

"THE MASTER"  
The Legend of the Plant and Soil Techniques

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. CITY OUTSKIRTS - DAY

The cityscape lies distant on the horizon. In the opposite direction, a path leads towards a plush field. Here, several spectators are seated on the soft blades of grass.

People of all races, creeds, ages, and clothing make up the audience. They spread comfortably throughout the area.

Expressions range from person to person. Some hold tremendous joy, while others seem uncertain. A few show signs of fatigue as if they are at the ends of their ropes, crying out for help.

A well prepared couple lays out a blanket before taking their seat.

The crowd faces a general direction. Their gazes set upon a grand tree.

The tree grows from multiple trunks joining together as one. This lays the foundations to support a hundred branches, each reaching outward in its own direction.

More people join the crowd. A group of city dwellers emerge from the west. Their loud clothes reflect their personalities. They wear T-shirts printed with short quips addressing their social concerns.

A MIDDLE AGED MAN rests under the shade given off by the massive tree. He sits atop crossed legs in a half-lotus position. Ratty garments cover his back. Swarthy skin, dry, knotted hair and a thick beard complete his ensemble.

He is the only one not facing the tree; he faces the crowd.

MIDDLE AGED MAN

Peace is what man has long sought  
but never found. This is because  
peace does not exist as man has  
come to describe it.

The members of the audience concentrate on his words. They delve deeper, behind the words.

MIDDLE AGED MAN (CONT'D)

If to keep peace restricted to some  
far distant future, then it will  
never be seen by the eyes of any  
generation. Peace looms over the  
now. It is here with us today.

(MORE)

MIDDLE AGED MAN (CONT'D)

Only, it is kept locked away. The actions of people alone confine it. The actions of people alone may free it.

A HUSBAND clutches his wife's hand. He lifts himself to his feet, bringing her along. They stand over the crowd. The Husband speaks his mind.

HUSBAND

I have found peace within myself.  
Is that not enough?

MIDDLE AGED MAN

If you were the only one alive then  
by all means it is enough.

In a short distance away, a TEENAGER stands up. He is wearing a leftist political T-shirt. A baseball cap covers his head. It is embroidered with the symbol for anarchy.

TEENAGER

In the world we live in, I believe it does take time to achieve a goal as large as this. Ultimately, the ends justify the means.

MIDDLE AGED MAN

Of what end do you speak of? The end of an empire? The end of a campaign? The end of a man's life? And what of everything that follows?

(shaking his head)

There is no end, therefore the means is everything.

Further out in the crowd, a YOUNG MAN rises. He expresses himself with fierce passion in his voice.

YOUNG MAN

I would never fight anyone.

MIDDLE AGED MAN

Are you well versed in the art of combat?

YOUNG MAN

No sir.

MIDDLE AGED MAN

It is simple to dismiss violence when you are not skilled in the craft of fighting.

(MORE)

MIDDLE AGED MAN (CONT'D)

It is logical to avoid competition when losing is inevitable. When one is certain he will stand victorious however... it is not so simple.

YOUNG MAN

I know for a fact that I wouldn't hurt another human being.

MIDDLE AGED MAN

One mustn't speak of fact in regards to events yet to come. But you may be right. Why would you fight? Why would anyone? It's absolutely ridiculous... under calm, comfortable conditions, that is. Under volatile situations, man is all too well known for his reactions.

The Young Man droops down his head. The passion remains in his face.

MIDDLE AGED MAN (CONT'D)

I was a man who lived by his reactions...

INT. FIGHT CLUB - NIGHT

Deep beneath the city is a dimly lit arena. Spectators fill the seats as incoherent chatters fill the air.

Designer label clothes and matching accessories drape the eccentric individuals found inside. Their actions definitely do not match their high standard apparel.

Intoxicated men and women stumble into one another. Drunks lean against a large cage surrounding a fighting ring. They unintelligibly cheer for their favorite fighters.

INT. RING

A competition is already underway. A combatant suffers a brutal blow. He drops to the mat. The REFEREE checks on him and waves off the match.

The fighter remaining on his feet, raises his arms high. He prances around the ring, flaunting to the fans.

Money exchanges hands within the crowd.

Several attendants enter the cage. They scoop up the fallen body and lift him off. Cleaners use liquid solvents to wipe away the stains left behind.

A well dressed ANNOUNCER walks towards the center of the ring, with a microphone in hand.

ANNOUNCER  
And now, ladies and gentlemen...  
the main event of the night. I  
introduce to you first, the  
challenger...

INT. FIGHT CLUB

The crowd boos in unison. They are pretty energetic for a group of drunks.

The CHALLENGER, 29, is a white male with a muscular build, though a bit on the bulky side. He makes his way through the mass of intoxicated humanity.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)  
Weighing in at 197 pounds...

The fans let him know what they think of him.

AUDIENCE MEMBER #1  
You punk! You ain't nothin'!

AUDIENCE MEMBER #2  
Your luck's about to run out!

The harsh criticism does little to disrupt the Challenger's poker face. Cups of beer fly his way and bounce off his chest. Nothing can faze him.

INT. RING

The Challenger enters the ring. He rolls his shoulders, stretches out his neck, and hops in place.

ANNOUNCER  
And now... Your champion...

Music blares from out the speakers. The place erupts.

The announcer's lips move but not a single word is audible. The voices of the fans unite into a continuous stream of howling echoes.

## INT. FIGHT CLUB

An entourage consisting of twenty strapping males enter the arena. They push and shove the fans to create room. Spreading out in a circular formation, they move as a single unit. Two men walk within the inner-circle of thugs.

The CHAMP strides in complete confidence, with shoulders held high. A hooded robe conceals his face.

Over his left hand he wears the revered Silver Claw. It is a reinforced glove with three long sharp prongs extending out from its knuckles.

The MANAGER, 35, saunters beside the Champ. He is a black man resembling a pimp in every fashion. Gold and flash blanket his body. A sturdy walking cane assists his pretentious gait.

The entourage makes its way to the ring. A woman from the audience attempts to get close. She presses up against the guards and reaches for the Champ. A large bouncer plucks her away, kicking and screaming.

The Champ continues on, indifferently. He enters the cage.

## INT. RING

The bodyguards follow him in. They quickly fill the ring, wedging themselves between the two fighters.

The Manager sticks close to the Champ. He removes his hood.

The Champ has a clear smooth face, glowing of a childlike innocence. He is a mere KID in his late teens.

## MANAGER

You got this, baby. This guy ain't nothin'. He fights white.

Kid's head darts towards the Manager. His piercing eyes show no sense of humor.

## MANAGER (CONT'D)

He's a brawler, baby. His feet never leave the ground.

The Referee carefully peels the claw away from Kid's grip.

The Referee holds the claw up to the audience. They cheer at the tops of their lungs. He walks over to the Challenger and displays it before him.

The Challenger acknowledges, dipping his head slightly. He then continues to shadow box, tossing out quick combos.

The Manager helps Kid out of his robe. Kid's light brown complexion shines under the spotlights. His ultra slim frame is toned and chiseled. There is no fat on him. He weighs no more than 120 pounds.

MANAGER (CONT'D)

Whooo. Lookin' good baby, lookin' good.

REFEREE

Alright! Anyone not here to either lose teeth or to knock'em out, get out of the ring!

