do what again?

Cho points to a MIG.

GENERAL CHO

You will get in that plane and we will see if you can shoot me down.

BAI

There are three planes.

Cho gestures to the second pilot.

GENERAL CHO

Captain Bur will be my wingman.

CAPTAIN BUR

It will be an honor seeing you fall from the sky.

BAI

Two on one. Sounds fair.

Bai turns toward the plane she has been assigned.

BAI (CONT'D)

So, what? This plane has no bullets  
or missiles?

Yefghini laughs.

GENERAL CHO

I assure you that the plane has a  
full compliment of fuel, weapons,  
and countermeasures.

BAI

Forgive me if I don't take your  
word for it.

Cho huffs.

GENERAL CHO

Go ahead. Pick any of the three.  
The choice is yours.

Bai looks over the aircraft. The one in the middle is painted  
in a fancy blue camouflage paint scheme.

BAI

I was promised a flight in a MIG-  
29K. I'll take the pretty one.

Cho guffaws.

GENERAL CHO

You can take the K model but I  
assure you there is no Russian  
carrier to land aboard.

Bai glares at Yefghini.

Yefghini shrugs.

Bai strides toward her aircraft -- barks orders in Korean at  
the ground crewmen -- crewmen scatter preparing the plane for  
flight.

Bai climbs up the ladder and straps in.

She wastes no time firing up the engine.

She doesn't wait for ground clearance and begins to taxi for  
the runway.

Cho and Bur hurry to keep up.

Voices over the radio instruct her to stop.

An aircraft on approach for landing must wave-off as Bai taxis onto the runway without clearance.

Bai jams the throttle to full power and takes off. She levels the aircraft and increases her speed - skims the tree tops.

Cho and Bur take off seconds behind her.

INT. COCKPIT - SAME

Bai pulls the plane into the vertical gaining altitude.

BEEP -- BEEP -- BEEP

Bai slams the stick hard left -- a missile slices past -- near hit.

Bai immediately banks hard right. Her head snaps back and forth across the sky looking for her two adversaries.

Bai switches the radio to the last frequency she used for Red Crown.

BAI  
(cool, melodic)  
Red Crown, Red Crown, this is  
Dragon over.

Bai spots the two MIGs.

RED CROWN  
Dragon? This is Red Crown go ahead.

The two aircraft converge on Bai's.

Bai makes evasive maneuvers.

BAI  
Red Crown, yes it's Dragon. I am  
flying a MIG-29K with two MIGs in  
pursuit.

The General fires his cannon.

A round penetrates the cockpit and Bai's left leg.

Bai cries out in pain.

Blood oozes from the hole in her G-Suit.

RED CROWN

Dragon, we have you on radar. We have requested launch of the alert five eta your position seventeen minutes.

Bai grips her leg -- excruciating pain.

BAI

Red Crown, I've been hit, but I'm still operational. This is going to be over in thirty seconds.

Bai grunts -- arms all missiles.

She maneuvers -- pulls hard on the stick -- G-forces press her into her ejection seat -- blood squirts from her leg.

The hard pull gets her behind the Captain's MIG -- obtains first missile lock -- fires.

BAI (CONT'D)

Fox one.

With no time to watch the missile, she banks the plane hard right -- pulls hard again -- grunts to keep the blood in her brain.

Blood gushes from her leg as the G-Forces squeeze her.

Air hisses from the hole in her G-suit -- useless.

Countermeasures pour from the Captain's MIG to no avail.

The Captain's MIG explodes.

BAI (CONT'D)

Splash one.

Bai rolls left -- pulls hard.

A missile screeches past her cockpit.

The General's aircraft comes into view -- no match for Bai.

She obtains missile lock -- fires.

BAI (CONT'D)

Fox two.

Moments later, the General's MIG explodes.

Bai's plane flies through the fireball.



BAI (CONT'D)  
 Splash two.

INT. SITUATION ROOM - SAME

Yefghini watches the battle on radar -- sees the second MIG disappear.

