

FADE IN:

LOGO for "The Documentary Network"

A Black-and-White News Documentary begins with:

A 1950s-era photo of a somber Chinese couple holding a newborn baby wrapped in a blanket.

The photo is fading from age. The edges are ragged and slightly torn.

EXTREMELY SAD MUSIC

A woman named LORI, whom we meet later, narrates.

LORI (V.O.)
For decades, China's birth control
policy has mandated one child only
per family.

This snapshot dissolves to another more recent photo of an elderly couple standing next to their one son, who is wearing work clothes and carrying a crate of produce.

LORI (V.O.)
For survival, parents require their
only child to be a son. As is
customary, he will contribute to
the family's economic livelihood
and support them in their old age.

The snapshot dissolves to an assortment of recent black-and-white photos of various Chinese families.

There are no daughters, just sons.

LORI (V.O.)
The result is that many couples
either abort female fetuses or
abandon their female newborns.

With each photo, the focus on the mothers gets fuzzier and more obscured.

LORI (V.O.)
Today there is a severe shortage of
women. In rural areas, the gender
gap is the most devastating.

The last photo is of a Chinese bride and groom.

It dissolves into a black-and-white home movie of their wedding.

LORI (V.O.)
For every 100 women, there are
between 120 to 140 men.

FIRECRACKERS are going off, as mostly male wedding guests watch the festivities.

LORI (V.O.)
In this vast country where men are
culturally and economically
required to produce heirs, there
aren't enough women to marry.

The groom is smiling. The bride looks miserable.

The MUSIC ends on a sadly disturbing note.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

EXT. RURAL CHINA - DAY

No more black-and-white documentary! No more sad music!

Upbeat MUSIC and the brilliant colors of a spectacular Chinese landscape take over.

Steep, jagged snow capped mountains provide a dramatic and imposing backdrop for this valley known as the "Red Basin."

The basin is bathed in a luminous red mist.

Lining the banks of this valley's gentle river are orchards that stretch as far as the eye can see.

At the edge of a large orchard, a peasant named FENG (27, very pretty) picks oranges and puts them into crates.

She HUMS happily.

Feng drops an orange and it rolls over to a large woven basket.

As she bends over to retrieve the errant orange, she changes her mind and reaches out to pick some hibiscus, which grows in vivid red along the orchard's edge.

Feng breaks off a bloom and reaches into the woven basket.

Inside is an 8-month-old baby boy wrapped in a blanket.

She tickles the baby's nose with it. The baby smiles and kicks his feet in glee.

Feng hears a LOUD MOTOR and looks around. She sees a rickety van approaching.

A CREEPY MAN gets out and shouts to her.

CREEPY MAN
I am recruiting for high-paying
jobs in the city.

Feng shakes her head "no" and looks demurely at the ground.

VERY FAINT BANGING NOISES come from the van.

Feng, suspicious, darts her eyes from the Creepy Man to the van.

The Creepy Man looks over to the van, concerned.

Subtly, without the Creepy Man seeing, Feng uses her foot to push the baby basket out of sight behind the hibiscus bush.

The Creepy Man tries one more time to motion Feng over to his van. She emphatically shakes her head "no."

The Creepy Man shrugs his shoulders, walks back towards the van and gets in. It speeds off.

Feng watches the van drive around the bend. Looking relieved, she goes back to picking oranges.

Suddenly, oranges fly everywhere as the Creepy Man grabs Feng from behind.

He puts a fluid-soaked handkerchief up to her mouth.

Her body goes limp in the man's arms. Her eyes roll around in their sockets. Feng passes out cold.

The Creepy Man does a BIRD WHISTLE.

A POCK-MARKED FACE MAN drives up with the van. The Creepy Man callously throws Feng into the back of the van and speeds off.

The baby remains, playing with the sprig of hibiscus among a sea of spilled oranges.

These oranges dissolve to:

EXT. OUTDOOR MARKET - DAY

Oranges at fruit stalls in a poor market town.

An ORANGE VENDOR shouts to shoppers, trying to draw customers.

ORANGE VENDOR
Sweetest and cheapest. Best in the
Red Basin.
(beat)
Pretty orange for a pretty lady?

The pretty lady that he is offering an orange to smiles at him as she walks at a rapid speed by the stalls in this rustic market.

She is dressed very differently from all the peasant women there. She carries off the simple elegance of Armani from head-to-toe.

This polished woman wears a business pants-suit and carries a briefcase, all the while turbo-talking financial lingo into a cell phone.

DOCTOR LORI WONG (35) is a Chinese-American economics professor from Philadelphia.

LORI
(on cell phone)
The sticking point is going to be
getting the small business loan
rates down to 3% and setting up
local accounts for wireless
transfers.

She stops at an apple vendor's stall.

With extreme multi-tasking dexterity, she juggles her cell phone and brief case while she selects a particular apple, pays the vendor and doesn't miss a beat of her cell phone conversation.

LORI
(on cell phone)
Unless the cash disbursements are
secured electronically, the
government could get its greedy
little paws into it all too easily.
That defeats the whole purpose.

A really handsome Chinese man named HSI-WA stands next to a
small, white car.

He smiles a dazzling smile as he waves at his client.

Lori takes a bite out of her apple and waves back.

LORI
(on cell phone)
I have to go. Hsi-Wa is here. I
have a presentation at the labor
market in...

Lori looks at her watch and rushes to the car, where Hsi-Wa
holds the car door open for her.

LORI
(on cell phone)
...oh shoot, five minutes. Tell
the Ambassador that I've finally
made my decision. I'll call her
and let her know as soon as I'm
finished there.

Lori looks very happy. She snaps the cell phone closed as
her driver, Hsi-Wa, closes the door behind her.

I/E CAR- VARIOUS ROADS - MOVING - CONTINUOUS

Nearly the whole time that he is recklessly speeding along,
Hsi-Wa turns almost completely around to talk to Lori in the
back seat of his car.

He almost collides into cars, fruit wagons and trees, but
LAUGHS OFF all his near misses.

HSI-WA
I to feel da need, da need for
speed.

Lori LAUGHS.

LORI

You put the cruise in Tom Cruise.

HSI-WA

He da man!

LORI

You da man, Hsi-Wa! You have made me laugh more this past year than I have in a very long time.

HSI-WA

Sad lady, this trip good for you.
Make you to smile again.

The car swerves around treacherous serpentine bends in the road.

HSI-WA

Doctor Wong, you to take me back with you? I to be your driver in city of "Brotherly Rocky?"

Hsi-Wa loudly HUMS the famous theme music to the movie, "Rocky" and extends his arms like Rocky did triumphantly at the top of the steps.

LORI

Why not, Hsi-wa? You drive way better than the cabbies back in Philly!

Hsi-Wa WHISTLES loudly and waves his arm, pretending he is hailing a taxi.

HSI-WA

(with a "Rocky" accent)
Yo, taxi!

LORI

I am going to miss you. And all your movie lines.

HSI-WA

You complete me.

The car almost crashes into a team of oxen crossing this rural road.

Hsi-Wa swerves at a high speed and laughs it off.

HSI-WA

You can to have husband and driver
in one man, if you to want. I to
give you my heart and liver.

Lori smiles at his sweetness.

Hsi-Wa pulls into a dirt lot and slams on the brakes.

Lori looks at her watch.

LORI
I should take you back with me.
I'd never be late for anything.

EXT. LABOR MARKET - CONTINUOUS

Hsi-Wa proudly grins from ear to ear as he helps Lori out of the car.

She looks at the hundreds of women lining up in the dirt lot outside a large building.

Hsi-Wa reaches into the car and takes out a Polaroid camera. He hands it to Lori.

She takes a shot that encompasses the women and the Chinese sign on the building.

A few seconds later the photo slides out of the camera and she hands it to Hsi-Wa.

LORI
Would you label this "FIVE EYE
BRIDGE LABOR MARKET" and put it in
the IWB file with the others?

CHINA LANDSCAPE MONTAGE

Fast motion:

We are traveling far away from the Five Eye Bridge Labor Market in the Red Basin.

In a matter of seconds, the landscapes, topography and climates change dramatically.

EXT. ORPHANAGE - DAY

We finally stop at an orphanage thousands of miles away.

It's in a rundown, dilapidated building.

An unseen door SLAMS.

INT. ORPHANAGE - DAY

In the main room of this orphanage, there is a hushed silence as an older, ugly, fat man named ZHU walks pompously from the door down the aisle of an auditorium.

His starched military uniform is the ominous green of the PLA, the Chinese Army.

A sign on the wall reads in English: "ST. JOSEPH'S MISSIONARY ORPHANAGE."

There are hundreds of girls of all ages sitting at strict attention in stiff school chairs.

However, there are only three boys.

They all have obvious physical disabilities-- two are in wheelchairs and one is standing with the help of leg braces and crutches.

The adorable boy with leg braces cowers next to his crutches in the back of the crowded room.

In his hand, the boy clutches a paint brush.

An AMERICAN NUN in an old fashioned habit grabs the cowering boy. His crutches CLATTER to the floor.

She pulls him towards Zhu, who is now sitting in a big throne-like chair as he holds court at the front of the room.

In Zhu's hands are small, marble-like balls. CLICKETY CLICK. CLICKETY CLICK. He plays with them absentmindedly, rolling them around in his palm. It is eerie.

At his feet are huge piles of assorted gifts of art supplies for the children.

The nun leaves the adorable little boy standing directly in front of Zhu.

The boy is having trouble standing without his crutches and almost falls as he tries to bow to the fat, ugly man.

He still holds the paint brush tightly.

A little girl brings him his crutches so he can stand.

ZHU

I see you have chosen a brush as
one of your gifts.

The boy is too shy to answer.

The nun nervously bows to Zhu.

AMERICAN NUN

My humble apologies, Commander Zhu.
This boy just came to us from our
Jesuit missionary in the south.

The angry nun gets right in the boy's face and yells at him
through clenched teeth.

NUN

Thank our distinguished graduate
for his gifts!

LITTLE BOY

Th-, th-, thank you, Hon-, Hon-,
Honorable Zh-, Zh-, Zhu for, for,
for the paint and, and, and the
can, can-, canvases and, and, the
bru-, bru-

Zhu graciously finishes the sentence for the boy.

ZHU

Brushes, yes. It makes me happy to
give them to you. What is your
name?

LITTLE BOY

L-, L-, Liu.

ZHU

Sister Ann tells me that you have a
special artistic gift. Do you have
a painting hanging in the classroom
with the other children's?

Liu nods.

ZHU

Wonderful. I will examine it today
and we'll talk about it when I
return next month.

Zhu rubs the boy's head affectionately.

The boy nervously bows one more time.

Zhu watches him hobble away with difficulty.

The room is deadly silent except for the SOUNDS of the boy's CRUTCHES tapping forward in a one-two rhythm, then a DRAGGING SOUND while he pulls his mismatched legs along from behind.

CUT TO:

Zhu's POV changes.

He is still looking at a boy with leg braces, but this time the boy is in a child's painting.

It is a well-drawn but violent depiction of the boy using his crutches to fend off an attack by a gruesome monster.

Reveal: We now see that Zhu is all alone in a dark and shadowy classroom in the orphanage.

There are children's drawings on easels all around the room.

Zhu examines the adorable boy's artwork again.

Zhu is in deep thought, almost a trance, as he runs his finger over the shapes in the painting.

In his other hand, he rolls the marbles around in his hand. CLICKETY CLICK. CLICKETY CLICK.

RAPID LANDSCAPE CHANGES

In seconds, we travel thousands of miles back to the Five Eye Bridge Labor Market.

EXT. LABOR MARKET - DAY

Hundreds of women are filing into the building, single-file.

Among the hundreds of women in line, a short, pimply-faced teenager named LIHONG (18) complains to her friend JINLIAN (18), who is unusually tall and has hair almost down to her waist.

LIHONG

It's like our job is to look for a job.

JINLIAN

We're never going to find one if we stay in the Red Basin.

(whispers)

I hear there is a man hiring women for high-paying jobs in the city.

They stop talking and just stare as Lori walks by them and goes into the building.

JINLIAN

(re: Lori)

I bet you that fancy lady works in the city.

LIHONG

You would move away from everyone who loves you dearly? And what about the widower Chiang?

JINLIAN

That old bag of flatulence? He's a flabby, disgusting man and I don't like it when he tries to rub me when my mother is not looking.

Lihong looks disapprovingly at Jinlian.

LIHONG

Women like us can not afford to marry for love.

JINLIAN

Says who?

Nearby, the Creepy Man eyes up Jinlian, who is unaware of his lurking presence.

LIHONG

What does your mother say?

JINLIAN

She will go with me. She has food and medicine only when I work.

(beat)

I am going to find him.

Jinlian breaks out of the official queue with a look and a stride that demonstrates extreme confidence, especially when compared to the sea of small and timid women surrounding her.

The Creepy Man follows.

He watches Jinlian approaches several male visitors entering the labor market.

JINLIAN
Do you need a worker? I have many
skills.

The man shakes his head no. Jinlian darts to another man.

JINLIAN
Do you need a worker? I have--

The second man shakes his head no. Jinlian perseveres.

JINLIAN
Do you need a--

The third man shakes his head no.

An elderly stooped-over woman, LUA, is in line watching all of this.

The Creepy Man approaches Jinlian.

Lua looks suspiciously at the Creepy Man, then hobbles over to Jinlian and forcefully grabs her arm.

Lua points out the Creepy Man to Jinlian, who boldly looks at him in disgust.

LUA
Jinlian, be careful.

Jinlian kisses the woman on the cheek.

JINLIAN
Mother, I am going to make
something good happen for us.

LUA
I hear there is an American woman
inside who pays money if we listen
to her speak and answer her
questions about jobs. It is safer.

INT. LABOR MARKET - DAY

Inside the Five Eye Bridge Labor Market, hundreds of poor women are assembling in a makeshift auditorium.

EXT. LABOR MARKET - DAY

The Creepy Man's POV as he peeks into the auditorium from an outside window.

INT. LABOR MARKET - DAY

POV: inside the auditorium, facing the window where the Creepy Man looks in.

His eyes dart here, there, everywhere.

Jinlian and Lihong sit down in the back as Lori stands in front of the gathering.

LORI

My name is Doctor Lori Wong. I'm a professor at the Wharton School of International Economics at the University of Pennsylvania in the United States.

(beat)

That's a mouthful, huh?

Lori smiles and waits for a response.

The audience doesn't laugh or smile. The women are still too wary of this stranger.

LORI

I took a year-long sabbatical from teaching to travel all over China and talk to women such as yourselves. I'm especially happy to be in your village today, because I was born not too far from here.

LUA shouts from the audience.

LUA

You American or Chinese?