MANAGER

(to Kid)

Don't end this thing too early, baby. Give the fans a bit of a show.

(serious)

The investors demand it.

The stage clears until only three men remain inside.

The Referee signals over the fighters to center ring. They gather around.

The Challenger studies Kid. Kid's eyes wander without concern.

REFEREE

You both know the rules. There aren't any. Use fishhooks and low blows as you see appropriate. Now remember... This fight is for the Silver Claw. Victory can only be claimed by a knockout. Don't go for a submission hold unless you plan on breaking the limb. Any questions?

The Challenger declines, shaking his head. He never takes his eyes off of Kid.

REFEREE (CONT'D)

To your corners, men.

The combatants part to their respective sides.

REFEREE (CONT'D)

(to Kid)

Hey kid... Take it easy tonight,  
okay? The hospital's got some  
empty beds, but the morgue is full.  
You catch me?

Kid smirks as he heads to his corner.

Both men stand ready at opposite sides of the ring.

REFEREE (CONT'D)

Let's get it on!

The Referee slices his hand through the air and moves back.  
The bell rings. The crowd cheers.

The Challenger trots forward. His fists closely hover around  
his chin.

Kid waits, almost bored. His arms hang down at his sides.

The Challenger tests a quick jab, knowing he is well out of  
range. Kid doesn't flinch, nor does he maintain eye contact  
with his competitor.

The Challenger moves in. He throws a right hook. Kid sways  
free and returns to his default position.

More punches result in misses. Kid flaunts his quickness.

The Challenger loses his composure. He begins to swing his  
arms wildly. He still can't make contact.

Then, the first hit of the match lands. The Challenger  
shuffles backward, clutching at his ribs.

Kid poses with his hand extended out in a fist.

The Challenger charges forward. Kid retreats towards the  
cage. He springs off the chain link mesh and delivers an  
elevated kick to the neck.

The Challenger drops to a knee.

Kid skips forward two steps and spins. As momentum builds,  
he swivels his hips and finishes with a devastating extended  
side kick.

The sole of his foot collides into the Challenger's chest.  
The impact sends him flying backward. He crashes onto the  
mat, several feet away.

The Challenger is not getting up. The only movements are those of sporadic twitching.

The Referee signals for the bell. The deafening roar of the crowd silences its rings.

Medical examiners rush inside. They dare not budge the fallen man.

Kid's entourage floods the ring with their arms held high. Some members jump ecstatically; others pump their fists at the audience.

The Manager slides his hand into the Silver Claw. He holds the glove high above him as he struts around the ring.

Champagne bottles pop open. The men douse themselves and the fans with sparkling bubbles.

In all the commotion Kid is nowhere to be found. He quietly exits the cage.

INT. FIGHT CLUB

A scantily clad GROUPIE stumbles up to Kid. She wobbles in place, struggling to keep her eyes from closing.

GROUPIE

How about we go somewhere we can really celebrate?

Kid averts his eyes and proceeds onward. She yells out to him.

GROUPIE (CONT'D)

Oh you don't hear me, huh? I thought all you guys fight for money and women. Or maybe you're not into that?

He quickly turns around and gets in her face.

KID

I fight to be the best. Cause if you're not the best, you're just another talking monkey.

He storms off, disappearing into the crowd.

GROUPIE

Whatever...

INT. LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

Kid slouches on a bench. He cuts the tape off his wrists. Distant noises of merriment grow louder.

The Manager enters. In one hand he holds the Silver Claw; in the other, he juggles his cane and a wad of cash. The entourage follows close behind him.

MANAGER

(to Kid)

Hey, baby. How come you left the party so early?

Kid remains silent. He continues to remove the tape off his hands.

MANAGER (CONT'D)

What's wrong?

KID

I'm done with this.

MANAGER

You're done? Done with what?

KID

I'm done travelling the world, pandering to a bunch of rich drunks; fighting arrogant, talentless losers.

The ambient chatter falls quiet. The Manager looks to his men. He hands them the claw and the cash.

MANAGER

(to the entourage)

Leave us alone for a bit, guys. We need to discuss some business.

The room empties. The Manager closes the door. He leans against it until the voices outside diminish.

MANAGER (CONT'D)

Talk to me, baby. You're on top of your game. Why would you wanna leave it all now? It can't be the money... cause we be rollin' in it.

KID

There's something missing. It's an emptiness. A hole.

MANAGER

Fill that hole with the bread you  
be winnin'.

KID

I no longer hunger. Are you  
capable of understanding that?

MANAGER

Help me understand. Help me change  
your mind. What do you want me to  
do? Name it; it's done.

KID

I want you to find me some real  
competition. People who are  
disciplined, determined and  
dedicated. People like... Shaolin  
monks.

MANAGER

Now I don't know about that. Monks  
don't really care to fight for  
money.

KID

(sarcastic)

Now you're catching on!

(serious)

Listen... I joined you to find  
challenges that I could overcome.  
To find fighters worthy of  
fighting. I have yet to find one.  
They don't exist here. There is no  
competition for me. So I'm done.  
It's over.

Kid packs up and heads for the exit. The Manager blocks his  
path.

MANAGER

Now hold on just a minute!

He places his hands on Kid's chest, holding him back. Kid  
looks down at his chest. The Manager wisely removes his  
hands.

MANAGER (CONT'D)

Just calm down, baby. Let's think  
this thing through. Now we came  
all the way over here, alright. We  
have investors from across the  
globe who have already paid for the  
contract that you signed.

(MORE)

MANAGER (CONT'D)

I mean, it's not like you can just walk away. Am I right?

Kid wants no part of it. He barges forth.

MANAGER (CONT'D)

Now I said hold on!

The Manager pushes him. Kid shifts his body. The Manager's own momentum turns against him. He stumbles to the floor.

Kid opens the door and exits the room, never looking back.

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT

Kid wanders alone down a deserted street. The moon is his only companion. The night is silent.

Whispers emerge from out a shady corner. Kid tightens his body. His eyes scan the darkness.

A drunken couple steps out into the light. They lean against each other and unsteadily walk past him.

Kid loosens his body and hangs his head low. He continues forth. The pavement is his only interest.

MANAGER (O.S.)

Where you off to, baby?

The Manager stands in the distance. A light post ominously glares down upon him. The handle of his cane reflectively shimmers.

MANAGER (CONT'D)

It's a cold, lonely place out there.

Kid keeps his eyes on the ground. Nothing else exists.

MANAGER (CONT'D)

Who'll care for ya. How'll ya eat?  
How'll ya keep warm?

Kid passes him by, not uttering a word.

MANAGER (CONT'D)

You'll need money. You'll need friends. Come back to us. We'll forget this whole thing ever happened.

Kid gains some distance from him.

MANAGER (CONT'D)

You ruined me. And now you wanna ruin yourself. I can't let you do that. I can't let ya starve out there kid!

Kid walks further away.

MANAGER (CONT'D)

(malevolently)

I won't!

Several members of the entourage step from out the shadows. They hold a variety of blunt weapons in their hands.

They rush him. Kid begins to flee. More members emerge from the other direction. They box him in.

The attackers gather close. Kid tries to keep out of range. He avoids the swing of a bat and moves in with a flurry of strikes. He manages to disarm a few crew members.