He leans forward and speaks into a desktop microphone.

YEFGHINI  
 (in Russian)  
 Dragon Slayer, clear to engage.

RUSSIAN PILOT  
 (in Russian)  
 Roger, Dragon Slayer engaging.

YEFGHINI  
 Let's see how she does against the  
 best Russia has to offer.

INT. COCKPIT - SAME

Bai grips her bleeding leg -- takes a deep breath - swallows hard.

BEEP -- BEEP -- BEEP.

Bai slams the stick hard left.

BAI  
 What the hell?

A missile screams past.

RED CROWN  
 Dragon, new contact, twelve  
 thousand feet.

BAI  
 (to herself)  
 No shit.

The Russian Sukhoi SU-57 stealth fighter screams toward Bai.

BAI (CONT'D)  
 (to herself)  
 That's no MIG.

RUSSIAN PILOT  
(in Russian)  
Hello Dragon. Sorry, but this must  
also be goodbye.

BAI  
(to herself)  
Cocky bastard.

The two aircraft pass each other nose to nose -- Bai rolls inverted -- yanks back on the stick.

The Russian pilot flips the plane so that it rotates until facing the opposite direction - its relative speed dropping quickly.

Half-way through her inverted loop, Bai spots the Russian.

BAI (CONT'D)  
(to herself)  
I've read about that maneuver.

Bai hears a tone as she acquires missile lock.

BAI (CONT'D)  
(to herself)  
Goodbye.

Bai fires the missile that races toward the Russian aircraft.

BAI (CONT'D)  
Red Crown, fox three.

The missile shears the Russian's tail sending it spinning out of control.

The Russian pilot ejects.

Bai watches as the parachute opens.

BAI (CONT'D)  
(to herself)  
Perhaps we will meet again.

BAI (CONT'D)  
Red Crown, splash three.

Bai grimaces in excruciating pain.

The low fuel warning light illuminates and the buzzer sounds.

BAI (CONT'D)  
Of course, I'm out of fuel.

BAI (CONT'D)

Red Crown, Dragon. Emergency fuel,  
request a vector direct to  
Michigan.

RED CROWN

Turn right heading one-niner-five  
degrees.

BAI

Coming right to heading one-niner-  
five. I need to speak with the LSO  
for the 115.

RED CROWN

Stand by.

Bai tries to put pressure on her bleeding leg -- little room  
to move in the cramped cockpit.

BAI

Red Crown, say range to Michigan.

RED CROWN

Range sixty-eight miles.

BAI

Roger.

MARLIN

Dragon, this is Marlin, over.

BAI

Marlin, I'm flying a MIG-29K. I'm  
hit. Requesting immediate clearance  
to land on Michigan.

MARLIN

But it's a MIG.

BAI

It has a tailhook.

MARLIN

Let me see what I can do.

RED CROWN

Dragon turn right heading two-zero-  
zero.

BAI

Roger two-zero-zero.

Bai breathes hard -- covered in sweat and blood.

MARLIN

Dragon suggest an emergency landing  
at a Japanese air base.

BAI

That's a negative Marlin.  
Requesting landing on Michigan.

Frustrated, Bai slams a hand into the cockpit window.

BAI (CONT'D)

Red Crown, confirm clear of bogeys.

RED CROWN

That's affirmative.

MARLIN

Have you ever landed a MIG before?

BAI

This will be a first.

MARLIN

The request is going up the chain  
of command.

BAI

Marlin, I'm injured. Don't let them  
make me punch out. It's either the  
carrier or the drink.

Bai squeezes her injured leg.

RED CROWN

Dragon, meet the Air Boss, this  
frequency.

BAI

Roger. Boss, this is Dragon  
requesting immediate Charlie.

AIR BOSS

Working on it. Say fuel and weight.

BAI

Fuel is 1.2. Weight, 25,500 pounds.

AIR BOSS

Dragon, Charlie. I just spoke with  
the President of the United States.  
You are clear to land. Meet the  
LSO this frequency.