LORI

Both. We left China when I was two. My parents both passed away last year, as you would say, gone on to the Yellow Springs, so I'm doing this in honor of them and the love they instilled in me for China.

The audience looks at Lori more warmly. Lua speaks up again.

LUA

American Chinese lady, so sorry for your sorrow, but why are you here?

LORI

Okay, here's another mouthful. I am here to study the role of Chinese women in rural economies. My research is funded by the IWB, the International Women's Bank.

Lua shouts out again.

LUA

There are women rich enough to have their own bank? And men let them?

LORI

It wasn't easy!

The audience finally gets Lori's sense of humor and laughs along with her.

LORI

But seriously, the IWB was started by women who are former United Nations ambassadors. Many of these powerful women grew up poor in poor countries. They've gotten together to create a different kind of world banking system that puts money in women's pockets at the local level.

(beat)

For the past ten years, this bank has given poor women all over the world low interest loans and grants to start their own businesses and become more self-sufficient.

LUA

Chinese women, too?

LORI

Not yet, but we're hoping to change that with this study. My job is to analyze the skills you already have and then develop programs that will teach you how to transform those

skills into businesses that your
village economy can support.

Lua interrupts yet again.

LUA
What about this money you promised
us today?

LORI
To show you that your time is worth
money, the IWB will pay 100 yuan to
any of you who will do individual
interviews about your work history
and skills.

The women smile and MURMUR.

CUT TO:

Lori is at a crude desk with one chair in front of it.
INTERVIEWEE #1 sits in that chair. Lori hands over the
money (yuan) to the very timid and nervous woman.

INTERVIEWEE #1
I have no skills and I have never
had a job.

LORI
What do you do all day?

INTERVIEWEE #1
Cook for my husband and the other
workers in the orchard.

Lori has a tape recorder running while she takes notes.

LORI
Just because you don't get paid
doesn't mean it's not a job. And
cooking is a great skill,
especially if you can do it for
large numbers of people. How about
a restaurant?

INTERVIEWEE #1
I have never eaten in one.

LORI
Actually, what I meant was that you

could become a cook in someone's restaurant or start your own, if you wanted to.

The woman grins.

CUT TO:

INTERVIEWEE #2 is a teenager. She looks happily at the money she has just been given.

INTERVIEWEE #2
I take care of the little children while the older women pick oranges.

LORI
Day care is a growing, important field. And what about teaching?

INTERVIEWEE #2
I cannot read. I had to leave school before--

LORI
What if the IWB had a program that taught you to read? Maybe you could then teach children?

The teenager nods enthusiastically.

CUT TO:

Lua, the old woman who kept interrupting Lori's speech, sits down at Lori's table for her interview.

Lori pushes 100 yuan towards her, but Lua leaves it there.

LORI
What is your name?

LUA
You ask? I talk? You pay?

LORI
(laughs)
Yes, that's exactly it. Name?

Lua doesn't answer. Instead, she grills Lori.

LUA

Your bank gives money to women in
other countries, why not here?

LORI

(laughs)

You ask? I talk? I pay?

Lua nods several times. Lori smiles.

Lori slides the money towards Lua.

LORI

We are hoping this study will
convince the Chinese government to
let us operate here.

Lua reaches for the money, but stops when three PLA
(People's Liberation Army) officers LOUDLY enter the
auditorium, almost in a march.

Lori watches as their starched green uniforms and stiff
demeanor cause a hush in the room and strike fear on the
faces of the women.

The officers approach various women in the line and point to
Lori questioningly.

The rest of the women freeze, staring at the ground in fear.

Lori smiles and waves enthusiastically to the officers,
throwing everyone completely off guard.

The army officers look at each other in surprise. The
leader shrugs his shoulders in a gesture of indecision.

They all just stand there.

Lori turns back to Lua.

LUA

(whispers)

You are not allowed here?

LORI

To be here, talking to you-- yes.
But, so far, your government
forbids us from providing loans and
grants to Chinese women.

LUA

(loudly)

Forbidden? Then you are dangerous
for women here. I cannot take this
"grant."

Lua demonstratively pushes the money back towards Lori,
making sure the army officers see her refusing the money.

Lua rushes out of the auditorium. All of the women quickly
follow, except for Jinlian.

She struts right over to Lori.

JINLIAN
I will answer your--

Jinlian notices the Creepy Man watching them.

Gesturing with the slightest nuance of her eyes and head
tilt, Jinlian points the man out to Lori.

Lori looks at the Creepy Man and gives Jinlian a thankful
glance.

LORI
Is he another government spy or
just a pervert?

Jinlian lowers her voice.

JINLIAN
Both, for sure. But I will answer
your questions anyway. I am
hungrier than I am afraid.

EXT. VAN - DAY

The rickety van in which Feng is imprisoned drives slowly
along a pot-hole filled rural road.

INT. VAN - DAY

Feng's limp body is tossed all over the back cargo section
of the van as the vehicle goes over the bumpy roads.

I/E CAR - DAY

In the backseat of Hsi-Wa's white car are two suitcases. In
the front seat is Lori's briefcase.

The car is parked in front of a small hotel.

On the hood of the car is a well-worn map with red circles and arrows indicating where Lori has traveled all over China.

Also leaning against the car is Hsi-Wa, who is holding a bouquet of flowers.

INT. HOTEL - DAY

Lori, in a bathrobe, is talking on the phone while doing a bunch of other things all at once.

Again, she exhibits extremely good manual dexterity.

With the phone tucked under her chin, Lori stuffs a FEDEX box with thick files labeled "WONG - FINAL CHINA REPORTS" and audio cassette tapes labeled "WONG - INTERVIEWS" and a thin folder labeled "FINAL CHINA PROPOSAL" as she talks.

LORI

Ambassador, I'm sorry, but I can't accept your job offer. This year in China has made me realize how important my marriage is. I'm going back to the States and make one last try.

(listens)

Thanks for your understanding.

INT. VAN - DAY

The van hits a rut. Feng's head bangs into the back hatch door. She is startled awake.

EXT. HOTEL - DAY

Lori is dressed in a simple Chinese peasant outfit and casual sandals. She couldn't look more opposite of the businesswoman style she wore earlier.

She carries a hotel key and the large FEDEX box to the hotel reception desk.

She puts the key on the counter and the HOTEL CLERK takes it.

LORI

Checking out, please.

HOTEL CLERK

Dr. Wong, your patronage was a
pleasure.

The clerk puts a sheet of paper on the counter and gives
Lori a pen so she can sign it.

He also hands her a slim FEDEX envelope.

HOTEL CLERK
This was just delivered for you.

Lori puts her large FEDEX package on the counter.

LORI
I also have this FEDEX package to
send, if you would be kind enough
to take care of it for me.

The clerk bows and nods.

Lori looks at the slim FEDEX envelope she just received.
She stares at the "From" label and puts her hand over her
mouth in shock.

EXT. HOTEL - DAY

Lori trudges slowly out of the hotel.

She uses a tissue to wipe the streaming tears from her eyes
as she examines the papers sticking out of the slim FEDEX
envelope.

For a long moment, she stands there, just staring at them.

Hsi-Wa sees her and hides the flowers behind his back.

Lori is in another world and doesn't notice him.

To get her attention, he does a famous Jerry Lewis line,
complete with the goofy voice and nerdy body language.

HSI-WA
Hey lady, lay-deeeeee!

Lori looks up and half-smiles as she wipes away her tears.

Hsi-Wa is holding Lori's Polaroid camera.

He hands it to a passer-by and motions for them to take
their picture.

HSI-WA

Please, yes? For me to always
remember my favorite American
client?

Hsi-Wa puts his arm around Lori. It's a touching, sweet
gesture.

CLICK. FREEZE.

CUT TO:

ECU: They are looking at the Polaroid that was just taken of
the two of them.

HSI-WA
You to look sad again. You to miss
me, yes?

LORI
Yes, Hsi-Wa. Listen--

HSI-WA
Plenty of time to be at airport.
Surprise! I to bring picnic for
you.

Hsi-Wa reaches in the car and retrieves a large picnic
basket. Lori looks very uncomfortable.

LORI
Hsi-Wa, I need a favor. A big one.
My plans have suddenly changed.
I'm not going home now. I need to
go to "281 Brigade."

HSI-WA
Ah, the place you to put big star
on map. What is "281 Brigade" to
be?

LORI
The former Mao farming collective
where my parents were raised. It's
almost completely abandoned now.
(beat)
Hsi-Wa, I've decided to make a
family pilgrimage. On my own. I'd
like to rent your car, if I can.
Just name your price.

HSI-WA

Ah, I to understand. You to want
to see the places of parents' life,
where they to grow up, where they
to meet, where they to marry?

Lori nods, more tears streaming down her face.

She reaches into the front seat of the car and pulls an old,
black-and-white photograph from her briefcase.

LORI
Look, the only picture of them ever
taken in China. Their wedding.
This year would have been their
40th anniversary.

Lori shows Hsi-Wa the beautiful wedding photo. In the
background is a modest home.

HSI-WA
You to know they to have
anniversary in the Yellow Springs.
(beat)
Together.

Lori smiles at this man who always manages to lift her
spirits with a kind word or silly joke.

Hsi-Wa reaches into the car and pulls out a a stack of new,
cellophane-wrapped blank cassette tapes.

HSI-WA
My goodbye gift to you. More
"brank" tapes for your "Mommy Car
Talkings."

Lori sees that he has labeled each one: "Mommy Car
Talkings."

She is so touched by Hsi-Wa's thoughtfulness.

LORI
Is that what you call it?

HSI-WA
It is to be joyful way to honor
beloved Mommy and Daddy.
(beat)
Please to let me to continue to
drive you? For no money, to be an
honor to do for the lady I to love.

LORI

Hsi-Wa, you have given me a
precious year of laughter and
kindness ... and infinitives.
Thank you, but this is a journey
that I have to make by myself.

(beat)

I'll take good care of your car.

HSI-WA

It is not to be the car that I to
miss.

He blushes as he hands her the flowers. Lori kisses Hsi-Wa
on the cheek.

INT. VAN - DAY

Feng, awake and less disoriented from having been drugged,
looks around the van and sees several other women lying
there, all unconscious.

INT. CAR - DAY

Lori is driving up a mountain road above the Red Basin.

On the dashboard is her parents' vintage wedding photo.

In the open briefcase on the front seat is the slim FEDEX
envelope and the flowers from Hsi-Wa.

When she's not dodging treacherously deep pot-holes, she
talks into a hand-held tape recorder as she drives.

Her voice is strange.

It's the shaky cadence of someone who is trying to hold her
emotions together but is about to crack.

LORI

Mom, I interviewed a young girl
named Jinlian today who is from one
of the most oppressed areas I have
visited. She can't read but she
can run an ultra-sound machine.

INT. RURAL CLINIC - DAY

Lori narrates as we see Jinlian in a rundown clinic doing an
ultra-sound test on a very pregnant peasant woman.

LORI (V.O.)

She told me that, because of the one child policy, even the poorest villages have an ultra-sound machine.

(beat)

Women pay a huge chunk of the family's annual income to find out the sex. The problem is ultra-sound can't provide a reasonably accurate reading until the second trimester. Since the women can only afford to go once, they wait until their seventh or eighth month.

(beat)

If it's a boy, the family has their prized male heir.

Jinlian shows the nervous pregnant woman the ultra-sound photo.

INT. CAR - DAY

Back to Lori driving and talking into the tape recorder.

That's it. She can't hold it together anymore. Lori breaks into heaving sobs.

LORI

If it's a girl, the woman gets an--

Lori struggles to speak the troubling words on her tongue.

LORI

She gets, she actually, voluntarily gets an... abortion. That is just so dangerous at seven months.

(beat, more sobbing)

Mom, the IWB asked me to stay on in China for another year to study the economic effect of China's loss of millions of aborted and abandoned girls. It's so sad. I told them no, but now I've-- SHIT!

The car SLAMS into a huge pothole.

Lori revs the car out of the enormous hole and continues driving.

She resumes talking into the tape recorder with the chuckling tone of voice people use when they're making a joke to get through the tears.

LORI

Tell Dad, now I understand why he always used to say, "He who has not traveled the roads of China knows not the true meaning of travel."

Lori sees a sign that reads: "281 Brigade...10 Km."

Lori looks from her parents wedding photo to the legal papers sticking out of the FEDEX envelope in her open briefcase.

LORI

Mom and Dad, the papers arrived today.

(beat)

After all the heartache we went through, it came to this.

(wailing through sobs)

I have no reason to go home. I have nobody now. Everyone I love is gone.

Suddenly, up ahead of Lori's car, a woman jumps out of the back of a moving van.

She hits the road hard and bounces a few times. It is Feng, the woman kidnapped from the orchard.

The van SCREECHES to a halt. A man gets out of the van and chases her.

Feng painfully picks herself up and starts running away. Blood pours down Feng's face, arms and legs. She clutches her midsection.

Feng sees Lori's car approaching.

She desperately waves at Lori to stop.

Lori, slowing down, recognizes the man chasing the woman.

LORI

Oh my God! That's the man from the-

Lori jams on the brakes and drops the tape recorder.

It hits the dashboard and the tape labeled "Mommy Car Talkings" slips out. It ricochets around the floorboards.

The wedding photo and the contents of her briefcase go flying.

Lori pulls over to the side of the road and runs around the car to open the passenger door for Feng.

LORI
C'mon, get in!

FENG
My baby! He took me from my baby!

Just as Lori is helping Feng into the car, a GUN SHOT rings out.

EXT. TRAIN YARD - DAY

Simultaneously, another GUN SHOT.

A dirty, oily train engineer stares at the fresh bullet hole in the wall of a cattle car of a freight train.

He is startled to see Zhu, dressed in his starched green military uniform, breathing down his neck and holding a pistol.

ZHU
When the train arrives, make sure
everything goes according to plan--

ECU: Zhu puts an handful of money into the train man's hand.

ZHU
OR ELSE....

The trembling train man flinches as he hears another GUN SHOT.

INT. VAN - DAY

At gunpoint, the Creepy Man forces Lori and Feng to put the fluid-soaked handkerchief over their own mouths.

Their eyes roll in their sockets and they pass out.

The Creepy Man injects a needle into a vein in Feng's arm.

The Creepy Man injects a needle into a vein in Lori's arm.

EXT. ZHU'S HOUSE - DAY

Zhu drives a white car up a majestic tree-lined driveway leading to a large, beautiful brick house.

Providing the backdrop for the house are beautiful meadows, orchards and many large-scale farm buildings.

INT. ZHU'S HOUSE - DAY

Inside the study, Zhu stands in front of a group of men.