Kid focuses on the opponent nearest to him. He dodges strikes, waiting for an opportunity to close in.

A weapon cracks him in the back of the skull. Kid remains on his feet, dazed. He rattles his head, adjusts his eyes, and fights on.

Kid throws a series of punches. They are all off target. His speed greatly diminishes.

The crew circles around and takes turns pummeling him.

Kid lands a couple of hard shots of his own. As thugs fall, more replace them.

Kid is heavily outnumbered. For every hit he lands, he suffers from twice as many.

Kid begins to throw strikes in all directions. He rapidly moves around, never standing in the same place.

A weapon jabs into his spine, stopping him in his tracks. Another object hits him on the head. Kid falls.

They maul him on the ground, kicking and spitting.

The Manager nears. The men lift Kid to his feet. He falls back down, unable to stand. Several members hold him up.

The Manager stares straight into Kid's eyes. Kid's eyes are glazed over. The Manager slaps him.

MANAGER (CONT'D)  
Don't you get it? You won't  
survive out there. I'm only doin'  
what's best for ya. It's nothin'  
personal, baby.

Kid wriggles free from his captives. His fist bashes into the Manager's face. The Manager stumbles back.

The entourage regains control over Kid. They lock his arms while others pound away at his ribs.

MANAGER (CONT'D)  
Hold him still!

The Manager bludgeons him repeatedly with his cane. The crew holds up Kid's flaccid body.

MANAGER (CONT'D)  
You were the greatest talent I'd  
ever seen. But you threw it all  
away cause it came too easy for ya.  
What a waste.

The crew lets go of Kid. He collapses onto the pavement.

The moon brushes Kid's face with its long rays. His eyes shut off the lights.

EXT. CITY OUTSKIRTS - DAY

Light trickles down through the narrow gaps between the foliage of a large tree. The glaring rays of the sun pull Kid's eyelids apart.

Kid awakens underneath the tree. He contorts his face to extremes, breaking up the dried blood sticking to his skin.

He twirls his wrists and ankles. He rotates his arms and legs. Nothing is broken.

Kid's hand investigates a pain at the back of his head. It returns painted red.

He tears away at his shirt. He wraps his head using a shred of cloth.

Kid wobbles to his feet. Once up, he leans uncontrollably to one side. As Kid falls over, he reaches out for the trunk of the tree. The sturdiness of the tree keeps him from falling.

In the distance lies the outline of the city. In the opposite way, a tapering path leads into the woods.

Kid turns to the cityscape. The sun shines bright; not a cloud is in the sky. The familiar bustle of daily life echoes faintly.

He turns to the woods. A massive cloud casts a shadow over the trees. He hears the chirps of foreign birds and a bevy of uncommon animalistic noises.

He looks directly upward. The sun is well past noon. It vanishes behind the clouds overlooking the woods.

He follows the path of the sun.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Leaves and branches cover most of the ground. Kid limps past several trees. Though the sounds of life are abundant, not a single thing is seen moving.

A twig snaps nearby. Kid turns toward the sound, tense.

There is nothing to be found.

Kid moves onward, constantly shifting his head in every direction.

EXT. WOODS - DUSK

The day grows dark. Kid sits in front of a large rock covered in moss. He rushes to build a fire. Several twigs are set up against each other over a batch of dried leaves.

He begins rubbing two sticks together. As speeds grow, so does anticipation.

No luck...

Desperation grows in his eyes. He places a branch on the ground and surrounds it with leaves. He holds another stick perpendicularly against it.

With his hands clasped, he begins to roll the stick with his palms. The pace quickens. He blows on it. The sticks begin to smoke. His hands feel warm. His eyes show confidence. And then...

Nothing...

Kid smashes the branch on the ground. He kicks away the pile of leaves.

His back presses up against the mossy boulder as he curls up into a ball. He holds his legs tightly against his chest and rests his chin on his knees. He begins to rock.

His eyes reveal a great deal of worry.

EXT. GRASSLANDS - DAY

The tall trees are no more. Rolling grasslands stretch for miles on end.

Kid hikes up several hills and staggers down steep paths.

Exhaustion clearly takes effect. Travel slows to a crawl.

Kid's stomach speaks its garbled language. With eyes weary, he continues forth.

EXT. HILL - DUSK

Kid wheezes from out his parched throat. He forces himself up a hill. His shoulders hang low, leaving his arms to dangle lethargically. At the apex of the hill he collapses.

He drops face first into the grass.

All movements cease.

Soon his head begins to toss sporadically, as if he is drowning.

He is not catching his breath. He is catching blades of grass with his mouth.

Kid uses his teeth to pluck out a mouthful of grass. He proceeds to chew and eat it. It's not as bad as it would appear.

As he eats, Kid sets his gaze upon the lands before him. At the bottom of the hill lies a fresh water lake. It glistens in a beautiful orange hue, reflecting the sunset.

Kid bursts over the hill and dashes down to the waterhole.

EXT. LAKE - DUSK

A misstep takes Kid down hard to the ground. He slides along the soft soil and makes it to the lake.

With cupped hands he greedily laps up the cool liquid. He soon gulps down whole handfuls of water.

A plant peeks out above the water. Kid plucks it and shoves it in his mouth. The taste is unbearable. Regardless, he continues chewing. He reaches out for another stem.

The sound of singing captures his attention. Kid lifts his head high. The song goes on. It is a soft masculine voice, not too far away.

Kid crams one last stem into his mouth and rises. His ears guide him towards the song.

EXT. HUT - DUSK

The lyrics grow clearer. It is a language he is somewhat familiar with. It is most definitely of Asian origin.

A beaten down wood shack stands alone on flat grounds. A small campfire burns just outside it.

The singing continues. An OLD MAN sits on a short bench not far from the hut.

He is of Chinese descent. Heavy wrinkles fold around his aged eyes. At sixty years old, he still has a full set of hair. His long black and grey locks droop dry and tangled.

The Old Man's song closes with a harmonious finale. He fetches a small loaf of bread from out a basket beside him. He takes a bite.

Kid eyes the stale bread. His mouth waters. Kid lifts his shoulders and pushes out his chest. He makes his presence known.

KID

Alright old man, hand over the loaf  
and there won't be any trouble.

The Old Man takes a look at Kid. He then takes another bite.

KID (CONT'D)

Hey! What's the matter? Can't  
understand me? I'll speak clearer  
for you.

(gesturing with hand)

If you want to live, give me the  
bread.

The Old Man smiles, amused. He speaks softly with an accent.

OLD MAN

Come get it.

KID  
What'd you say to me?

OLD MAN  
What's the matter? Can't  
understand me? I'll speak clearer  
for you.  
(gesturing with hand)  
If you want the bread, come here  
and take it.

KID  
(referencing his body)  
You don't want any of this, old  
man.

OLD MAN  
(referencing the bread)  
Then I guess, you don't want any of  
this, young boy.

Kid screams with rage and rushes towards him. The Old Man remains seated.

Kid swipes at the bread. The Old Man swiftly rolls away, taking the bench with him.

The Old Man sets the bench back beneath him and casually returns to sitting.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)  
You must not be very hungry.

Kid is persistent. He charges. He swats at the loaf. The Old Man sways. His back bridges along the bench.