BAI

Roger.

Nearing the ship, she drops the landing gear and flaps to two-thirds.

She's lost a lot of blood -- more pours from the wound.

Her vision darkens for a moment.

She takes a deep grunting breath and her vision clears.

The MIG's wings dip up and back as she struggles to maintain control.

Bai moves the tailhook lever into the down position.

She picks up the meatball -- she is on the glideslope.

MARLIN

Dragon, Paddles, call the ball.

BAI

Dragon, ball, 0.8, Fulcrum.

MARLIN

Roger ball, Dragon.

Bai tries to remain focused.

MARLIN (CONT'D)

Easy with it.

Bai's hands work the controls making multiple tiny corrections per second.

MARLIN (CONT'D)

Right for lineup.

Bai dips the right wing for a microsecond.

Seconds later, the MIG makes its first arrested landing on a U.S. Aircraft Carrier.

Bai shuts down the engines while the plane is still in the wires -- then she passes out.

The deck hands struggle to find a way to open the canopy of the unfamiliar MIG.

Finally, the crew opens the canopy manually.

Medical personnel pull Bai's lifeless body from the aircraft.

Marlin rushes up and runs along side the gurney.

INT. FORD INFIRMARY -- LATER

Bai lies in a hospital bed covered with a sheet, except for her exposed left leg that is wrapped with a bandage -- an IV runs to her arm.

Marlin stands at the foot of the bed talking softly with the Air Boss and the Flag Admiral.

AIR BOSS

Do you think they were attempting to take her out?

FLAG ADMIRAL

The Russians and the North Koreans are allies. They would be attacking and shooting down their friend's aircraft.

AIR BOSS

Maybe they had permission.

That thought hangs in the air a moment.

MARLIN

We are looking at the first American Ace since Vietnam.

AIR BOSS

She's one hell of a pilot.

The three men look at Bai.

Bai wakes with a start.

She looks around in an attempt to get her bearings - sedatives and blood loss have left her in a fog.

The three men move up beside the bed.

BAI

(hoarsely)

Water please.

Marlin picks up a water glass with a straw -- puts it to Bai's mouth.

She sucks and sucks and sucks on the straw.

MARLIN

You might want to take it easy.

FLAG ADMIRAL  
Can we get you anything?

BAI  
Morphine.

AIR BOSS  
Sorry. The doctor says you're not  
that bad off.

BAI  
Tell the Doctor he's next on my  
list.

The men chuckle.

Bai touches her leg.

BAI (CONT'D)  
My leg?

MARLIN  
It's still there. Doctor says it  
will be fine. Bullet nicked the  
artery but you had surgery to  
stitch it up and clean the metal  
from the wound.

Bai nods.

FLAG ADMIRAL  
I'll admit, that's the first  
cockpit I've seen completely  
covered in blood.

AIR BOSS  
Now, this is important. After we  
removed you from the MIG, we put it  
on an elevator straight to the  
hangar bay. We then launched a  
fake rescue of you from the sea.  
You were forced to eject after  
running out of fuel. Luckily we  
were able to save you.

BAI  
In other words, we stole a MIG.

MARLIN  
Sort of. You were invited to fly  
the plane. No one said a word  
about returning it.

FLAG ADMIRAL  
Get well Dragon. The President  
wants you on the first flight to  
D.C., when you're able.

Bai shakes her head no.

BAI  
Rest.

MARLIN  
Yes, get some rest.

Bai closes her eyes -- the men turn and exit.

EXT. WHITE HOUSE -- A FEW DAYS LATER

EXT. ROSE GARDEN -- EVENING

A large crowd has gathered.

The President exits the White House leading Bai, the  
Commandant, and Sidney to the stage area.

The President takes the podium.