ZHANG, a handsome young man in his late teens, is well-dressed. The remaining eight men are ill-clad peasants.

Zhu barks at one of the peasants, CHUN.

ZHU
Anything less, no deal.

Chun points to Zhu and Zhang.

CHUN
Zhang inherited his money. You, Commander, made it through your, um, "enterprises." This is not a hardship for the two of you. For the rest of us, it is too much at one time.

ZHU
The down payment is the down payment, Chun. I suggest you comply as I specified, or you know the consequences.

Chun reluctantly hands money to Zhu.

The other men do the same.

EXT. TRAIN - NIGHT

An old train rumbles through the night.

EXT. TRAIN - MORNING

The sun rises. The old train chugs on through ruggedly mountainous terrain, then valleys, then more mountains.

INT. CATTLE CAR - CONTINUOUS

Inside a cattle car of the old train, there are chains
CLANGING. The chains lock the sliding doors to the outside.

Ten unconscious women are chained to each other in groups of
twos on the floor of the cattle car.

INT. SLEEPING COMPARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Adjacent to the cattle car is a sleeping compartment with
two berths.

Two men sleep with rifles held across their chests and
pistols in holsters at their waists.

They are the Creepy Man and the Pock-Marked Man from the
van.

Suddenly a woman MOANS. Then another woman SCREAMS.

The men wake up and leap out of bed, guns drawn.

INT. CATTLE CAR - CONTINUOUS

A harsh reality seeps into the drug-induced fog of Lori, who
stares at her surroundings.

She is shocked at seeing herself on a train.

She is shocked to see nine more women, all in a drugged fog,
slowly waking up.

CLINK, CLINK go the chains on their wrists and ankles.

Lori raises her arm to rub her face and Feng's arm shoots up
in tandem. They are stunned to see that they are shackled
to each other.

LORI

Where are we? How did we get like
this? Why were you running from--

Lori's last question jars Feng fully awake and hits her like
a ton of bricks.

FENG

Oh no, my son! I left my son in
the orchard!

The two men burst into the cattle car.

LORI

You! What the hell do you think
you're doing. I'm an A--

Jinlian steps in between the gun and Lori.

JINLIAN
Don't you know it's impolite to
point like that?

Jinlian touches the barrel and pushes it gently away from
Lori.

The Creepy Man rubs the gun over Jinlian's breasts, leering
at her.

Then he snarls at her.

CREEPY MAN
Shut up or I'll shoot you both
dead.

The second kidnapper, the one with the severely pock-marked
face, waves his gun at everyone.

POCK-MARKED MAN
He means it.

The men return to their compartment.

Lori hugs Jinlian.

LORI
Jinlian!

JINLIAN
Doctor!

Feng gestures for silence.

FENG
Sssh!
(beat)
You are a doctor?

Again Jinlian speaks too loudly.

JINLIAN
She's Doctor Lori Wong, an American
doctor of economics!

FENG

Sssh! Whisper, please.

(beat)

I advise you to call yourself Wong.
Do not let the men find out you are
American. They might shoot you
dead on the spot.

LORI

But wouldn't they be more afraid to
hurt an American?

FENG

Just the opposite. They despise
you and fear your independence.
And I advise that you do not let
them find out you are educated.
They fear a woman's intellect most
of all.

JINLIAN

Isn't that the truth.

FENG

Try not to talk to them again
before we get there.

LORI

Get where?

Suddenly, the barrel of a rifle is pressed against the back
of Lori's skull.

Lori gasps in surprise and fear.

CREEPY MAN

Shut up! No talking until we reach
the bachelor village. Or else!

There is the ominous sound of a GUN CLICK.

Jinlian speaks out boldly, in a loud voice.

JINLIAN

You aren't going to hurt our
friend, you coward. That would be
money out of your greedy pocket.

The Creepy Man pulls the gun away from Lori and sticks it in
Jinlian's back.

CREEPY MAN

Woman, silence or I shoot!

He rubs the gun down over Jinlian's back and around her derriere.

He leers, LAUGHS and goes back to his sleeping compartment.

FENG

I caution you both. Ordinary people cannot get guns and drugs such as these men have. They must have powerful connections.

LORI

Criminals?

FENG

Government officials.

JINLIAN

Same thing.

INT. ZHU'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Zhu gathers piles of money, then offers a toast to the nine other men gathered at his house.

ZHU

Congratulations to us, gentlemen.
The train arrives tomorrow morning.
I suggest you get your cock lofts ready.

The men drink. Some look happy, most do not.

EXT. TRAIN - DAY INTO NIGHT

Through sunny valleys full of flower blossoms and snow-capped mountain regions, the train continues to chug along.

The changes in scenery indicate just how far away the train is taking its passengers.

INT. CATTLE CAR - NIGHT

While most of the women sleep, Feng and Lori whisper.

LORI

I don't understand.

FENG

Men in China must marry. But,
there are not enough women anymore
because of family planning.

LORI
So much for family planning.

FENG
An irony, yes. Chinese men limit
the number of women, then decades
later, there is a shortage of
women. So, Chinese men now have to
steal women and sell them for
marriage.

LORI
How big is this black market for
kidnapped slave brides?

FENG
Enormous and getting more so. It
is whispered that in the far
regions there are some villages
where all of the wives have been
kidnapped.

LORI
How can that be?

FENG
As with everything else, party
officials and police are either
paid to look the other way, or are
in it themselves.
(beat)
Anyway, Chinese people sympathize
much more with the husband.

LORI
WHAT? That is insane.

FENG
Kidnapping is becoming another form
of arranged marriage. Cheaper,
too, for the husband.
(beat)
Think about this, Miss Doctor of
Economics. These days brides'
families are selling their
daughters to the highest bidder, an
astounding change from the

thousand-year-old tradition of having to pay a dowry to the groom's family. Men must bid as much as four or five years' salary to get a woman. But it costs the husband less, maybe only one or two year's income, for a kidnapped wife.

LORI

Oh my God! Your system is so barbaric.

FENG

I hear your system doesn't work so well, either. What about marriage in America?

Lori pauses for a long moment.

LORI

(strained whisper)

I'm not married.

FENG

A woman your age? Are you a widow?

LORI

I feel like one.

FENG

I don't understand.

LORI

I received my divorce papers yesterday.

FENG

May I ask? Why the divorce?

Lori shrugs.

LORI

Statistics, I guess.

FENG

I don't understand.

LORI

Our divorce rate is higher than 50 percent. But the divorce rate for

couples who deal with a tragedy or personal loss is higher then 80 percent.

FENG
Adversity should draw a man and woman closer.

Lori answers quickly and harshly.

LORI
It doesn't. It wrenches them apart.

FLASHBACK:

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Lori is in a doctor's examining room. She is sitting on the examining table, wearing the paper gown.

LORI (V.O.)
For years we tried to get pregnant.
All the treatments and fertility drugs threw me into the eye of a hormonal hurricane and put us completely into debt.

She fiddles with her medical chart on the table.

LORI (V.O.)
Finally, I got pregnant.

INSERT items from medical file: test results, fertility prescriptions and sonograms.

LORI (V.O.)
I didn't make it past 11 weeks.

On one chart, the word "MISCARRIAGE" is written boldly in red.

INT. AMBULANCE - DAY

Sirens are BLARING.

LORI (V.O.)
The second time, we thought everything was going to be okay.

Lori is eight months pregnant. Two EMTs frantically work on Lori on the ride to the hospital.

A heart monitor drones.

EMT #1
Damn it! Flatline on the baby.

EMT #2
We are NOT going to lose the mother!

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

DOCTOR HELEN POWELL walks in the hospital room.

Everywhere on Lori's body are probes and tubes that are hooked up to equipment that beeps, blips and flashes like crazy.

DR. POWELL
I'm sorry, Lori. There are serious complications. It appears highly unlikely you could ever carry a baby to full-term.

Lori puts a hand to her gaping mouth. She looks over.

REVEAL: A man is sitting on a chair on the far side of the hospital room. In sorrow, he puts his face in his hands.

THE **FLASHBACK** IS OVER.

INT. CATTLE CAR - DAY

Feng tenderly wipes away a tear running down Lori's cheek.

LORI
I understand the statistic now.
It's too hard to stay with the
person whose every glance, word and
touch reminds you of the worst pain
you've ever felt.
(beat)
We were trying to work things out,
when--

EXT. PHILADELPHIA STREET - DAY

The CRUNCH OF METAL is deafening as a large Philadelphia city bus runs a red light and crashes into a car carrying an elderly Asian couple.

INT. CATTLE CAR - DAY

The sound of the CHUGGING TRAIN emphasizes a profound silence in the moving prison.

LORI
I died with them.

Feng reacts with a look of deep compassion and sorrow for Lori. She reaches out to Lori.

EXT. TRAIN PLATFORM - MORNING

Zhu and the nine other men walk across the train platform.

The men look at the large clock.

INT. CATTLE CAR - DAY

Lori wipes her tears. She whispers to Feng.

LORI
And your husband, Feng?

FENG
An arranged marriage, but one of
love. We were children in school
together.
(beat)
My hope is that he will come
looking for me in the orchard and
find our son, happy in the
hibiscus.

Lori reaches out to Feng, consoling her with the simplest touch of one hand on another.

LORI
But the kidnappers can't sell you
as a bride. You're already
married.

FENG
It makes no difference to them.
What will make a difference is if
they find out--

The door to the sleeping compartment is thrown open.

JINLIAN (O.S.)
Look who's back-- our charming
hosts.

Suddenly, a loud SLAP. Jinlian's head is thrown back.

The Creepy Man brutally grabs her, unshackles her and drags her towards the sleeping compartment.

Jinlian kicks him as she is led away.

JINLIAN
Do your mother's smelly delta!

The woman stare with open-mouth astonishment.

The Creepy Man stops in absolute shock.

CREEPY MAN
Even the most vulgar man would
hesitate to utter such filth.

She makes things even worse. She spits on the Creepy Man.

He slaps her much harder this time. Jinlian literally falls into the kidnappers' compartment.

Lori looks to Feng, questioningly.

Jinlian's SCREAMS come from the connecting sleeping compartment as we hear the sounds of more SLAPS and PUNCHES.

FENG
He lost face when she intervened on
your behalf. Now he is making her
pay.

Lori puts her hand over her mouth in horror.

SEXUAL GRUNTS are heard. Then, more SLAPS.

EXT. TRAIN PLATFORM - MORNING

Zhu points.

ZHU
Wait in there.

One of the nine men slides the train shed door open just as:

INT. TRAIN - MORNING

The Pock-Marked Man sleepily slides open his compartment door to look at the women in the cattle car.

Feng and Lori get a glimpse inside. Jinlian is crouched in pain on the floor.

The Pock-Marked Man walks past the women and goes to the cattle car door that leads outside. He unlocks the chains and slides the door open slightly.

He urinates onto the passing countryside.

When he finishes, he closes the door and buttons his trousers.

Forgetting to re-chain the door locks, he returns to his compartment.

Lori and Feng look from the unlocked door to each other.

LORI

You with me on this?

As an answer, Feng raises her shackled arm. Because their arms are shackled together, Lori's shackled arm automatically raises with Feng's.

They signal to the other seven women. Lori whispers.

LORI

The train is slowing down and the door is unlocked. C'mon, we can jump.

The women look petrified.

One of them, PUA, whispers to Lori and Feng.

PUA

No! Do not make trouble! They will kill us!

LORI

Pua, tell Jinlian, we're not abandoning her. We'll bring the police back and get everyone out of here.

Lori and Feng, sitting on the floor of the cattle car, noisily stand up together.

It takes several awkward adjustments to quiet their movements and get the motion of their shackled arms and legs in sync.

Lori reaches the door first. She grunts as she hoists herself and Feng up.

Feng stops Lori and whispers.

FENG

They will kill my other baby if
they find out. But I may kill it
if I jump.

(beat)

Help me do this at the right
moment, I beg of you.

Lori looks perplexed.

Feng solemnly presses Lori's hand on her belly. Under the loose clothing is a slight swelling of her belly.

Lori finally gets it. She hugs Feng.

The train swerves and the women are tossed against the door.

EXT. TRAIN - CONTINUOUS

The train is going around a sharp bend. On the horizon in this remote corner of the world is a tiny train station.

INT. CATTLE CAR - CONTINUOUS

Lori pries the door open. She sees the station in the distance.

LORI

Now, before the train reaches the
station. I'll cushion your fall.
One, two, three!

They start to leap out when, out of nowhere, a large hand grabs onto Lori. The Creepy Man pulls her back in.

A screaming Feng is suspended out the door, hanging and spinning perilously close to the train wheels and the tracks.

Feng's being shackled to Lori saves her. Lori uses all her strength to pull Feng back in.

The Creepy Man watches Feng's near-fatal struggle in amusement.

 CREEPY MAN
 Stupid cow. You don't jump out of
 a train any better than you do a
 van.

The Creepy Man LAUGHS SINISTERLY as the TRAIN WHISTLE BLOWS.

CUT TO:

EXT. TRAIN PLATFORM - DAY

The kidnappers escort the ten shackled women off the train.

Jinlian gets off last, limping.

Her face is horribly battered and bruised.

 CREEPY MAN
 I ravaged your untouched flower as
 a favor to your awaiting husband.
 Like a man breaks a horse, I broke
 you.

Jinlian tries to lash out at him. She misses.

The Creepy Man LAUGHS at her.

INT. TRAIN SHED - DAY

Zhu is running the auction. In the back of the room, seven of the men are already paired off with kidnapped women.

 ZHU
 Hmm, three left.

At the front of the room, Feng, Lori and Jinlian stand on display.

Zhu taps FAGANG the Brick Maker on the shoulder. The very effeminate Fagang walks to the front.

Zhu points out Feng.

ZHU (CONT'D)

Brick Maker, I think this one won't
give a timid man too much trouble.
She looks patient. And fertile.
2000 yuan, minus your deposit.

The brick maker, FAGANG, nervously hands his money to Zhu.

Zhu puts it with a large pile of money already on the table.

Zhu points to Jinlian and the young man named Zhang.

ZHU

Wu Zhang, I saved this one for you.
So young and oh so pretty. The
balance, please.

Zhang solemnly hands over his money to Zhu and gingerly
takes Jinlian's hand. She recoils, pulling her hand back.

ZHANG

(whispers)

Do not fear me. I will be good to
you.

Suddenly, Zhu grabs Lori, the only one left on display.

ZHU

Hello, Wong, I am Zhu, the chief
official. You are the luckiest
bride. I shall share my riches
with you. In exchange, you will be
obedient and provide me with a son.

CREEPY MAN

Unlike your first wife, huh,
Commander?

A hush comes over the room. Zhu, angry, motions for the
Creepy Man to be silent.