Kid leans over him, stretching to reach for the bread. The Old Man tosses the loaf over Kid's head. He quickly gets by Kid and catches the bread before it hits the ground.

The Old Man stands with the bread in his hand. Kid lunges for it.

The Old Man drops the bread, only to catch it with the top of his foot. Kid dives for it. The Old Man kicks up the loaf back into his hands.

The Old Man displays tremendous coordination and acrobatic skill, keeping the bread away from Kid. He seems to be enjoying the game. Kid is not at all happy.

Kid comes at him in a wide stance. The Old Man places the bread on the bench. He kicks the short-legged seat at Kid. It slides levelly through his legs.

Kid bends over, desperately reaching for the bread. The Old Man uses Kid's exposed back to roll over him.

The Old Man meets the bench on the other side of Kid. Taking the bread into his hands, he sits down.

The Old Man relaxes, placing his foot over his knee. He then takes a small nibble.

Kid turns around, furiously. He kicks away the bench. It slides far away.

The Old Man remains in a seated position with his leg crossed. He is sitting in midair! All his weight balances on a single foot.

KID

That does it, old man. It didn't have to come to this. You had your chance. Now prepare for a beating.

Still squatting, the Old Man eats another piece of bread.

KID (CONT'D)

Don't think I'm gonna take it easy on you just cause your brittle bones can snap easier than wooden boards.

The Old Man shows no reaction.

KID (CONT'D)

I mean it!

The Old Man takes another bite of bread.

KID (CONT'D)

I warned you.

Kid aims for a knockout with a forward roundhouse kick. The Old Man gracefully twirls out of the way. Kid can't believe it.

The Old Man tucks the bread into his shirt and knots it secure. He poses in a peculiar fighting stance. With legs straight together, he holds his arms outward at different heights. His head sways from side to side; his body soon follows.

He resembles a plant teetering in the breeze.

Kid is unsure of how to approach. He cautiously moves in. The Old Man patiently waits.

Once within striking distance, Kid throws a punch. The Old Man analyzes the form, speed, and angle of the attack. He maneuvers accordingly.

The Old Man strategically places the sharpest tip of his elbow in the line of impact.

Kid's fist smashes into the hardened joint. Intense pain shoots up his arm. His fingers twitch. He fights to keep a straight face.

Kid goes for a kick next. The Old Man calculates. He lifts his knee into the arc of the kick's trajectory.

Kid's shin nearly shatters against the rock-hard hinge. He balances on one foot, leaving his other leg to hang limp.

KID (CONT'D)

Had enough yet?

The Old Man smiles. Kid quickens the pace. He unleashes a barrage of quick, powerful strikes.

The Old Man counters each blow by taking the hit on a toughened body part. Not once does he attempt to go on the offensive.

Kid throws a quick jab to the nose. The Old Man ducks low. Kid's fist collides into the Old Man's forehead. His forehead wins.

The more hits Kid lands, the more damage he suffers.

KID (CONT'D)

(fighting)

What kind of animal style is that?

OLD MAN

(defending)

It is not an animal style. It is Plant Style.

KID

(fighting)

Plants don't fight.

OLD MAN

(defending)

Of course they don't.

The Old Man turns to block a side kick. His back is now exposed.

Kid takes advantage. He punches at the Old Man's back.

The Old Man curls his chest inward and squeezes his shoulders together. His scapulas protrude outward.

Kid's punch connects with the jagged edge behind the shoulder joint.

This one hurts him. Kid grimaces in pain. The Old Man grows worried.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)  
Enough! Stop hurting yourself.

KID  
Are you kidding? I'm just getting warmed up.

Kid returns to his fighting stance.

Disinclined, the Old Man gets into a stance of his own. This one is far different from the first.

He stands completely vulnerable. His arms hang down at their sides. He holds his head high. His eyes remain alert. They show no signs of anger. There is absolutely no fear in them.

Only compassion and amicable kindness emit out this warm gaze. It is a glare evoking friendship, as if the first moments of introducing oneself to a fellow being.

KID (CONT'D)  
Have you gone senile, old man?  
Prepare yourself for battle.

OLD MAN  
I have.

KID  
What kind of style is that? You look like you're expecting a hug.

OLD MAN  
It is Soil Technique.

KID  
Yeah? You'll be soiling your pants, when I'm done with you.

Kid charges with hands cocked.

The Old Man doesn't stir. He peers into Kid's eyes.

Kid swings a punch with tremendous velocity. As he sends his fist forward, he catches a glimpse of the Old Man's eyes.

A strange sense of warmth envelops him. He can't go through with it.

Kid struggles to pull his punch back. It is too heavy. He jerks his shoulder hard.

Kid's fist halts inches before the Old Man. The Old Man never even blinks.

KID (CONT'D)

What're you doing just standing there? This is a fight! Show me your Soil Style.

OLD MAN

You have just seen it.

KID

You didn't do anything.

OLD MAN

Soil doesn't appear to do anything, yet it nourishes all life.

Pause.

KID

Are you crazy? I could've killed you!

OLD MAN

And you chose not to.

Kid yells out. He throws another punch. The Old Man watches him with hearty eyes.

Kid's eyes lock into the Old Man's gaze. He tries to turn away. He can't...

At the last moment Kid yanks the punch off its mark.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

See. You cannot even strike me.

KID

Yeah, cause you're not doing anything.

OLD MAN

Exactly!

The Old Man opens the knot in his clothes and removes the loaf of bread. He splits it into two unequal portions. He holds out the larger chunk to Kid.

Kid stands firm. He turns his head away. His stomach grumbles.

The Old Man insists. He nods, extending his hand further.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

Go on.

Kid looks at him. He eyes the bread, then back at him.

Kid reluctantly accepts. He snatches the bread from the Old Man's hand. He greedily bites into it, making a mess of himself.

The Old Man fondly laughs.

EXT. HUT - NIGHT (LATER)

Kid and the Old Man sit close to the fire. The Old Man wraps a fresh bandage around Kid's head.

KID

I've always been into fighting. Even as a child, while others would throw or kick around a ball, I would be off sparring. I never showed any interest in learning sports. You can't use those skills in the real world. But fighting... now that's actually practical.

OLD MAN

A mind capable of so much should not find practicality in fighting.

KID

Animals fight. We're all just animals.

The Old Man pulls the bandage tightly around Kid's head. Kid flinches in pain.

OLD MAN

When man defends his actions, he acknowledges that he is just an animal. When man is not on trial however, he assumes that he is a separate entity, far superior.

KID

Man is the greatest animal.

OLD MAN

It is not a question of greatness,  
but a statement of differences.  
Every living being has its limits.  
Man is blessed with vast potential.  
But seldom, if ever, does he reach  
it. Animals may not have the exact  
range in potential, if to measure  
it in such ways, but most reach  
their barriers.

KID

Then which is better?

The Old Man knots the head dressing.

OLD MAN

They are not there to be compared.  
They just are.

KID

You said yourself that man has the  
highest potential.

OLD MAN

Potential is meaningless, if not  
sought to be reached. The greater  
the potential, the more one must do  
to attain it. Limits vary within  
individuals as well. One man does  
not have the same potential of  
another. Physical and mental  
barriers afflict each, differently.