PRESIDENT  
Hello America. We are back here  
again today to celebrate the  
heroics of Captain Bai "Dragon"  
Loong. We put Dragon in harms way  
a second time and she again  
performed in an exemplary fashion --

EXT. ROSE GARDEN - LATER

Bai now wears the insignia of Major and a Congressional Medal  
of Honor hangs from her neck.

The President places a second Medal of Honor around Bai's  
neck.

Bai salutes the President.

The President returns the salute.

The crowd claps enthusiastically.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - NIGHT



EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING OF LIM MING -- NIGHT

The street is dark -- deserted.

A homeless person sleeps on the steps to the building -  
tattered blanket covering everything.

Lim Ming whistles a tune as he approaches the stairs.

When he keys the lock to the front door -- the homeless  
person rises -- pulls a 9mm with a silencer -- squeezes the  
trigger.

SILENCED 9MM gunshot.

Lim's brain and blood splatter the door.

The homeless person checks up and down the street for  
witnesses -- sees no one -- vanishes into the shadows.

EXT. PENTAGON -- THE NEXT DAY

INT. PENTAGON CONFERENCE ROOM -- SAME

Bai, Hackney, and Vincent sit at the conference table.

HACKNEY

Major, you pulled off one of the  
best pieces of espionage in recent  
history.

VINCENT

When we sent you to North Korea, we  
had no idea you'd come back with a  
MIG.

BAI

Well, I'm pretty dedicated to my  
work. You two take credit for being  
the brains of the operation?

Smiles all around.

HACKNEY

That's still on the down low.

Bai nods.

VINCENT

There's something else.

HACKNEY

Where were you last night?

BAI

I was back at the hotel after an early dinner. Why?

HACKNEY

Lim Ming was murdered last night.

Bai jumps up and claps her hands together.

BAI

That is awesome.

Hackney and Vincent stare at her.

BAI (CONT'D)

What? You think I had something to do with it? I wish.

HACKNEY

So, your were not involved in any way?

BAI

If I was, I would be bragging about it right now. I would tell anyone that would listen.

Vincent looks down shaking his head.

HACKNEY

I for one am glad you were not involved.

BAI

What about the Ambassador? Someone should take care of him next.

VINCENT

No one is taking care of the Ambassador. He is harmless.

BAI

Dammit. But that is great news about Ming. I couldn't be happier. He couldn't deliver and got himself killed.

VINCENT

He delivered you on a silver platter.

Bai waves him off.

BAI  
Whatever.

HACKNEY  
In the office pool, seventy-five percent of the participants picked you as the shooter.

Bai laughs.

BAI  
Please tell the seventy-five percent that I'm truly sorry it wasn't me.

VINCENT  
So, we hear you are off to test pilot school?

BAI  
I've got to keep flying and no one wants to fly with me on my third mission anyway.

The men laugh.

HACKNEY  
Can you blame them?

BAI  
If you want to see some real action, fly with the Dragon.

Bai shakes her head.

BAI (CONT'D)  
Well, if that's it, I will be seeing you gentlemen around.

The men stand and they all shake hands.

HACKNEY  
It was a real pleasure.

BAI  
Thank you both.

Bai exits the Conference Room and heads toward the lobby.

INT. LOBBY -- MOMENTS LATER

Sidney sits on the floor working on her laptop.

When she sees Bai, she gathers up her gear.

BAI

I just heard some interesting news.

SIDNEY

Oh yeah?

BAI

That bastard Lim Ming was murdered  
last night.

Sidney shrugs.

SIDNEY

Got what he deserved, right?

BAI

He did indeed.

Bai gives Sidney a curious look.

BAI (CONT'D)

Did you hear anything about it?

SIDNEY

Me. No. Nobody tells me anything.

BAI

How about I give you the night off  
and buy you a beer, since I'm  
heading to Patuxent River tomorrow?

SIDNEY

I'm all in.

Bai smiles.

The two exit the Pentagon.

As they walk toward the sedan, Bai rests a hand on Sidney's  
shoulder -- leans in close to her ear.

BAI

Now, about the South Korean  
Ambassador --

FADE OUT.