Zhu gruffly hands the kidnappers a wad of money.

ZHU

Brokers, do not return until you
fill the orders for the other
districts.

The kidnappers start to leave. Zhu's angry, booming voice
stops them dead in their tracks.

ZHU

(re: Jinlian's bruised
face)
And do not damage any more goods in
transit. It is bad for business.

The two kidnappers quickly leave.

ZHU
Men, in the coming weeks, until I
officially witness your nuptials,
each bride is to be shackled in
your cock loft. Let them know
who's boss. Brides, be humble
servants to your husbands.

Lori watches Feng put her hands on her belly.

INT. ZHU'S COCK LOFT - MORNING

Perched on the ledge of the second story window of Zhu's
large barn, a rooster COCKADODDLE-DOOs at the rising of the
sun.

A few feet away from the rooster, among bales of hay in this
cock loft, Lori stirs.

She is shackled to an iron ring hanging from a wall.

A tiny, hunched-over, old man named TANG appears at the top
of the ladder.

From Lori's POV, the man is a fuzzy shape coming towards
her.

She is in a drug haze.

He comes into slightly better focus as he unchains her.

He pauses a moment to look at the welts on Lori's arms and
legs. They are grotesque.

TANG
Go relieve yourself and return
immediately.

Lori, confused, struggles to stand up.

TANG
It has been a week. It's time for
you to go by yourself. Use the
workers' outhouse.

It's not quite registering. Lori is really "out of it."

TANG

Boss says if you conduct yourself
well, he will shackle and sedate
you less. If not--

Tang holds up the shackles.

Lori awkwardly climbs down the ladder and goes as fast as
she is able (which is not very fast) out of the barn to an
outhouse.

From inside the outhouse, Lori peers through various cracks
in the wood. She scans the house, the barn and the
surrounding fields.

She sees no one. She opens the outhouse door and still sees
no one. She makes a tentative run for it.

She crosses a field, heading towards a road and railroad
tracks in the distance.

She finally reaches the dirt road by the train tracks.

A moment later, a truck approaches. Lori runs out,
screaming for the driver to stop.

LORI

Oh, thank god!

It's an army truck.

CUT TO:

INT. ARMY TRUCK - DAY

Lori and the army officer are driving down the road.

LORI

There are ten of us! Kidnapped to
be brides! Zhu is the leader of
the black market ring! It's so
wide-scale, it operates across many
provinces!

The army officer nods his head. To Lori's amazement, he
turns the car up Zhu's long driveway.

CHEN

Foolish woman. Commander Zhu has
eyes and ears everywhere.

INT. ZHU'S HOUSE - DAY

Lori is in shackles again, chained to a chair.

Zhu is pacing.

ZHU
You failed the first test. I
instructed my people to watch for
your escape.
(beat)
No food until you conduct yourself
as befits my wife.

LORI
You pompous ass! We are not
married and we never will be!

Zhu slaps her. She stares at him defiantly.

LORI
I'll resist you to my dying day.

Zhu slaps her again. Harder.

ZHU
(whispers)
Do not ...

His hand goes to her breast. Through her shirt, he roughly
twists her nipple, inflicting extreme pain.

He continues twisting it as he leans into Lori's pain-
contorted face. Nose-to-nose.

ZHU
(screams)
....LET IT COME TO THAT!
(beat)
Tang!

The servant Tang rushes in. Zhu's hand is still twisting
Lori's nipple. He is still nose-to-nose.

ZHU
I have another marriage ceremony to
officiate. Take her back to the
barn. Keep tightening the

shackles. And give her more
sedatives. Anything to dull her
ambition.

Zhu tweaks her nipple harder than anytime before. He
LAUGHS.

CUT TO:

INT. ZHU'S BARN - DAY

In the cock loft of Zhu's barn, one of Lori's wrists is
chained to a ring on the barn wall. The other wrist is
free.

Her ankles are shackled to each other.

Her hair is matted. Her face is pale and drawn. Her lips
are purplish and puffy.

Tang climbs up the ladder to the loft.

He tightens the already too-tight shackles. Her wrist and
ankles are covered with welts and dried blood.

TANG

Boss says if you stop speaking
harshly to him, you may eat in a
few days.

Lori slurs her raspy words.

LORI

You keep drugging me. And you
won't give me any water.

TANG

A fit punishment. Do not try to
escape again.

LORI

I don't have the energy.

TANG

That is the idea.

(beat)

However, you will need strength to
make yourself pretty for your
wedding.

Lori looks devastated. Tang turns to leave.

LORI
Please, I need water.

Tang looks at her, smiles and climbs down the ladder.
He gets a nearby bucket and scoops water from a trough.
He climbs back up and pushes the bucket towards Lori.
With her one free hand, she reaches for it, but it is just out of her reach.
She keeps trying, GRUNTING to reach it.
She inches her shackled feet around and tries to push the bucket towards her.
The bucket comes within reach, but the water spills everywhere.
Lori only gets a few remaining drops in her mouth.
Tang leaves, muttering to himself.

TANG
Another defiant one to tame.

INT. ZHANG'S HOUSE - DAY

In young Zhang's well-appointed house, lit dragon lanterns and phoenix candles are everywhere.

Jinlian, in a flowing red dress and red shoes, sits in front of a mirrored vanity.

An elderly woman, LIHUA, stands in front, blocking Jinlian's view of the mirror.

Lihua performs the customary bridal hairstyling ritual.

Lihua steps aside so Jinlian can look in the mirror.

Jinlian recoils in horror. This is the first time she has had an opportunity to look at a mirror since the kidnapping.

The massive battering and bruising on her face is still very evident.

LIHUA
Jinlian, my child. Please try to understand. What is happening is wrong, but it is beyond our

control. I told my grandson the only thing we can control is how we treat you, how much love we give you.

JINLIAN
Giving me all the love in the world does not help my mother. She depends on me. She is not well.

LIHUA
And her heart must be breaking.

Jinlian nods. Lihua hugs her.

EXT. ZHANG'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

On the side of the house, several men are holding the bridal sedan, which is a red awning-covered chair carried on two bamboo poles.

Lihua reaches in and places a phoenix crown on Jinlian's head. Hanging from the crown is a veil with red tassels and beads. It covers much of Jinlian's face.

Lihua throws rice on Jinlian.

LIHUA
For luck.

Lihua points to the ornaments hanging at the rear of the sedan-- a sieve and a mirror.

LIHUA (CONT'D)
The shai-tse strains out evil. And the light this mirror reflects will protect you.

JINLIAN
Too late.

LIHUA
My grandson is kind. He will honor you.
(beat)
And do not fear, he will be gentle during the deflowering.

JINLIAN
Again, too late.

Lihua frowns.

CUT TO:

When the older children see Jinlian's sedan approaching, they set off firecrackers.

The entire Wu clan, numbering about 30, is in the yard.

The nervous 19-year-old groom, Zhang, stands at the end of a red carpet. Directly at his feet is a lit stove.

The carriers put the sedan down and help Jinlian out. They motion for her to walk down the red carpet.

Jinlian refuses.

The sedan carriers gently "escort" her down the red carpet.

The family throws rice on Jinlian, who stops defiantly.

JINLIAN

If you think I am stepping over
that, you're crazy.

Jinlian leans over and moves the lit stove aside.

There is a collective GASP from the Wu's.

Out of nowhere, Zhu appears.

The wedding guests pull back in fear.

Zhu steps forward and puts the stove back in place on the red carpet.

ZHU

I'll take over from here. Zhang,
escort your bride over the lit
stove.

Zhang takes Jinlian's rigid arm. They step over the lit stove.

A servant holds a tray. From it, Zhu takes two lotus seeds and puts them in a cup of tea.

ZHU (CONT'D)

Grandmother Lihua, you have the
honor of sipping the lotus tea so

that Tsao-Chun the Kitchen God will
bless this union.

Lihua sneers at Zhu, then reluctantly takes the tea and
sips.

Zhu bows.

ZHU
You shall now bow three times.
First, to the heavens.

Jinlian refuses to bow. Zhu forces her to.

ZHU
Next, to the parents.

ZHANG
Honored sir, who knows better than
you that I have no parents.

ZHU
Bow to the wise woman who so
lovingly raised you as her own.

Zhang bows to Lihua, his grandmother.

Zhu forces Jinlian to bow to no one in particular.

While she is leaning over, Jinlian whispers through her
tears.

JINLIAN
Mother, I love you.

Zhu frowns and sneers at Jinlian.

ZHU
Last, bow to each other.

Zhu forces Jinlian's head down.

ZHU
Husband and wife, to the nuptial
chamber.

All of the guests cheer. More firecrackers.

Everyone follows Zhang and Jinlian to a specially decorated
bedroom in the house.

There is a large, ornate, beautifully carved wooden structure in the middle of the room.

Over top of the structure is a flowing red canopy.

Red curtains all around the square structure are pulled open, giving onlookers a clear view inside.

Inside is a bed.

Zhang escorts Jinlian into the wooden structure surrounding their bed.

Zhang motions for Jinlian to sit next to him. She reluctantly does.

Lihua brings over two goblets linked by a red thread.

She pours in wine and honey. She hands the goblets to the newlyweds.

The groom takes a sip from his, then waits for Jinlian.

Lihua motions for Jinlian to sip from her goblet.

Jinlian looks around the room at Zhu and the Wu family staring at her.

Lihua smiles and gently touches Jinlian's shoulder.

Jinlian reluctantly sips from her goblet, then exchanges threaded goblets with Zhang. The bride and groom each sip from the other's goblet.

The Wu family cheers.

EXT. FAGANG'S HUT - DAY

We see Fagang in a rundown thatched hut at the edge of Zhu's vast estate.

Fagang, the brick maker, is so poor he can't afford to have a house made of brick.

INT. FAGANG'S HUT - DAY

Feng sits perfectly still at the wobbly kitchen table.

FAGANG

Feng, please. I beg of you. Say something.

Silence from the rigid Feng. She stares straight ahead.

FAGANG

Do something.

Silence. She stares straight ahead. Fagang grabs a plate of food and puts it under her nose.

FAGANG

Eat something.

Silence. She stares straight ahead.

FAGANG

I cannot live like this. Please,
Feng!

Silence. She stares straight ahead.

FAGANG

I do not want to marry either!

Feng's eyes flicker ever so slightly.

FAGANG

Zhu will be here any moment to
oversee our wedding ceremony. What
am I to do?

Fagang rushes outside and vomits in the dirt.

EXT. ZHU'S HOUSE - DAY

In dressy attire, Zhu heads to his car. Tang follows.

ZHU

I will return shortly. Is
everything finally ready for
tomorrow?

TANG

Yes, boss.

ZHU

Get Wong from the cock loft and
chain her to my bed. I have waited
long enough. I will take joy in
disgracing her before I make her my
wife.

Zhu drives away.

INT. RENTAL CAR GARAGE - DAY

Several police men enter a garage where mechanics in oily overalls work on cars.

The Police Captain waves an arrest warrant and shouts out to no one in particular.

POLICE CAPTAIN
Hsi-Wa! Which one of you is Hsi-Wa?

The mechanics point to an office door with a sign that translates to: "TZU HSI-WA, RENTAL CARS & LIMO SERVICE."

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Hsi-Wa is brought into the Police Captain's office in handcuffs.

His swollen face and bruises show that he has been beaten.

POLICE CAPTAIN
An unlikely story. Eyewitnesses
say your car was used in the
robbery.
(beat)
It is a crime not to confess. Take
him away.

Officers roughly escort Hsi-Wa away.

INT. ZHU'S HOUSE - DAY

Lori is face down on Zhu's tall bed. She is weak, battered, bruised and beaten.

She tries to get up, but falls face-down back on the bed.

One wrist is shackled to the bed post. Both ankles are shackled to each other and chained to one of the bed posts.

Lori hangs her head over the side of the bed in despair. Suddenly, something under the bed catches her eye.

She struggles to reach it with her one free hand. It takes extreme body contortions to slide it out.

It is a wide, shallow chest.

In it, there are stacks and stacks of flat canvases.

Each canvas is a painting depicting the same woman being tortured in all different ways.

There are streaks of red blood on each.

The torturer looks like a glorified version of Zhu-- thinner, younger, handsomer.

One of the paintings shows Zhu gouging out one of the woman's eyes.

Another painting shows the one-eyed woman on her knees, begging for mercy, while the man looks on and laughs.

Another shows the one-eyed woman with three dead babies in her womb, a fire raging behind her.

Lori hears a TRUCK MOTOR.

She hurriedly puts the paintings back in the chest.

She hears CHEN, Zhu's militia leader, come inside the house and talk to Tang.

CHEN (O.S.)

Commander said for me to check on
her while he is gone.

Lori shoves the chest back under the bed.

Chen comes in and unlocks her wrist and ankle shackles. He puts the key down on the bedside table. Lori looks at it as she rubs her wrist and ankle.

CHEN

Sorry. Commander said tighter.

Chen tightens her ankle shackles, then tightens and re-chains her one wrist back onto the bedpost.

LORI

Chen, I need water.

(beat)

Please, I see it in your eyes. You
are not a cruel man.

Chen looks undecided, then nods.

CUT TO:

Chen is in the kitchen, pouring from a water pitcher.

CUT TO:

Lori grabs the key.

CUT TO:

Lori drinks the glass of water with her one free hand. She hands the glass back.

Chen walks out. Lori quickly turns.

Suddenly, Chen walks back into the bedroom, startling Lori.

CHEN
Boss would kill me for leaving
that.

Chen stomps over to bedside table. He stares down at the table, then at Lori.

CHEN
Finally, you chose wisely.

The key is on the bedside table. Chen picks it up.

EXT. RURAL ROAD - DAY

A dilapidated horse-drawn wagon crawls out of Fagang's driveway.

Fagang and another man sit up front. They look all around, checking to see if anyone is watching.

They hug very intimately. They kiss.

Fagang turns back to the reins, urging the old horse to go faster. It doesn't.

Fagang steers the wagon away from the village.

In the back of the wagon lays Feng, roped, shackled and with a cloth stuffed in her mouth. Her kicks are wasted energy and her SCREAMS are muffled.

Zhu comes driving in from the opposite direction, just a moment too late to see Fagang, his lover and the wagon go around a bend.

Zhu pulls up to Fagang's hut, gets out of the car and takes a quick look into the hut and sees it is empty.

ZHU
Damn you, feeble Brick Maker!

EXT. MEADOW - DAY

In a gorgeous meadow, Zhang sets out an elaborate picnic for Jinlian.

JINLIAN
So this is what it's like not to be
hungry all the time.

ZHANG
Jinlian, the life here is good.