KID

I believe that all men are equal.

OLD MAN

I agree.

With another piece of cloth the Old Man dresses Kid's damaged  
knuckles.

KID

But you just said some men are  
greater than others.

OLD MAN

It is you who is assigning value to  
men. Potential does not deal in  
values. All men have their own  
limits.

(MORE)

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

If you are capable of doing more to benefit your surroundings then it is your duty to do more.

KID

What happens if one doesn't live up to their potential?

OLD MAN

That is what you call... suffering. The further you are from potential, the more suffering you cause to yourself and everything around you.

The Old Man knots the bandage around Kid's hand.

KID

And if one reaches their potential?

OLD MAN

That is called... enlightenment. It is not enough to simply reach potential. One must live his potential.

The Old Man begins to wrap Kid's bruised shin.

KID

What about animals that live up to their potentials? Are they...

OLD MAN

By the very definition, they are enlightened.

KID

Even insects? Plants?

OLD MAN

Of course.

KID

You've got to be kidding. They don't do much of anything.

OLD MAN

They do all they are able to. It is all that life asks of them.

The Old Man finishes dressing Kid's leg.

KID

How does one come to know the limit of their potential?

OLD MAN

One does not come to know it. One comes to feel it.

Kid scratches his head.

KID

I need a break. This is all a bit too much for me right now. There are so many questions I need to ask. But I'm too tired to even think.

OLD MAN

You may sleep here tonight.

KID

And after tonight?

OLD MAN

That is up to you.

Kid looks out into the night. The fields are vast and lonely.

Kid turns to the small hut. It is worn, but it has a sturdy roof.

Kid turns back to the Old Man.

KID

You think maybe I could stick around for a while?

OLD MAN

You may stay.

KID

Don't worry. I'm not one to freeload. I'll do whatever is needed.

OLD MAN

I know you will.

INT. HUT - DAWN

Kid is sound asleep on the floor of the hovel. He nestles beneath a torn blanket.

A stream of cold water pours down on his face. He sits up, gasping for breath.

The Old Man stands over him holding an empty bucket upside down. Water drips from its rim.

KID  
Are you nuts?

OLD MAN  
You must cherish life.

KID  
What?

OLD MAN  
Life! It is precious. You should appreciate it.

KID  
I do appreciate it.

OLD MAN  
Don't tell me. Tell life.

KID  
(looking up in the air)  
I appreciate you, life.

OLD MAN  
Life cannot hear you.

KID  
(looking up, yelling)  
I appreciate you, life!

OLD MAN  
Stop yelling.

KID  
I'm just telling life how much I appreciate it.

OLD MAN  
Life does not understand words. It only understands action.

KID  
How do I act appreciative?

OLD MAN  
By awaking early and living a full day.

The Old Man exits the hut. Kid stays seated, shivering from the cold water.

OLD MAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Come. Training begins outside.

KID  
What training?

EXT. HUT - DAWN

Kid stumbles out of the shack.

KID  
I never agreed to any training.  
Frankly, I don't need it.

OLD MAN  
You couldn't beat me, yesterday.

KID  
Only because you didn't fight.

OLD MAN  
That is the only way to victory.

Kid shifts his eyes down.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)  
The first thing you must learn  
is...

KID  
(interrupts)  
The first thing you must learn is,  
if I'm going to train, I need to  
eat. I consume about six-thousand  
calories a day.

OLD MAN  
Don't speak of numbers. I don't  
understand numbers.

KID  
It means I eat a lot.

OLD MAN  
If to eat only that which the body  
requires, then you needn't eat  
much. If to consume everything  
around you for the sake of  
performance, then you needn't  
perform.

KID  
What foods does the body need?

EXT. BAZAAR - DAY

A village market place bustles with commoners. Tents display a variety of goods.

OLD MAN (V.O.)

Grains are of great importance.  
They are the backbone of diet.  
They provide us with the energy we  
need to train. Grains should  
accompany every meal. Rice... at  
least twice.

A baker sets fresh loafs of bread atop a counter.

An artisan twirls dough into strands of noodles.

A customer carries a sack of rice over each of his shoulders.

OLD MAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Fruits, nuts and vegetables will  
keep you sustained throughout the  
day. Do not limit variety. Be  
willing to try new tastes. They  
all contain unique properties that  
cannot be substituted.

Fresh fruits and vegetables are stacked upon stands. The colors are exotic and vibrant.

Customers neurotically inspect them. They resort to strange techniques in choosing the ripest ones.

One lady holds a melon up to her ear while knocking on it.

OLD MAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Finally, there are beans. If  
grains are to be considered the  
backbone of diet, then beans are  
its brains and muscles. Beans  
offer us strength and provide the  
opportunity for growth. And  
similar to grains, they are quite  
versatile in how they can be  
prepared and served.

One shop sells raw beans with their outer casings intact.

A worker stacks blocks of tofu.

A cook deep-fries squares of bean curd in oil and serves it to customers, ready to eat.

KID (V.O.)  
What about meats?

EXT. PATHWAY - DAY

Kid and the Old Man peer at the market place from a distance. They stand just off a beaten path, far away from the crowds.

OLD MAN  
I am a vegetarian. Now, so are you. We should try to consume things we share the least similarities with. Things that are farthest from our blood. By joining their elements with ours, we become more complete. It's true that one must consume a bit more without meat, but there are more plants than there are animals.

KID  
Then why do so many people crave the taste of meat?

OLD MAN  
A child can be raised on a flesh diet before it is ever born. There is no one reason of why man has come to crave blood. Man is a milk producing animal that eats many types of meat. When it comes to the blood of other milk producing animals however, he prefers those that eat plants over those that only eat meat. Even man's taste searches for foods farther away from himself.

KID  
All this talk about food has got me hungry. What are we doing all the way over here?

OLD MAN  
Patience.

A FEMALE SHOPPER heads home from the market square. She carries a basket of fresh groceries.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)  
(referring to Female Shopper)  
There!

The Old Man approaches her, leaving Kid behind.

KID  
(whispering loudly)  
Wait. Where you going?

The Old Man calls out to the Female Shopper.

OLD MAN  
Excuse me madam. Please spare some  
food for an old man and a young  
boy.

FEMALE SHOPPER  
I'm sorry. I only bought enough to  
last the day for me and my family.

OLD MAN  
No need to apologize. It is I who  
have disturbed you. For that I am  
terribly sorry.

She reaches into her satchel.

FEMALE SHOPPER  
I have some money left over. You  
are more than welcome to it.

OLD MAN  
No. Please... It is not money  
that man requires. He only needs a  
meal every now and then. Thank you  
most graciously, but I cannot  
accept.

The Old Man returns to Kid, empty-handed.

KID  
What'd you do that for? You should  
have taken the money. Beggars  
can't be choosers.

OLD MAN  
As long as there is life, there is  
choice.

KID  
Look at yourself!

The Old Man curiously checks himself. He doesn't find  
anything particularly wrong.

KID (CONT'D)  
You're a homeless man!

OLD MAN

As long as there is land, there is home.

KID

This is embarrassing. There's no need to be doing this. I'd rather starve to death than get down on all fours and beg others for kindness.

OLD MAN

You let your pride restrict you. The poor are forced to lose their pride. This is why they are capable of things the wealthy are not.