JINLIAN
I'd choose hunger if it meant being
with my mother.
(beat)
You are very gentle and kind. How
could you do this to me? And your
sweet grandmother?

ZHANG
My grandmother really cares for
you. She likes the fire burning
within you.
(beat)
As do I.

Zhang hands Jinlian a bouquet of wild flowers.

JINLIAN
How romantic. Courting your
kidnapped slave bride.

Zhang tenderly takes Jinlian's hands in his and plants a
tender kiss on them.

ZHANG
Please. Think of this as an
arranged marriage. This will grow
into love.

Jinlian picks up the bouquet and smashes it into the ground.

JINLIAN
I will never, ever love you. How
could you even expect me to? My
being here is a death sentence for
my mother.

Zhang picks up the one flower that did not get crushed. He tenderly puts it in her hair, behind her ear.

ZHANG

Tell me about your mother.

EXT. ZHU'S HOUSE - DAY

Chen gets into his truck. He shouts to Tang, at the front door.

CHEN

Call me if she gives you any trouble.

INT. ZHU'S HOUSE - DAY

Lori hears Chen's TRUCK DRIVE AWAY.

Close-up of her wrist shackle. It looks locked, but it isn't. She easily unlatches it.

She unchains her ankle shackle from the bed post. As she goes to unlatch the shackles from around her ankles, she accidentally clicks one of them back into place.

LORI

Shit!

Lori rushes away with the swinging chain CLANKING LOUDLY.

She tries to muffle it by reaching down and holding the chain.

She cannot go very fast anyway this way. She stumbles many times.

She is beyond weak.

Lori walks by Zhu's study and peers in.

She stops abruptly. Lori sees an easel holding a blank canvas. She stares at it and puts her hand over her mouth in horror.

Suddenly, she notices something on Zhu's desk. A telephone.

The chain CLANKS LOUDLY on the floor as she rushes over to the phone.

It is an old rotary phone. She tries to dial but the dial won't turn. There is a lock in the first rotary dial hole.

She smashes it again and again, but the lock will not budge or break.

Lori repeatedly BASHES the phone to the floor.

She examines it closely and tries to dial. Still, it won't turn.

She smashes it one last time in wild desperation. The phone breaks into pieces, but the lock remains intact on the rotary dial.

CUT TO:

Lori passes through a large laundry area. Farm and military uniforms are neatly folded into piles.

Lori passes through and goes into a pantry area. She tries opening the cupboards, but they are all locked.

She has her hand on the knob of one of the cupboards when she hears a LOUD EXPLOSION that shakes the house and rips open the cupboard doors.

She looks out of a nearby window and sees black smoke billowing in the distance.

CUT TO:

EXT. FAGANG'S HUT - DAY

Flames engulf the brick-making shack next to Fagang's hut.

An unidentified person writhes on the ground, covered in flames.

The force of ANOTHER EXPLOSION catapults the burning body across the yard.

CUT TO:

INT. ZHU'S HOUSE - DAY

Jars fall to the floor. The GLASS BREAKS.

Uncooked rice falls to the floor.

Lori picks through the glass and devours a handful of rice.

She stops and perks up at hearing a CAR MOTOR in the driveway.

EXT. ZHU'S HOUSE - SUNSET

An impatient Zhu gets out of his car, screaming.

ZHU

Tang!

Tang comes running out of the barn.

ZHU (CONT'D)

Prepare my bath.

TANG

Yes, boss.

ZHU

And set up my easel in the bedroom.

INT. ZHANG'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Jinlian and Zhang are in bed.

Zhang makes light, loving kisses up and down her arm. Then, he moves up to her neck.

INT. ZHU'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The big, fat ugly Zhu gets up out of a large tub. Tang helps Zhu put on his robe.

Zhu walks towards the bedroom.

There is a hidden chest just outside the bedroom door.

He takes out a whip from among the many instruments of torture in the box.

He struts into the bedroom, making a grand entrance by cracking the whip.

Zhu looks with pleasure at the easel, canvas and paints positioned near the bed.

Zhu's smile disappears when he looks over to the bed.

ZHU

She's gone! TANG!

EXT. ZHU'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Hordes of farmhands with flashlights are returning from searching Zhu's property. Zhu waits by the door.

TANG

No trace, Boss. We really should be investigating the explosion. We'll find her later.

ZHU

NO! Gather the soldiers. Find her NOW!

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

A HUNCHED OVER MAN hobbles down the road in a green military uniform, matching cap and clunky boots. The lights of a truck suddenly appear.

The man cowers.

HONK, HONK.

It's a green military truck and Chen is driving. He pulls over to the walking man. He points to the back, which is filled with soldiers.

CHEN

Get in. Join the search party.

Tang offers a hand to the hunched over man. It's Lori, but he doesn't look very closely.

TANG

These damn wives. More trouble than they're worth.

The truck rambles down the road.

INT. ZHANG'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Zhang cups Jinlian's face in his hands and brushes his lips ever so slightly against hers.

Jinlian is frozen.

Zhang sees this and stops.

ZHANG

I am sorry. Only when you are ready.

Zhang turns over on his side, his back to Jinlian.

EXT. TRUCK - NIGHT

The truck is parked. Chen is standing at the back, assigning search areas to the soldiers.

CHEN
You two, the river.

The two soldiers jump off the truck and head off.

CHEN
You and ...

Chen looks at Lori.

CHEN
You. Train station.

Lori climbs down from the truck. The shackle comes out of her clunky boot and CLANGS against the metal of the truck.

Tang and Chen are startled. Lori clumsily makes a run for it.

INT. ZHU'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Violent, heavy music plays.

On the easel in Zhu's bedroom is a painting that depicts:

-- Lori naked, positioned face-down and spread-eagled on the bed.

-- Her wrists are shackled to the headboard. Her ankles are shackled to the bed posts at the other end.

-- Zhu is riding her like a horse.

-- The whip is striking Lori's back, which is already covered with welts in a zebra-striped pattern of red blood.

With a flourish, Zhu makes several more red brush strokes.

The painting now shows Lori in a pool of blood on the bed.

He looks over to the bed where the real Lori is in a pool of blood.

ZHU
Perfect!

INT. ZHANG'S HOUSE - SUNRISE

Jinlian is sleeping in the spoon position.

She cuddles against Zhang's back with her body. Her arm is around his waist.

She starts thrashing around, making all sorts of noises.

She wakes up and is shocked to see how she has positioned herself.

She quickly removes her arm from Zhang's waist and backs away from him.

Zhang turns to her.

ZHANG

Jinlian, that was nice. You are very affectionate while you sleep.

JINLIAN

Zhang, I had the horrible nightmare about my friend Wong again. Please don't ignore my questions any longer.

Zhang is reluctant to say anything. He seems scared.

JINLIAN

TELL ME! How is she?

Zhu hems and haws. Finally he speaks up.

ZHANG

She marries Zhu today.

JINLIAN

At the bride auction, I noticed that Zhu had some kind of hold over you and the rest of the husbands.

ZHANG

Jinlian, he is the highest ranking party official in this region.

JINLIAN

So he is very rich and very corrupt.

ZHANG

Careful how you speak.

JINLIAN

I love how all you rich people
stick together.

ZHANG

My family, my grandmother
especially, we are very afraid of
him.

JINLIAN

Your family is so afraid that you
just lined his pockets with
thousands of yuan to buy me?!

ZHANG

My family is against the new custom
of buying brides, even though there
are no women left in the entire
district to marry.

JINLIAN

So why did you do it?

ZHANG

Jinlian, to understand, you must
know my family's history.

FLASHBACK:

Zhu's father is in a military uniform.

His father is arguing with Zhu.

A house is in flames.

ZHANG (V.O.)

When I was a boy, my father, a
district official, resisted Zhu's
schemes for larceny. Threats
followed. My father thought them
idle. But soon after, our house
burned down. My grandmother pulled
me out just in time.

End of **flashback**.

Zhang lifts his pant leg. Jinlian recoils at the scar
tissue.

ZHANG

My parents never made it out.

JINLIAN

Zhu?

ZHANG

Yes, but I have never been able to prove it.

JINLIAN

I am sorry. I really am. But what does that have to do with this?

ZHANG

Zhu holds all party and military power now. That enables him to make a fortune off all the black markets. Brides are his newest and most lucrative commodity.

JINLIAN

But why did you buy me?

Zhang hesitates, then blurts out the truth.

ZHANG

He threatened to kill my grandmother if I didn't. And he told my grandmother that he would kill me if she made trouble. We never know who is safe to tell, so we tell no one.

JINLIAN

I need to see Wong. Where is she?

ZHANG

Zhu's estate is next to ours, over the south meadow. But under the circumstances, I don't think Zhu would permit Wong to have a visitor, especially not another bride.

JINLIAN

But what about the wedding? Can't we go?

ZHANG

His will not be a wedding with
guests.

JINLIAN
Will he hurt Wong?

Zhang says nothing, but his face says everything.

INT. ZHU'S HOUSE - MORNING

Paint brushes and tubes of paint are scattered all over the
floor of Zhu's bedroom.

Tang is shaking the heavily SNORING Zhu.

Tang stares at a huge red stain on the bed next to Zhu.

Zhu opens his eyes groggily.

TANG
Boss, boss, there's been an escape!

EXT. RURAL ROAD - MORNING

Zhu's police force searches in and around the train station.

One POLICE OFFICER digs into a large pile of coal.

He touches a woman's foot.

POLICE OFFICER
I found her!

He blows several times on a WHISTLE. The other officers
come running.

The men dig more.

Zhu arrives. He looks furious.

A blackened-faced woman gasps for air as they pull her out
of the coal.

One man uses a handkerchief to wipe the coal dust from her
face.

It is Pua, one of the women from the train.

Zhu SLAPS Pua so hard that she falls and hits the ground
hard with a loud THUD.

ZHU

(shouting)
I have better things to do on my
wedding day than chase after a
stupid woman! Take this bride back
to her husband and chain her up!

The men grab Pua. She kicks and screams, but her resistance
is futile.

ZHU
Then have all the husbands meet me
at my house at once. These escape
attempts must stop!

INT. ZHU'S HOUSE - DAY

ECU: A row of eight marble-like ceramic balls. Each one
has a different Chinese symbol painted on it. Zhu's hand
sweeps in and puts a ninth one in the row.

Nine of the ten men we saw earlier at the bride auction are
assembled for a meeting at Zhu's house. Only Fagang is
missing.

Zhang speaks up.

ZHANG
Commander, are you suggesting the
husbands shackle, starve and drug
their wives forever?

Zhu picks up one ball and looks at Zhang. Zhu puts the
ball in the palm of his outstretched hand, showing it
specifically to Zhang.

Then he smiles at Zhang and puts the ball back down on the
table.

ZHU
One.

Zhu repeats this ritual for each of the men.

ZHU
Two. Three. Four. Five. Six.
Seven. Eight. Nine.

The nine balls are now in a straight row on the table.

Suddenly, Zhu scoops up all the balls and they all sit in
the palm of his hand.

He rolls them from one hand to the other, back and forth, back and forth.

Zhu lines up the balls again.

CHUN

Honorable Zhu, most of us here are very poor. We have no servants to keep our brides from escaping if they are determined to leave.

(beat)

My wife Pua is more trouble than she is worth.

When Chun says "Pua," Zhu scans the row of balls and picks one up. He stares at the writing on the ball as he repeats the name.

ZHU

Pua.

(beat)

Exactly.

Zhu caresses the "Pua" ball and puts it back in the row.

A husband named TSEN speaks up.

TSEN

You told us that if they had no money, they wouldn't try to escape. You told us that since they can't read and don't know where they are, they wouldn't try to escape. You told us to get them pregnant and they wouldn't try to escape. But my wife will not submit and I will not force her.

(beat)

We can't take it anymore, Honorable Zhu.

Zhu glides his hand over all the balls in the row.

ZHU

Trust me. The brides will never try to escape again.

The husbands look at Zhu in suspense.

INT. ZHANG'S HOUSE - DAY

Jinlian does not hear Zhang enter the house.

In silence, he watches her.

Jinlian surreptitiously takes out a stash of money from behind a desk. She reaches into her pocket and adds more to it.

ZHANG

Jinlian, what are you doing? Where did you get that money?

JINLIAN

I, I--

ZHANG

I have been thinking myself crazy. Every day I have a little less than I thought. You're planning an escape, aren't you?

JINLIAN

I have to get back to my mother. Can't you understand?

ZHANG

I can. Yes, very much.

(beat)

Jinlian, I have already sent someone to help your mother. She has food, money and medicine. And a doctor sees her regularly.

JINLIAN

Zhang!

She throws her arms around Zhang.

He resists and just stands there. Jinlian pulls back.

JINLIAN

What?

ZHANG

I'm just returning from Zhu's.

JINLIAN

Did you see Wong? Did you give her my message?

ZHANG

Wong was nowhere in sight. Zhu called a sudden meeting of the husbands.

JINLIAN
On his wedding day? What was so urgent?

ZHANG
He's furious that every day his soldiers have to hunt down brides trying to escape.

JINLIAN
Have any made it?

ZHANG
None. Not even close. After capture, they receive severe beatings. Yet, they still try to escape.
(beat)
That's why Zhu came up with a new rule. It is beyond barbaric.

FLASHBACK:

INT. ZHU'S HOUSE - DAY

In Zhang's flashback, Zhu holds a sledgehammer over the balls, which are now grouped in a small circle.

ZHANG (V.O.)
Each ball has a bride's name on it.
The next time a bride tries to escape, all of the brides will immediately be killed.

Zhu SLAMS the sledgehammer down on the nine ceramic balls, SHATTERING them all at the same time.

The **flashback** ends.

INT. ZHANG'S HOUSE - DAY

Jinlian GASPS.

JINLIAN
Zhang, I will never get home to my mother!

Zhang embraces her and comforts her.

INT. ZHU'S HOUSE - DAY

In Zhu's bed chamber, Tang props Lori up in a chair. She is so weak she cannot hold herself up.

She falls off and hits the floor with a THUD.

Tang picks Lori up and sits her on the bed.

He ropes her to the ornate, intricately carved backboard of the bed.

He wipes off the dried blood on her face, arms and legs.

He combs her matted hair.

On her head, he places the phoenix crown with the red veil. It hangs at an awkward slant.

Tang carries over to the bed a tray of the wedding necessities: a lit stove, dragon and phoenix candles, lotus seed tea and two wine goblets attached by a red thread.

CUT TO:

Zhu enters the bedroom.

Lori is unconscious, roped to the headboard.

TANG

Boss, she cannot bear you a son if she stays this weak. We must heed what happened with Xiutze.

Zhu slaps Tang across the face.

ZHU

Never speak of her again!

Tang rubs his face, where an imprint of Zhu's fingers remains.