KID

Like eating from the garbage?

OLD MAN

In your hand and in your mouth you call it food. But place it on a pile, and it is declared worthless. Only pride can take something as wholesome as soil and label it as loathsome as dirt. It is the poor who are closest to fulfilment. They would come to realize this, if only they would look at themselves, rather than in the direction of the rich.

A MALE SHOPPER exits the market place. He carries two baskets bountiful of food.

The Old Man attempts to approach him. Kid holds the Old Man back.

KID

Wait. Let me do this.

The Old Man watches as Kid goes up to the Male Shopper. Some words exchange. The Male Shopper shakes his head to the sides and continues to walk. Kid uses his body to block the way. More words exchange between them.

Kid suddenly grabs him by the collars and cocks his fist.

OLD MAN

(annoyed)

Oh no.

The Old Man rushes in.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)  
Let him go!

KID  
(confining Male Shopper)  
This guy's got a mouth on him. He  
needs to be taught a lesson.

The Old Man pries them apart.

The Male Shopper notices the Old Man. He humbles himself.

MALE SHOPPER  
How have you been, old man?

The Male Shopper holds out one of his baskets.

MALE SHOPPER (CONT'D)  
I wish to give this to you. Think  
of it as a token of appreciation  
for all the help you have given me.  
(eyeing Kid)  
I was on the way over to your hut,  
when this kid rudely insisted that  
I give it to him instead.

OLD MAN  
I am very sorry. He is with me.  
Please forgive him.

The Old Man looks at Kid. Kid stands, confused.

The Old Man slightly tilts his head towards the Male Shopper.  
He signals Kid by twitching his cheeks.

Kid wrinkles his brows in protest. The Old Man's eyes grow  
stern. Kid gives in. He faces the shopper and bows,  
obligingly.

KID  
Sorry.

The Old Man politely accepts the basket.

MALE SHOPPER  
Be well, old man.

The Male Shopper glimpses patronizingly at Kid before going  
on his way.

Kid glares at him, appalled. He turns to the Old Man.

The Old Man looks at Kid with an austere expression. Kid slowly rolls his eyes around, attempting to avoid contact with the Old Man.

The stare burns deeper into him. Kid can't take it any longer.

KID

Dignity was at stake! I had to defend it!

The Old Man keeps his eyes fixed upon Kid.

KID (CONT'D)

(reviewing himself)

I've always had trouble dealing with people treating me condescendingly. I had no other choice than to get defensive to win the respect I deserve.

OLD MAN

The way you treat others and the way you treat yourself offers you enough respect to last the span of your life. There is no need to demand respect from others.

KID

(bows)

Sorry sifu.

OLD MAN

(stern)

Don't call me sifu! I am not your teacher. I am merely someone who helps point things out.

The Old Man heads down the path, carrying the basket of food. Kid lags behind.

KID

(defensive)

I was only being respectful!

The Old Man stops and turns around.

OLD MAN

Respect is not addressing titles. Nor is it conforming to established social tiers. Respect is one's attitude towards life. Respect is how you carry yourself amongst your surroundings.

EXT. RUINS - DAY

Ancient stone pillars lay toppled across a lush field. Some columns remain erect amidst debris and rubble.

The decorated roof of a once monumental structure now rests just inches above the ground.

Despite the massive destruction, life prevails. Blots of shrubbery and vibrant vegetation accent the pale shades of gray.

Not too far away projects a tall mass of land.

EXT. STAIRWAY - DAY

The sky is clear and blue.

A lengthy stairway extends upward from the ruins. Hundreds of stone planks swerve up the side of a steep cliff. They stretch to reach the blue abyss above.

Kid runs up the stairs. He lugs a wide post over his shoulders. Large buckets, full of water, dangle from each end.

Every step is sluggish. Perspiration drips down his arms to the points of his elbows.

The Old Man watches from the very top.

OLD MAN

Come now. The flowers are thirsty.

KID

(heaving)

I'm trying. It's... It's difficult.

OLD MAN

Nonsense! There is no difficulty; only the restrictions on effort we place upon ourselves.

Kid reaches deep and musters his will. He strives onward.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

Remove all restrictions. Free yourself.

Kid clambers to the last few steps. He collapses at the top of the stairs. His head plops down beside the Old Man's feet.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)  
Up, up. The plants await.

The Old Man leads the way as Kid pulls the buckets across the steps.

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

At the top of the stairs is a wondrous garden. An expansive thicket surrounds the area. Colorful wild flowers bloom.

The scent of freshness fills the air. The Old Man takes in a deep breath and savors the aroma.

Kid wanders in, carrying the buckets across his shoulders.

The Old Man signals him closer. He is like a child at a toy store.

OLD MAN  
Come, come.

Kid struggles to continue standing. The Old Man scoops out a cup of water from the bucket. He dispenses it evenly throughout the bushes.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)  
(to flowers)  
Drink up, young ones.

As the Old Man moves further down, Kid keeps with him. His hands support the beam across his shoulder.

The Old Man playfully feeds the plants. Kid isn't as energetic. Fatigue turns him edgy.

KID  
You made me do chores all week long. What does any of this have to do with training?

OLD MAN  
The difference between chores and exercise lies in the frequency of their repetitions.

KID  
How is carrying water up a thousand steps related to self-defense?  
When do we work on our punches?

The Old Man stops watering the plants. The smile on his face fades. He abruptly turns to Kid.

OLD MAN

(stern)

The throwing of a fist is never defense. You may try to convince yourself otherwise, but pretending is all you are doing.

KID

Then how do you stop an attacker?

The Old Man returns to watering the plants.

OLD MAN

You don't. The attacker must stop himself.

KID

While we do what? Stand there and take a beating?

OLD MAN

Do as the plants do.

KID

Which is?

OLD MAN

Defend yourself.

EXT. RUINS - DAY

OLD MAN (V.O.)

Plants are exceptional creatures. Though they are considered immobile, they can stretch, curl, and sway.

The Old Man demonstrates a pose. He plants his feet firmly on the ground. He twists his body, stretching out every muscle. He curls his arms inward and then extends them out.

His arms flap as if leaves in the breeze. His body sways loose as if the stem of a plant.

EXT. FIELDS - DAY

OLD MAN (V.O.)

The gentlest of breezes can carry them miles away. But when roots grow deep, they can withstand even the most severe storms.

The Old Man spreads his feet wide and stomps down. He tenses his body. His arms take the form of suspended branches. The stance resembles a tree.

His body no longer swings. He stands immovable.

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

OLD MAN (V.O.)

Some plants develop thorns. Although their primary functions serve far different purposes, they can be applied for defense.

The flowers look on as Kid displays a plant pose.

The Old Man scrutinizes the style. He shifts Kid's feet slightly apart.

Kid switches into another pose and holds. The Old Man lifts Kid's hand a smidgen higher.

EXT. LAKE - NIGHT

OLD MAN (V.O.)

Man can learn to use his thorns. The most hardened parts of the body are the elbows, knees, shoulders, knuckles, and the forehead. All these have primary functions all their own. But they can be utilized to keep the body safe from attack.

Kid takes a defensive stance.

The Old Man taps on Kid's elbow. With a free hand he simulates a strike towards him.

Kid holds his elbow into place and blocks the attack. Kid wobbles. His footing is not firm.

The Old Man adjusts Kid's stance to gracefully accompany the high elbow block.

The Old Man taps on Kid's knee. He then slowly kicks at him.

Kid lifts his knee high to block the strike. He loses his balance and stumbles.

The Old Man adjusts Kid's stance. Kid lifts his knee once more. He now stands solid.

EXT. RUINS - DAY

OLD MAN (V.O.)

Only an aggressor will ever get  
pricked by thorns. This is self-  
defense in its purest form.

The Old Man performs a series of soft contact strikes. Kid's eyes rapidly catch the path of the attacks. He lifts a hardened joint to block each blow.

Kid's limbs never venture far from his body. After each block he returns into a default pose.

EXT. HUT - DAY

Kid and the Old Man feast on noodles. They eat in silence.

Kid finishes his meal first. He watches the Old Man eat.

The silence is getting to him. Kid brushes his hands down his face. He impatiently waits, with eyes wide open.

The Old Man slurps one final strand of pasta into his mouth. He slowly chews.

The Old Man walks over to a bucket of water. He rinses out his bowl and utensils. Kid waits in line behind him.

The Old Man returns to his bench.

Kid quickly washes his dishes and hurries back.

OLD MAN

The preparing of the meal, the  
consuming of the meal, and the  
clean up, are all a single duty.  
And so, they should follow  
subsequently without break.

KID

But why must we eat in silence?

OLD MAN

Never disrupt a meal; not even with  
speech. Man searches his entire  
life to find others who he would  
die for... To find others, who  
would die for him. Food is  
composed of living beings who have  
actually died for you. Show some  
courtesy... for your search has  
ended.

KID

But we're only eating plants. I can understand if we were eating animals...

OLD MAN

It does not lessen the fact, something that was once alive is no longer. Life feeds upon life in one form or another. This cannot be changed. But how you choose to acknowledge this, can be.

EXT. FIELDS - DAY

The Old Man comes at Kid with a flurry of attacks. Kid uses the Plant Technique to defend himself. He adjusts his body to thwart every hit.

They continue to spar.

KID

(blocking)

Plant Style is useful and all, but it seems to lack depth. I can't shake the feeling that it's only a beginner's tool.

OLD MAN

(sparring)

It most definitely is.

Kid drops his guard. He gets hit in the chest.

They stop sparring.

KID

(overreacts)

I don't believe this! I'm a skilled fighter! A champion! Why train me in an entry-level style?

OLD MAN

Plant Technique is for those who want to change for the better. It is for those who want to become more than what they are. It is a simple discipline that anyone can participate in and still continue to live their lives. It is also for those who are not yet ready to commit completely towards a greater purpose.

(MORE)

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

It is for those who acknowledge they have some degree of control, but accept that fear will ultimately rule over their lives.

KID

And for those who yearn for more?

OLD MAN

For those who seek freedom... Freedom from fear... Freedom from themselves... There is Soil Technique.

KID

How will this Soil Technique help me grow as a fighter?

OLD MAN

It will only help you grow as a person.

KID

Let me guess... There are no offensive moves, right?

OLD MAN

By engaging in violence you accept that it is okay.

KID

It is okay to fight, when necessary.

OLD MAN

Necessity varies greatly amongst individuals. With enough convincing and a little pressure, a want can easily become a need.

KID

Then... A person decides based on the situation.

OLD MAN

A man under duress is certain to make irrational choices.

KID

In a fight, it is instinct that makes all the decisions.

OLD MAN

And instinct is...

KID  
Instinct is your natural response  
to things.

OLD MAN  
Instinct can be manipulated through  
exposure and repetition.

KID  
Yeah. That is why we train, to  
fight.

OLD MAN  
That is why we must train, to not  
fight.

A chill flows through Kid's stomach. It runs up his spine,  
causing him to shiver.

He must learn more.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)  
Just as one can train his reflexes  
to block and strike, one can train  
his reflexes to not react. One can  
train his reflexes to offer only  
warmth and understanding.

KID  
How does one do that?

CUT TO:

INT. HUT - DAWN

Kid slumbers on the floor. Water comes crashing down on his  
face. He jolts up, catching his breath.

The Old Man stands over him with an empty pail.

EXT. LAKE - DAY

Kid and the Old Man sit in half-lotus positions. They face  
each other.

OLD MAN  
The mind is a body of water.

Kid breathes deep and calm. His shoulders fall relaxed. His  
eyelids grow heavy. He shuts his eyes.

CUT TO:

A BLACK SCREEN

OLD MAN (V.O.)

It begins as a single droplet.

Drops of rain collect into a small puddle. Ripples crinkle the surface of the tiny pool.

OLD MAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

When the water is small and shallow, ripples can calm rather quickly. The floor is visible without much strain to the eye.

The ripples cease. The water turns clear. The floor easily stands out.

OLD MAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

As one grows, so too does the pond; expanding larger than even the greatest oceans combined.

The puddle inflates. It stretches far and wide.

EXT. OCEAN - DAY

An endless sea merges with the skies.

Small ripples form on the surface of the water. A new series starts before the older ones die down. The moving ridges obstruct the floor from view.

OLD MAN (V.O.)

The more water there is, the more water that can be shifted. There are no more ripples; only waves. New disasters are birthed.

A ripple forms. It grows in speed and mass. It gathers more water until the tiny ripple becomes a high tidal wave.

The winds pick up. The waters splash violently.

OLD MAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

The floor has long disappeared. One cannot imagine a bottom even exists.

The storm grows stronger. Tornadoes touch down onto the surface of the water. Giant whirlpools clutter the area. The entire ocean begins to quake.

CUT BACK TO:

EXT. LAKE - DAY

Kid opens his eyes. He gasps for breath. His heart beats rapidly.

The Old Man sits composed before him.

KID

I can't stop the winds. I can't control the waves. I can't see the floor.

OLD MAN

You will. You must.

EXT. CLIFF - DAY

A flowing strip of water divides two bodies of land. The raging river sequesters a prominent mountain that pierces the sky.

On the other side of the water, Kid and the Old Man stand face to face near the edge of a tall cliff.

OLD MAN

Training of the mind is fundamental. However, the conditioning of the body is not to be overlooked. Both must function at equal levels. Only then can the communications between the two be accurately interpreted.

KID

(flippant)

Let's do this thing!

The Old Man gives him a solemn stare. Kid straightens out his attitude.

KID (CONT'D)

I mean...

(bows)

I am ready.

OLD MAN

There are three sections of the body that need special attention. More effort must be given to the things that require more effort.

KID

What are the sections?

The Old Man punches Kid in the stomach. Kid hunches over.

OLD MAN  
First is the abdomen.

Kid heaves heavily. He curls his brows. He tightens his fists. He is definitely not pleased.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)  
Show no reaction.

Kid looks up at the Old Man enraged. He fights to hold himself back.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)  
There can be no passion.

Kid shuts his eyes and holds them tightly closed. He exhales. He loosens his fist. He slowly rises.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)  
Reaction is the physical shift from rational choice to underlying instinct. When a man's actions do not match his speech, he will react when tested. When a man's actions are guided by his theories, there can be no reaction. Do not react. Use the art of adaptation without hesitation.