ZHU

Is everything ready as I specified?

TANG

Boss, she can't stand and I can't get her to sit up in the chair.

Perhaps the ceremony should be here
in the bed chamber?

ZHU

Good enough. Let's get this over
with. I am in the mood to paint
and paint and paint tonight.

With Lori roped to make her sit up in the bed, the wedding
takes place quickly and mechanically.

Zhu steps over the lit stove by himself.

Tang puts the lotus seeds into the tea and drinks it.

Zhu sips from one of the goblets tied together by a red
thread. He puts the other to Lori's lips. Her lips are so
parched she can't open them. The red wine dribbles down her
chin.

Lastly, Zhu bows three times, each time grabbing Lori's chin
and making her bow her head feebly.

CUT TO:

The rooster COCKADOODLE-DOOs.

The sun comes up on the bed chamber.

Brushes, tubes of paint and wedding materials (lit stove,
lotus tea, the goblets) are strewn around the bedroom floor.

Several paintings are tacked to the bed chamber walls.

More paintings are strewn on the floor.

Each one depicts torture scene after torture scene with all
of the wedding materials in the scene.

In every picture, the red phoenix crown is on Lori's head,
hanging off at a disheveled angle.

CUT TO:

Zhu is asleep, his fat body spread out everywhere.

Lori is now roped to the headboard by her neck.

A rich Chinese fabric is partially draped over her naked
body.

The red phoenix crown is still hanging on her head.

INT. ZHANG'S HOUSE - SUNRISE

Jinlian awakes to find herself again spooning Zhang's back. Her arm is around his waist.

She hugs his waist a little tighter and cuddles him even more with her body.

Zhang turns to her, with a question on his lips.

Jinlian caresses his lips with her finger. She kisses him.

I/E ZHU'S HOUSE - DAY

MONTAGE:

Zhu beats Lori savagely and then paints each torture scene. This goes on for a really long time, as we see from the stack of canvases that pile up, the seasonal weather changes outside and the deterioration of Lori's physical condition.

The color of her skin is deathly. The bruising and scarring are grotesque.

She is so thin, she looks like a skeleton.

Her mind is also deteriorating. You can see it in her eyes.

She is beaten down in every way.

EXT. ZHU'S BARN - EIGHT MONTHS LATER

On the second story of Zhu's barn, Lori perches precariously on the ledge of the open window of the cock loft.

Her flowing nightgown billows in the breeze, emphasizing her emaciation.

She teeters on the ledge.

She lets go of her hold of the window frame. She is poised to leap to her death.

She stares down, trying to muster the courage to jump.

She suddenly looks up.

Something in the far distance catches her eye.

She slips.

The last thing she sees as she plummets downward is a colorful kite soaring in the sky, bobbing along with the flow of the wind.

EXT. MEADOW - CONTINUOUS

Zhang is running across the meadow, with his arms outstretched, maneuvering the kite.

Close-up of Jinlian's face. She is laughing as she watches her husband.

The kite almost crashes, but Zhang saves it at the last second.

He steers it back up high, where it soars gracefully.

Jinlian cheers and claps.

She turns sideways to blow him a kiss. She is very, very pregnant.

INT. ZHU'S HOUSE - DAY

Zhu rushes into the house.

ZHU
Tang! Tang!

Tang hurries over.

ZHU
Get the nurse.

TANG
What's wrong?

ZHU
Get Chi now!

CUT TO:

Lori shivers despite being wrapped in blankets. Her teeth chatter.

CHI, the village nurse, confronts Zhu.

CHI
Medicine can't cure the harm you've done.

ZHU

This is not my fault. The sow
tried to kill herself. Chen saw
her and broke her fall.

CHI
You won't get away with this again.

ZHU
Shut up, Nurse. See that she
recovers, or you will be next.

CHI
You beast, I'm your only chance for
making her well enough to give you
a child.
(beat)
But you must know one thing. She
hasn't the will to live.

Zhu storms out.

Chi goes back over to Lori, who is delirious.

Chi sits next to her and strokes Lori's forehead.

Lori mumbles almost incoherently.

LORI
Mom? Mom?

Chi listens, then looks startled.

CHI
I have suspected about the brides.
In the last year, so many new ones,
unhappy ones, with accents from
other provinces. Perhaps your
province is farther than most?

Lori's eyes open in surprise.

CHI
I have met most of them.
(beat)
Their husbands are not savage, like
yours.
(beat)
My name is Chi.

Lori shows her first sign of life in a long time. When she
speaks, her voice is raspy and uneven.

LORI
Chi, my friends-- Feng and Jinlian?
Do you know them?

CHI
Oh, Jinlian. I know her well. She
will have her baby soon. I believe
she has come to love young Zhang
dearly.

Lori looks shocked.

LORI
Baby?!
(beat)
And Feng? How is she? And her
baby?

CHI
I do not know of her.

LORI
She was sold to the brick maker.

CHI
Fagang?

LORI
Yes, that's him.

CHI
The kilns in his brick factory
exploded almost a year ago. One
body was found, burnt beyond
recognition. Fagang lived, but was
horribly burned. I bring medicine
to him every week. Never have I
seen a woman there.

LORI
No!

Lori lets it all out. She cries the pent-up tears of a
thousand sorrows.

When the tears finally subside, Chi takes Lori's chin in her
hand and makes Lori look her square in the eye.

CHI

Wong, you have to help me get you
out of here. Please start eating.
Tang says you refuse all food.

Chi holds Lori's hands.

CHI
Please, you can trust me. I am
your friend.

Chi picks up a bowl of soup and gingerly spoons a tiny bit
into Lori's mouth.

Lori can't swallow. She chokes on it.

CUT TO:

Chi is preparing a bath.

Lori, gaunt and emaciated, is sitting up in the bed, looking
a million times better.

But she still looks beyond awful.

Chi shouts from the bath area.

CHI
Is the food staying down better
now?

LORI
(still raspy)
A little.

CHI
Good. Now, a bath will do wonders
for you.

Chi escorts a weak and limp Lori to the tub.

Chi helps Lori disrobe.

As the dressing gown comes down, Chi GASPS.

Bones stick out grotesquely underneath the zebra-striped
scars on Lori's completely disfigured back.

Lori turns around, facing Chi. We can't see Lori's front,
but Chi can.

Chi GASPS louder and longer than the last time.

CHI
Oh, my poor child!

INT. ZHANG'S HOUSE - DAY

Zhang paces outside the bed chamber.

A SCREAM comes from inside.

JINLIAN (O.S.)
Lihuaaaaaaaaaa!

CUT TO:

Inside, Lihua assists in Jinlian's delivery.

JINLIAN
Ahhhhhhhhhhh!

The baby arrives. Lihua holds it up.

LIHUA
Jinlian, it's a girl!
(beat)
Zhang, come in and meet your
daughter!

Zhang bursts in.

He hugs Jinlian and looks at his newborn in sheer amazement.

INT. JAIL - DAY

The Police Captain unlocks Hsi-Wa's cell.

Hsi-Wa is surprised.

POLICE CAPTAIN
Before one of the criminals was put
to death, he admitted that they
found your car abandoned on the
side of the road and used it for
the robberies. There were papers
in it belonging to an American
professor. Army officers
corroborated your story. They were
at the Five Eye Bridge Labor Market
that day and filed a surveillance
report about her, including that

you were her driver. You are free
to go.

HSI-WA
Eight months in prison for a crime
I to not commit!

POLICE CAPTAIN
A sharp tongue could get you eight
more.

HSI-WA
What to happen to Dr. Wong? Did
they to hurt her?

POLICE CAPTAIN
We presume your car broke down, she
got other transportation and went
on her way. They swore they found
the car abandoned.

HSI-WA
I to talk to them?

POLICE CAPTAIN
Too late. All put to death.

HSI-WA
Her papers, her tapes, all her
things? To be still in my car?

POLICE CAPTAIN
Your car was inspected and only
loot from the robbery was found.
(beat)
And this.

The police officer hands Hsi-Wa an envelope.

HSI-WA
Where to be my car now?

POLICE CAPTAIN
Sign these papers downstairs and
you may have it.

INT. ZHU'S HOUSE - DAY

Lori sits in the bath. Chi sponges her.

CHI

Your body is like a skeleton. I
would have never known.

(beat)

How far along are you?

Lori sobs.

LORI

Far. Very far.

CHI

I know it's not going to be easy to
love this baby, but you can't
starve it and yourself to death.

LORI

(raspy)

Women in China have late abortions
all the time. Please help me. I
can't do this.

CHI

An abortion is too risky in your
condition.

LORI

(raspy)

So is having the baby. I've lost
two already. The doctor says I
have an extremely high risk
condition.

CHI

An abortion now could be fatal.

LORI

I never, ever, ever thought I
wouldn't be capable of loving a
baby. But, I can't. It's his.
Please do it, before Zhu finds out.

CHI

He will keep hurting you if you
don't have a baby. A son is all he
has ever wanted. Once he knows, he
will treat you well. No more
torture. No more rapes.

LORI

How do you know him so well?

CHI

We both grew up in the Jesuit
missionary orphanage. I saw what
he went through. I tried to help.
Until the fire.

FLASHBACK: INT. ORPHANAGE - NIGHT

Chi, as a cute 8-year-old girl, watches a chubby boy her age
play with marbles. It is Zhu.

Suddenly, a middle-aged Jesuit priest named FATHER HERMAN
smacks him in the face with a long paintbrush.

Zhu is so stunned, he drops all the marbles and they PING-
PING as they hit the floor and bounce all over the room.

Father Herman yells at Zhu.

FATHER HERMAN

Fatty Zhu, so weak, so stupid, so
unlovable. Not even your own
mother wants you.

(beat)

Paint me a beautiful picture if you
do not want to get beaten again.

ZHU AS A BOY

Yes, Father Herman.

CUT TO:

It is a few years later. Zhu is now 12-years-old. He's
still chubby, but taller. He is more frightened than ever.

He stands at the easel in the empty classroom.

He is naked from the waist up.

We only see a man's arm. It caresses Zhu's chest with a
paintbrush.

The boy is uncomfortable, yet involuntarily stimulated when
the brush lingers at his nipples.

FATHER HERMAN (O.S.)

Zhu, still with all the baby fat.
You are so ugly. No woman will
ever want you.

Next, the arm holds a burning candle up to a nipple.

The arm tips over the candle so that hot wax pours directly on the nipple and down the boy's chest.

Zhu flinches in agony.

FATHER HERMAN (O.S.)
Paint me a beautiful picture if you
do not want to get burned again.

Zhu puts the finishing touches on a morosely beautiful painting of Father Herman in a naked repose.

CUT TO:

Eighty children are asleep in the dark dormitory. Chi sneaks in and quickly gets into her bed.

A moment later Father Herman and Zhu tiptoe in.

Chi watches Father Herman tuck Zhu in.

The priest takes the only lantern in the room and walks out with it, closing the door behind him.

A boy SOBS in the total darkness.

EXT. ORPHANAGE - CONTINUOUS

Father Herman holds the lantern as he walks from the dormitory building into the rectory next door.

INT. ORPHANAGE - CONTINUOUS

Zhu, wiping tears from his eyes, looks out of the dormitory window at the rectory. He sees the lantern burning in one window.

INT. PRIESTS' RECTORY - NIGHT

A fire rages in the rectory. It is consuming everything in its path.

Father Herman is SCREAMING in an agonizing wail for HELP.

CHI (V.O.)
All of the priests perished in the
rectory fire. Only the nuns
remain.
(beat)
I hear he visits there every month.
He forces the boys to take art

lessons, just like the American priest did to him.

The **flashback** is over.

INT. ZHU'S HOUSE - DAY

Chi and Lori are still talking.

CHI

A few years ago Zhu hired me to take care of Xiutze, his first wife. He treated her well only when she was pregnant.

LORI

What happened to her?

CHI

In three years she had three boy babies and all three died, too small and weak to survive outside her womb.

LORI

Was she missing an eye?

CHI

Yes, how did you know?

INT. ZHANG'S HOUSE - DAY

Jinlian sings to the baby in her arms. Zhang comes in.

JINLIAN

You're back! I missed you. We missed you.

ZHANG

My beautiful wife, I never thought I would see you this happy. But I have news that will make you jump over the moon.

(beat)

Your mother. She is coming to live with us.

Jinlian cries as Zhang hugs his wife and son in a touching family embrace.

ZHANG

But one thing, you must pretend she
is the nanny. Zhu must never find
out we brought your mother here.

INT. ZHU'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Zhu comes to the bedroom door and stops. He eavesdrops.

LORI
The woman in the paintings! Did
she die in a fire?

CHI
Yes, clutching the last dead baby
in her arms.

LORI
Please, please, help me!

Lori grabs on to Chi's arms, pleading.

LORI
I have to get out of here! Please,
I'm begging you. Help me get back
to the States!

Zhu barges in, enraged.

ZHU
My ugly skeleton of a wife gets out
of bed after all this time?!

Zhu grabs Chi by the throat and screams at the top of his
lungs.

ZHU
LEAVE US, CHI, AND NEVER COME BACK!

Zhu flings Chi out of the room by her neck.

Her head hits the door frame with a THUD and she slumps to
the ground.

Suddenly, Zhu starts breaking things all over the room. He
is in a destructive frenzy.

ZHU
YOU COULD RUIN EVERYTHING I HAVE
WORKED TO BUILD!

He CRASHES a chair down next to Lori.

Zhu grabs his whip and whips Lori every time he speaks.

ZHU
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO ME?

WHIP.

ZHU
I CANNOT LET THEM FIND YOU AND
TRACE EVERYTHING BACK TO ME!

WHIP.

ZHU
WHO KNOWS YOU ARE MISSING?

WHIP.

ZHU
(in a child's voice)
WHY DO AMERICANS ALWAYS HURT ME?

Zhu lashes out at Lori three more times.

WHIP. WHIP. WHIP.

Zhu raises the whip another time.

Suddenly, Chi grabs the end of the whip as Zhu is about to bring it down on Lori.

CHI
YOUR WIFE IS PREGNANT!

Zhu is stunned.

ZHU
You are too thin! Could it be?!

EXT. RURAL ROADS - DAY

MONTAGE:

Hsi-Wa drives all over the Red Basin and to the village of "281 Brigade."

Everywhere he goes, he stops and approaches men, women, children.

He shows them the Polaroid photograph of Lori posing with him.

Everyone shakes their head "no."

He looks devastated.

INT. GENERAL STORE - DAY

Zhu leads a weak Lori through the village's general store, past the food counters, past the post office counter, past the pharmacy section and towards a back room.

Zhu KNOCKS.

CHI (O.S.)
Come in.

Zhu pushes Lori into the room.

Chi speaks to Zhu.

CHI
Wait out there while I do the
female things.

Inside the room, there is a large table next to a big machine. Chi helps Lori up on it.

CHI
(whispers)
I did not have a chance to warn
you. Zhu insists I do an ultra-
sound.

LORI
Oh my god! Chi, what if--

CHI
Trust me. This will be for the
best.

INT. CAR - DAY

There are two businessmen sitting in the back of Hsi-Wa's white car.

Hsi-Wa rushes to open the front passenger-side door for a third businessman.

The client is an enormous man who needs extra room.

Hsi-Wa leans over, releasing the lever that moves the seat back.

The seat won't budge.

Hsi-Wa tries several more times. Still won't budge.

He gets down on his knees and peers in to see what the blockage is under the seat.

Wedge into the runner is a cassette tape labeled: "Mommy Car Talkings."

CUT TO:

EXT. STORE - DAY

The clients sit in Hsi-Wa's car, waiting.

Hsi-Wa comes out of a store with a brand new tape player. He presses "Play" and hears Lori's voice on the tape.

LORI (ON THE TAPE)
Mom, I talked to a young girl named
Jinlian today who is from one of
the most oppressed areas I have
visited. She can't read but she
can run an ultra-sound machine.

CUT TO:

Hsi-Wa presses "Play" again.

LORI (ON TAPE)
Oh my God! That's that horrible
man from the labor market!

There is a loud screeching of car brakes on the tape.

Then a loud THUMP. After that, there is nothing more on the tape.

Hsi-Wa presses "Stop."

INT. GENERAL STORE - DAY

Looking into the monitor, Chi maneuvers the paddle over Lori's swollen belly.

LORI
What do you see?

CHI
(shouts)

Zhu, come see!

Zhu comes in as Chi presses a button and something in the machine starts WHIRRING.

Moments later, an ultra-sound photo drops into a tray.

Zhu looks at the monitor.

ZHU

I can't tell anything from this.

CHI

Well, it's hard because he's moving around so mu--

ZHU

HE?

CHI

Yes, he. I printed a picture the only time I could identify his maleness.

Chi retrieves the ultra-sound photo from the tray and shows it to Zhu.

ZHU

Are you sure? These tests aren't 100% reliable. This could be a shadow.

(beat)

Chi, I won't be stuck with a girl.

Zhu RAPS his fist on the table.

INT. HUT - DAY

Hsi-Wa knocks on the door of a shabby hut.

A mean, OLD WOMAN gruffly answers the door.

OLD WOMAN

What do you want?

HSI-WA

You to be Jinlian's mother. They to tell me at the labor market where to find you. I to be sorry about your daughter's disappearance but I to need to know--.

OLD WOMAN

No, no, no, Lua is her mother. She moved away. I live in this dump now.

She slams the door. Hsi-Wa knocks again.

HSI-WA

I to be sorry to disturb you, but you to know where I to find Lua?

The old woman glares.

Hsi-wa pulls a wad of yuan out of his pocket.

The old woman sees the money. She softens and smiles.

OLD WOMAN

Oh yes. Lua bragged, bragged, bragged. Her daughter got a rich husband and a new baby. She went to live with them.

HSI-WA

Where?

EXT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

OLD WOMAN (V.O.)

Thousands of miles away.

Fast motion: A train passes through all sorts of landscapes, climates and topography.

At a particular station, the train slowly chugs in and comes to a stop.

Jinlian rushes to her mother, Lua, and helps her climb down off the train.

JINLIAN

Mother!

LUA

My precious Jinlian, I never thought I would see you again!

Lua pulls back and touches Jinlian's face, running her hand over the contours. They are about to hug.

Zhang looks around. He tugs Jinlian's arm and pulls her away from her mother's embrace.

ZHANG

I'm sorry, please not out here, it is not safe. Wait until we get home. And remember, you must only call her "Amah."

Jinlian and Lua nod and assume a more rigid, distant posture from each other.

Zhang hands Ling Ling to Lua.

LUA

(whispers)

My beautiful granddaughter, Ling Ling.

JINLIAN

You will be so happy here, uh, "Amah."

Zhang smiles at seeing Jinlian and Lua so happy.

EXT. ZHU'S HOUSE - DAY

Chi pedals her bike into Zhu's driveway just as Zhu is getting into his car.

ZHU

Chi, keep my wife improving and give us a healthy son and you will be handsomely rewarded.

CHI

Wong's and the baby's health are all the rewards I need. I want absolutely nothing from you.

Zhu sneers at Chi.

INT. ZHU'S HOUSE - DAY

In the kitchen of Zhu's house, Chi paces.

Lori, even more pregnant, sips tea.

They whisper.

CHI

Your plan is brilliant.

LORI

Except it means you two put yourselves at greatest risk with Zhu.

CHI

I am the village midwife, so no suspicion will come of my visits to the houses of the pregnant brides. And Lihua is organizing the harvest feast, so that will explain her visits to the others.

EXT. ZHU'S HOUSE - DAY

Chi helps Lori walk around Zhu's property.

CHI

I told him that you must have fresh air and exercise if you are going to deliver a healthy boy. Lihua will walk with you each morning. I will walk with you each afternoon. You will pass Lihua's information on to me and my information on to Lihua. As long as Zhu doesn't see us old ladies plotting together, this will work.

LORI

When?

CHI

Before you have the baby. Because, afterwards...

Lori nods.

LORI

There will be no afterwards.

EXT. ZHANG'S HOUSE - NIGHT INTO MORNING

Hsi-Wa sits in his car outside of Zhang's house. Hour after hour he peers up at the grand house in the dark.

CUT TO:

It is now morning. Hsi-Wa, asleep in his car, awakens to the sound of a car revving in the driveway.

He sees a woman driving away. He follows.

EXT. ZHU'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Lihua gets out of the car in Zhu's driveway.

A hugely pregnant Lori opens the door.

She hugs Lihua.

The two women start walking around Zhu's property.

LIHUA

Tell Chi, good news. I have
finally reached the other three.

LORI

So that leaves just Feng.

LIHUA

Fagang refuses to speak of her. We
have to accept the likelihood that
she was killed in the kiln
explosion.

LORI

But if she is alive and we don't
find her in time, our plan means
her death.

The walk ends in the driveway. Lihua hugs Lori goodbye and gets in the car.

Hsi-Wa ducks down in his car, trying not to be seen.

INT. ZHU'S OFFICE - DAY

Tang and Zhu are working in the office.

ZHU

The yields are down in the sixth
district again!

Zhu slams his fist down.

INT. ZHU'S KITCHEN - DAY

Lori sits in an alcove near the kitchen. She nibbles from a plate of fruit as she looks pensively out the window.

Suddenly, she SCREAMS.

Tang comes running into the kitchen.

TANG
What is wrong?

LORI
I, uh, I knocked over the plate of fruit.

Tang looks questioningly at the fruit plate sitting undisturbed on the table.

LORI
I am getting strong enough to reach over my belly and pick things up.

TANG
Well, please try not to disturb Zhu any further. We are calculating yields and he is angry enough.

Lori watches Tang walk out of the kitchen. She rushes to the window of the alcove, where Hsi-Wa is grinning like crazy.

LORI
Hsi-Wa!

HSI-WA
I to think never to find you! You to come quickly, I to have a car by the road.

LORI
I cannot leave. It is a death sentence for all the kidnapped brides.

HSI-WA
You, Jinlian, others too?

EXT. FAGANG'S HUT - NIGHT

HSI-WA (V.O.)
What I to do to help?

Hsi-Wa creeps around the outside of Fagang's hut.

There are enormous scorch marks in the grass. The burnt shell of the kiln building remains.

Hsi-Wa looks in a window of the hut and see Fagang inside, alone.

The burns on Fagang's face, neck and arms are grotesque.

INT. ZHU'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Zhu sleeps on one side of the big bed.

Lori is on the other side. She tosses one way. Then another. Then yet another.

A couple of times she grips her belly and rubs it.

Then she tosses and turns some more. She sits up.

Suddenly, Zhu's hand comes out of nowhere and slaps her hard.

Lori's head snaps back with a THWACK, smacking against a pointed edge of the ornate wooden headboard.

ZHU

How much longer do I have to put up
with your incessant tossing and
turning?

LORI

Chi says just two or three more
weeks.

Zhu rolls over with an HARRUMPH.

Lori reaches back to rub her head.

She brings her hand back down. It is covered with blood.

Lori awkwardly gets up off the bed and goes into the bathroom.

Suddenly, she grips her belly in pain.

She holds onto the sink for support.

INT. ZHANG'S HOUSE - DAY

Lua packs a shoulder bag full of baby blankets, bottles, diapers and toys.

Jinlian, holding baby Ling Ling, squeezes her tightly.

JINLIAN

Mother, it's safer at his cousin's farm. Zhang can take good care of you, Lihua and the baby there.

LUA

For the first time you have everything good in your life. And you're risking it all.

JINLIAN

I couldn't live with myself if I didn't do this. Besides, if I don't, Zhu could hurt us all.

LUA

Another suspicious fire, huh?

JINLIAN

Exactly.

(beat)

Don't worry, I'll meet up with you by tonight.

EXT. BARN - CONTINUOUS

Zhu uses a knife to peel an orange while his farm workers load crates of fruit onto many trucks.

INT. ZHU'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The telephone RINGS feebly. The phone is barely taped together.

EXT. BARN - DAY

Tang runs out of the house towards the barn.

TANG

Boss, boss, come quick!

CUT TO:

Zhu leads Chen, Tang and all the workers inside the barn to a hidden door.

Zhu unlocks it.

The men are stunned to see a vast arsenal of guns and other weapons.

CUT TO:

The men load half the arsenal into nearby farm trucks.

Zhu, packing major heat, gets into his car and takes off.

The gun-toting workers jump in the trucks and speed off behind Zhu's car.

A short distance down the road, they meet up with other farm trucks and other peasant men.

A convoy forms.

At several stops along the way, they stop to pick up other men who jump in the back of the trucks and grab guns for themselves.

A convoy of army vehicles joins in and heads up the mountain behind Zhu's car in the lead.

A woman watches from behind a hay stack while the convoy speeds by.

Her head is covered by a scarf.

When the convoy is well past, she quickly darts from behind the hay stack and walks quickly in the other direction.

An unseen woman SCREAMS IN PAIN.

EXT. RIVER - CONTINUOUS

A pregnant woman in a big hat walks swiftly along side a river.

The unseen woman is still SCREAMING IN PAIN.

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

A woman in a hooded jacket runs through the woods.

The unseen woman is still SCREAMING IN PAIN.

EXT. ZHANG'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The SCREAMS of the unseen woman continue as we see Jinlian leave her house and run at lightning speed over the meadow.

EXT. ZHU'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Chi, on a bicycle, rides up the driveway to Zhu's house. She hears the SCREAMS of agony coming from inside.

INT. ZHU'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Lori is on the floor, SCREAMING and MOANING.

Her water has broken and she is having labor contractions very close together.

Chi comes running in.

Jinlian comes in a moment later and hugs Lori.

One by one, it becomes a gathering of all of the kidnapped women from the train, except for one.

Only Feng is missing.

The women attend to Lori in various nursing capacities.

LORI

We have to get out of here! I'll
have the baby on the train! I can
do it, please!

Lori has another contraction and SCREAMS in pain.

CHI

You can't go anywhere. This is
going to be a dangerous delivery as
it is.

LORI

Chi, then the women must go now.

JINLIAN

No, Doctor Lori. We're not leaving
without you.

LORI

But you'll miss the train.

JINLIAN

The men won't be back until
morning. There is one more train

this evening. We'll wait for you
 to have the baby and catch that
 one. Together.

Lori's labor is agony. The baby just won't come.

The women attend to Lori for hours. Still, no baby.

Chi and Jinlian talk quietly in a huddle by a large candle.

 CHI

 This baby just does not want to
 come out into the world.

 JINLIAN

 Do you blame him?

Chi looks at the clock. It ticks on the men's return and
the last train out.

INT. FAGANG'S HUT - CONTINUOUS

Hsi-Wa has Fagang by the throat.

 HSI-WA

 She to be alive?!

 FAGANG

 Zhu said he would kill me if I told
 anyone!

Hsi-Wa releases his grasp.

 HSI-WA

 I to be sorry about your burns.
 And I to understand your fear of
 Zhu. But, the blood of ten women
 to be on your hands. If Feng to be
 alive and Zhu to know where she to
 be, she to be as good as dead. And
 so to be you.

EXT. ZHU'S HOUSE - SUNSET

The sun is setting over Zhu's house.

INT. ZHU'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Lori is drenched with sweat and nearly unconscious from the
arduous labor.

She can barely speak.

LORI
(barely whispers)
It's getting late. Chi, the women
must go now.

CHI
I agree. Jinlian, lead them there.
Hide near the train shed until the
train comes. Get on the last
train, no matter what.

JINLIAN
But--

LORI
(barely whispers)
Go! I will make it, I promise you.

Jinlian hugs Lori.

EXT. RURAL ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Coming down the mountain road is a long trail of lights from
the returning convoy.

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Jinlian leads the women through the woods towards the train
station.

EXT. ZHU'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

A car speeds up Zhu's driveway towards the house, sending
rocks and pebbles flying.

INT. ZHU'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Chi is alone with Lori.

CHI
We're getting closer.

LORI
(barely whispers)
Is the baby okay?

CHI
So far, yes.

LORI
Thank god!

Chi looks surprised at Lori's response.

LORI
(barely whispers)
I have come to love this little
life inside me.

Chi takes Lori's hand in hers and brings it up to her heart.

This epiphany has profoundly deepened their bond. This special moment needs no words.

The door bursts open.

Hsi-Wa and Feng run in.

LORI
Feng!

Feng embraces Lori.

LORI
What happened to you? We were so worried.

FENG
The brick maker likes women even less than he likes Zhu. He defied Zhu's order to marry me and sold me to a cobbler in the next village. For a big profit.
(beat)
In retaliation for his defiance, Zhu put gasoline in his kilns and they exploded. Fagang's male lover was killed instantly.
(beat)
I was already gone when it happened.

LORI
And your baby?

FENG
I tried to escape. Zhu's officers beat me to a pulp. My unborn son did not make it. I, too, died with him.

Lori and Feng hug.

Hsi-Wa takes Chi aside.

HSI-WA

Chi, I to see a trail of car lights
to come down the mountain road.

CHI

No!

Lori SCREAMS in pain again.

Feng wipes her brow.

Hsi-Wa puts his arms around her.

Chi gets back in place between Lori's legs.

CHI

Breathe. C'mon Lori, you can do
it. Breathe deeply one more time,
then bear down.

Lori lets loose a loud SCREAM, which gets lost in...

EXT. RURAL ROAD - CONTINUOUS

The brakes of a pick-up truck SQUEAL to a halt near the
train station. Many gun-toting men are crammed in the back.

Two men jump out and the truck continues on.

The men are two of the husbands, Chun and Tsen.

They head into the woods towards their huts.

TSEN

Who would have lied about an
insurrection in the mountain
district?

CHUN

If we hadn't run into the district
secretary on his way down, we would
have driven hours and hours more up
there on those forsaken roads. All
for nothing.

TSEN

I've never seen Zhu so mad.

CHUN
His wrath is legendary.

TSEN
Sshhhh. Do you hear something?

Jinlian and the seven other women reach a clearing leading to the train station.

TSEN
Look, the wives are escaping!

CHUN
(shouts)
Stop right there!

Chun and Tsen draw their guns.

The women GASP.

CHUN
There was an insurrection, all right. Just not in the mountain district.

The two men herd the women into the empty, windowless train shed.

Tsen and Chun use a nearby piece of timber to wedge the shed door shut and lock the women in.

TSEN
We should split up. You warn Zhu and I'll go into the village for the other--

Tsen and Chun are interrupted by GUN CLICKS.

There is a rifle shoved into each of their skulls.

The husbands drop their guns and raise their arms in surrender.

CUT TO:

Behind a large rock in the woods near the train station, Tsen and Chun are on the ground, unconscious, with fluid-soaked rags near their mouths.

The men are shackled to each other. Empty syringes lay nearby.

Sitting on the train platform are the original kidnappers,
the Creepy Man and the Pock-Marked Man.

 CREEPY MAN
PERFECT! We just re-kidnap the
women and sell them all over again
in a far-off village.

 POCK-MARKED MAN
And double our original profit for
half the work!

 CREEPY MAN
How long before the next train?

The Pock-Marked Man looks from a schedule posted on the wall
to his pocket watch.

 POCK-MARKED MAN
Forty minutes.

 CREEPY MAN
Perfect. Just enough time to get
the shackles.

INT. ZHU'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Feng and Hsi-Wa are urging Lori on.

 FENG
Just a little more, Lori, c'mon.

Lori SCREAMS with all her might.

Finally, the baby comes out into the world.

The baby WAILS for dear life.

 CHI
Feng, gather the baby's things.
Hsi-wa, get a blanket and wrap Lori
up. We've got to get out of here
NOW!

Chi quickly bundles up the baby in her arms, while Hsi-Wa
bundles up Lori in his arms.

Suddenly, Zhu bursts in on them, gun drawn.

The women SCREAM.

Zhu FIRES at Hsi-Wa, hitting him in the chest and barely missing Lori.

Hsi-Wa struggles not to drop Lori. He manages to put her down gently, while clutching his gaping wound.

Zhu aims again, intending to finish off Hsi-Wa, but freezes when he hears a BABY'S CRY.

Zhu dashes across the room and grabs the baby away from Chi.

He tears away the baby's blanket.

ZHU

I must know it's a son!

Zhu struggles to remove the diaper that is keeping him from the proud moment of seeing his son's maleness.

Suddenly, Chi ferociously STABS Zhu in the back with a fireplace poker. Feng HITS him in the head with a chair.

Zhu falls to the floor with a THUD.

He moans in pain, SHOUTING CURSES at everyone.

Lori and Feng examine Hsi-Wa's gunshot wound. It looks dangerously close to his heart.

Feng rips up a table cloth, puts it over the bloody wound, trying to stem the bleeding.

HSI-WA

I'm fine, I can make it.

CHI

We have to go before Zhu's men see us.

Lori limps over to Zhu's box of torture instruments and takes out a pair of shackles.

She removes the key and puts it on a small table.

She hands the shackles to Feng, who puts them very tightly on Zhu's wrists and ankles.

LORI

So you will know the oppression of
bondage that you have made others
feel.

Next, Lori takes the baby from Chi's arms and stands over Zhu.

LORI
You will never see him again.

Zhu CRIES OUT in anguish.

ZHU
My son! Do not take my precious
son away from me!

They all run out of the house.

Zhu sees that Lori left the key to his shackles on a small table.

He struggles to reach it. He tries and tries.

On one swing of his arms, he accidentally knocks over the table.

The big candle on the table falls to the rug.

The rug catches fire.

EXT. RURAL ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Far down the road, Lori pauses.

She looks back at the house that was her prison.

It is going up in flames.

She stares for a moment at this ironic justice.

A moment later, she turns her back and continues on.

CUT TO:

The train is blowing warning WHISTLES that signal it is about to leave.

Lori's group arrives at the station with just moments to spare.

Their heads dart all around, looking for signs of Jinlian and the other women.

A long WHISTLE blows.

Lori's group has no choice but to start boarding the train.

Lori goes first. Then Chi hands up the baby and climbs up herself.

Feng stands behind Hsi-Wa to help him up the first step.

Just as Hsi-Wa reaches the first step, he glances down the platform and sees female silhouettes boarding a freight car.

He points them out to Feng, who is still behind him on the platform.

Feng joyously runs down the platform to the women.

She doesn't realize that the two unseen kidnappers are actually herding the shackled women into a cattle car.

With some difficulty, Hsi-wa, Lori and Chi (who is holding the baby) climb down and get off the train to see what is happening, but, are too slow and too late to help.

The kidnappers easily grab Feng and shove her into the cattle car with the other women.

Led by Jinlian, the women fight back, trying to jump out before the train starts moving.

The men with the guns shove them back into the cattle car.

Again, following Jinlian's lead, they use their shackles as weapons. The women fight back and knock the kidnappers down.

The women start leaping off the train, many of the pregnant ones sustaining injuries on their hard landings.

The Creepy Man sees Jinlian trying to help the last pregnant women jump off carefully.

He waits until the exact moment the pregnant woman jumps to grab Jinlian.

He puts the gun to her forehead with a fury borne out of Jinlian's defiant resistance.

Jinlian fights with a strength borne out of a mother's will to return to her beloved husband and child.

Jinlian also fights with a stunning choreography of agile, athletic movements that catch the men completely off guard.

She lashes out and pummels them with her shackled hands and feet.

It is not enough.

The two kidnappers regain their positions and gang up on her.

The Creepy Man pistol-whips Jinlian into unconsciousness.

Final TRAIN WHISTLE.

The train slowly starts to pull away. The out-of-breath Pock-Marked Man stands at the cattle car door, looking down on the platform.

Hsi-Wa, who is bleeding through his bandages and clearly losing massive amounts of blood, lunges up at the Pock-Marked kidnapper and grabs onto him.

The two men struggle, hanging off the barely moving train. Hsi-Wa unsuccessfully reaches for the kidnapper's gun.

They both fall off and narrowly miss being crushed by the wheels of the train.

From his position above on the departing train, the Creepy Man reaches down and shoots Hsi-Wa in the chest at close range.

The Pock-Marked kidnapper springs up and runs to catch the train.

The Creepy Man reaches out and pulls him up, just in time.

Lori and Chi rush over to Hsi-Wa, who is in a puddle of blood as he fights for breath.

Lori bends down over him to hear what he struggles to say.

HSI-WA
(gasping)
To be in my pocket. From car.

Lori looks at his blood-soaked chest, but does not understand.

Hsi-Wa reaches out feebly and puts her hand on his chest. Her hand is instantly covered in blood.

She feels around under his jacket.

HSI-WA
Near to be my heart.

Lori feels something sticking out of his shirt pocket near his heart.

She pulls out a bloody envelope. She opens it up and takes out her the wedding photo of her parents.

HSI-WA
They to be so proud of you.

She hugs Hsi-Wa with all her might.

HSI-WA
I to see them in the Yellow
Springs.

He dies in her arms. She SCREAMS.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

The remainder of this story is done as the same black-and-white news documentary as the opening scene.

The logo for "The Documentary Network" is in the lower right corner of all the documentary video.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - DAY (3 YEARS LATER)

Documentary video: It's three years later. Lori (looking healthy at a normal weight again) kneels on the train platform in the sacred spot where Hsi-Wa died in her arms.

In her hands is her parent's wedding photo. She kisses it.

LORI (V.O.)
Hsi-Wa lost his life bringing a
piece of my parents back to me. It
is comforting to know that he is
with them in the Yellow Springs.

A train lumbers by.

Lori looks tortured and traumatized by the sight of the train.

Reveal: the eight women who jumped off the train three years ago surround Lori. They carry bouquets of flowers.

LORI (V.O.)

The kidnappers escaped in the
train... with our beloved Jinlian.

The women put the bouquets around a make-shift monument to
Hsi-Wa and Jinlian.

LORI (V.O.)
For three years we have scoured the
country for her... and them.

INT. LABOR MARKET - DAY

FLASHBACK to a shot from an earlier scene at the Five Eye
Bridge Labor Market

Lua points out the Creepy Man to Jinlian.

Jinlian looks directly at him in disgust. The Creepy Man
turns away.

LUA
Jinlian, be careful.

Jinlian kisses the woman on the cheek.

JINLIAN
Mother, I am going to make
something good happen for us.

Video switches to: funeral footage of an ornate Chinese
coffin.

LORI (V.O.)
Lua could not take losing Jinlian
yet again. She died of a broken
heart.

EXT. ZHANG'S HOUSE - DAY

FLASHBACK to a shot from an earlier scene when Zhang bows to
his grandmother, Lihua, at his wedding to Jinlian.

LORI (V.O.)
Zhang's grandmother Lihua followed
soon after.
(beat)
Zhang is now both father and mother
to 3-year-old Ling, who is as bold
and fearless as her mother.

Documentary video: You don't have to read Chinese to know what little Ling is stapling onto a telephone pole.

It is a "MISSING" poster displaying a photograph of her mother.

LORI (V.O.)
Private investigators came up with
nothing. The reward we offered,
again, nothing.

Ling's stapled flyer comes up only to the height of Zhang's knees.

Zhang smiles at Ling, then staples another "MISSING" flyer higher up on the same telephone pole.

LORI (V.O.)
Zhang and little Ling have
plastered the country with
"MISSING" and "WANTED" flyers.

Next, he staples a "WANTED" flyer beside it. It displays police sketches of the Creepy Man and the Pock-Mark Man.

Zhang rubs Ling's head and brushes the hair back from her face, like affectionate parents do.

LORI (V.O.)
The Chinese government is no help.
There are simply too many missing
women. We continue our search
anyway.

EXT. ORCHARD - DAY

FLASHBACK to shots from an earlier scene: Feng is picking oranges with her baby nearby in a basket.

She tickles his nose with the sprig of hibiscus.

The Creepy Man shows up, trying to lure her away. She refuses.

LORI (V.O.)
Feng's undying hope was that her
husband would find their baby
"happy in the hibiscus."

Subtly, Feng uses her foot to push the baby basket out of sight behind the hibiscus bush.

LORI (V.O.)
Just hours after Feng was
kidnapped, he did.

Documentary video: a touching scene of Feng's husband making
a meal for their now 3-year-old son.

Feng walks into the kitchen carrying a new batch of
"MISSING" posters depicting Jinlian.

Father and son embrace her.

INT. GENERAL STORE - DAY

Flashback to an earlier scene. This is the "Lori getting an
ultra-sound" scene from earlier, only now, as it is
replayed, we see more details.

Chi is administering the test in the back room of the
village general store.

LORI (V.O.)
Chi risked her life organizing the
mass escape. She also risked her
life in another way.

ECU on Lori's pregnant belly. Chi glides paddles across it.

LORI (V.O.)
To work, this act of bravery had to
be kept a secret from everyone,
including me.

Chi looks towards the door and shouts.

CHI
Zhu, come see!

Zhu comes in as Chi presses a button and something in the
machine starts WHIRRING.

Moments later, an ultra-sound photo drops into a tray.

This time, we see that it drops down on top of another photo
already sitting in the tray.

Zhu looks at the monitor.

ZHU
I can't tell anything from this.

CHI
Well, it's hard because he's moving
around so mu--

ZHU
HE?

CHI
Yes, he. I printed a picture when
I identified his maleness.

Chi retrieves the ultra-sound photo from the tray. But this time, we see her reaching in and taking out the bottom photo, not the one that just dropped into the tray.

Chi hands the photo to Zhu and points to the baby's maleness.

ZHU
Are you sure? I hear these tests
aren't 100% reliable. This could
be a shadow.
(beat)
Chi, I won't be stuck with a girl.

This time we see Chi maneuvering her body to block Zhu's sight of the photo tray.

As Zhu is closely examining the ultra-sound photo that Chi handed him, Chi reaches back behind her into the tray and takes out the newest photo.

She subtly hides it behind the machine and smiles.

CUT TO:

INT. ZHU'S HOUSE - DAY

Flashback to an earlier scene: Chi is coaxing Lori through the pain of her agonizing delivery.

CUT TO:

Flashback to an earlier scene: Lori takes the baby from Chi's arms and stands over Zhu.

LORI
You will never see him again.

Zhu CRIES OUT in anguish.

ZHU
My son! Do not take my precious
son away from me!

This flashback is over.

SAD MUSIC begins.

Documentary video: The wedding photo of Lori's parents
fills the screen.

Zoom into the house in the background of the wedding photo.

DISSOLVE TO:

Documentary video: the same house in present time.

Lori walks down the path outside the home.

LORI (V.O.)
I now live in "281 Brigade." In
the home where my mother was born.
Where she married my father. I
feel their love everyday.
(beat)
And pass it on.

Suddenly, the most adorable, giggling 3-year-old Chinese
girl runs into frame.

The scene is in black-and-white, but the satin ribbon in her
hair is in full, vibrant color.

LORI (V.O.)
The son was never a son.

The little girl carries a doll in her hand.

She jumps into Lori's outstretched arms.

LORI (V.O.)
Jin-Wa is my miracle child.
(beat)
One day she will come to understand
the honor of her full name: Jinlian
Hsi-Wa Wong.

Jin-Wa hugs her mother so cutely and lovingly.

Jin-Wa also reaches out and holds the hand of her "adopted"
grandmother, Chi.

LORI (V.O.)
Every day, we search and pray for
another miracle.

Video switches to an earlier scene: all the women from the first kidnapping are shackled to each other in the cattle car.

Zoom into Jinlian, looking fearless and defiant.

LORI (V.O.)
Jinlian **IS** out there.

THE MUSIC STOPS.

There is OMINOUS SILENCE.

FADE TO BLACK

The following slow-scrolling text appears on screen:

**Each year, more than 100,000 Chinese
women are kidnapped and sold as slave
brides.**

Only 1 out of every 10 is ever rescued.

Many get kidnapped again.

FADE OUT