KID  
How does one adapt to being hit?  
Are we going to train to numb the senses?

The Old Man punches Kid in the stomach. Kid doubles over, gasping.

OLD MAN  
You must feel! Pain is the very sensation of life. It is what reminds us, we are still alive. Only when man desensitizes himself, is he capable of such atrocities. Only to escape his pain does man inflict it upon others.

Kid climbs back to his feet. He clutches at his aching stomach.

KID

I will not escape pain. But tell me... What's so special about the abdomen?

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

The Old Man paces back and forth. The flowers bloom behind him.

OLD MAN (V.O.)

The core is of the utmost importance. It is here, where the battle for balance is fought.

Kid holds himself up by the elbows in a push-up formation. The Old Man paces along his back.

Kid desperately fights to keep his body held tight. He soon collapses.

The Old Man retains his balance atop Kid. He continues pacing.

EXT. LAKE - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

OLD MAN (V.O.)

Two forces converge. The opposing powers are so identical, all motion appears to cease at the point of impact. This most fierce struggle is called... balance.

Kid and the Old Man dangle upside-down, off opposite ends of a round boulder. Their feet interlock at the apex, supporting one another from falling. Their backs bridge against the smooth curves of the boulder.

Kid performs an inverted sit-up and eases himself back down. The Old Man goes next. They repeat, in alternating fashion.

Kid strains considerably harder than the Old Man.

EXT. RUINS - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

The Old Man sits playing with a foreign puzzle game. His body bounces up and down in a slow steady pace. Somehow, his posture retains its structure.

OLD MAN (V.O.)

The center is not found by sight,  
but sought by feeling. Feel the  
flow of balance. Follow the flow  
of balance.

Kid holds himself up suspended above a gap between two elevated platforms. He faces the sky in a crab formation. The Old Man is seated on Kid's abdomen. He continues playing his game.

Kid lifts the Old Man using back bridges. He lowers back down and repeats. He struggles to complete a few repetitions.

Kid grows tired. He loses his grip and falls to the floor.

The Old Man swiftly lands on his feet just as he solves his puzzle game. The Old Man walks away with his hands raised in victory.

EXT. FIELDS - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

OLD MAN (V.O.)

Balance is the one law of the  
universe. It is how life came to  
be. It is why life sustains. It  
is what will allow life to  
continue.

Kid and the Old Man lay opposite each other, with their backs on the grass. Their feet are intertwined.

Kid uses a circular motion to lift himself to a sit-up position. He swings through, completing the circle and returns to the starting point.

The Old Man rotates his body similarly, only counter-clockwise.

Timing makes it so that as one person comes to a sit, the other is back down.

Round and round, they go. They never let their shoulders touch the floor.

Kid slows his pace. He clutches at his burning obliques. The Old Man maintains a smooth motion.

INT. HUT - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

The Old Man leans back, relaxed. He rests his foot over a bent knee.

Using chopsticks he eats a bowl of rice. His whole body lowers and lifts in rhythm. However, he maintains his lax position.

OLD MAN (V.O.)  
To deny balance is to deny  
existence.

Kid is on the ground doing push-ups. The Old Man is rested atop his back.

Kid's arms tremble as he pushes himself up and lowers back down. One final repetition breaks him. He crashes to the ground on his chest.

The Old Man catches himself. He remains atop Kid's back. He casually continues eating.

EXT. CLIFF - DAY

The Old Man and Kid face each other. Kid rubs at his aching abdomen.

KID  
What's the next section?

The Old Man chops him in the neck. Kid clutches at his neck, jumping around in pain.

OLD MAN  
No reaction!

EXT. HUT - DAY

OLD MAN (V.O.)  
The spine is the very foundation of  
the human structure. Its weakest,  
most malleable point... the neck.

Kid places the top of his head on the ground. He spreads his feet wide. Holding his back high, he locks his hands behind himself. He stays in this excruciating pose.

The Old Man places a clay pot, full of water, on the small of Kid's back.

Kid begins to wobble. The pot begins to shake.

Kid can't hold on much longer. He lets himself go. The pot comes crashing down. Water splashes everywhere.

EXT. FIELDS - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

OLD MAN (V.O.)  
Where the neck bends, the body  
follows. Control the neck, control  
the body.

Kid prepares for a headstand. He kicks up and holds the pose. He uses his hands to assist him.

The Old Man kicks away Kid's hand. Unable to support himself, Kid topples over.

EXT. RUINS - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Kid stands, bending forward at the hips. A rope is tied around his head. It runs down to the ground and wraps around a large rock.

Kid attempts to lift the deadweight using only his neck.

OLD MAN (V.O.)  
Allow another to control your neck,  
and they now control your body.

Kid flexes the muscles of his neck. He lifts his head. The resistance is tremendous, but Kid powers through.

Kid comes to a complete stand. In perfect form, he lowers back down.

The next repetition seems impossible. He attempts to grip the rope with his hands.

The Old Man grabs a hold of Kid's arms and secures them behind his back.

Kid exhausts himself. Eventually, he stands tall.

The Old Man smiles. He lets go of Kid's arms.

The rock pulls Kid down to the floor, hard.

EXT. LAKE - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

The Old Man sits, drinking a cup of hot water. He is very relaxed.

OLD MAN (V.O.)  
Keep the neck strong; ensure the  
body's allegiance.

Kid holds himself up in a neck bridge. Only the top of his head and the soles of his feet touch the ground.

The Old Man is seated on Kid's abdomen. He sips some hot water.

Kid can't keep himself up. He collapses.

The Old Man drops down with him. He adjusts his cup in midair, spilling not one drop of water.

The Old Man lands atop Kid's fallen body. He retains his relaxed seating posture and casually takes another sip from his cup.

INT. HUT - NIGHT

Kid tosses in his sleep. His eyes move rapidly from side to side. Wrinkles form across his forehead.

KID  
No! Stay back! I'll knock you  
out.

He turns over to his stomach.

KID (CONT'D)  
No!

Kid pushes off the floor and punches his pillow. He wakes up. He rubs his eyes as he looks around the room.

The Old Man lies in bed. He is turned on his side, facing Kid. His eyes are open.

KID (CONT'D)  
Sorry. I didn't mean to wake you.  
I thought I was being attacked by  
someone I once knew.

OLD MAN  
This is not how you should handle  
an attacker.

KID  
It was only a dream. That's all.  
Had it been real, I wouldn't have  
acted like that.

OLD MAN

Dreams at their core, are you.

KID

Dreams are just neurons, wildly firing off in the brain.

OLD MAN

I do not understand what that means. And you may be right. The images are pure fabrications. But how you deal with those images, is based on logic. Your logic. The choices you make in dreams reflect the choices you make in life. You choose to engage in violence in dreams, because you choose to engage in violence in life. Inversely, if you cannot reject lust in dreams, you may not be able to reject lust in life, no matter how certain you are of yourself.

KID

Then dreams are like a test?

OLD MAN

Dreams are fundamental in helping one review himself. Dreams create settings where consequences do not apply and pose the question... will you behave differently or stay true to your convictions. You may not be able to control your dreams, but you do control the choices you make within them. Train so that the choices you make in life become the choices you make in dreams.

KID

How can one possibly train for such a thing?

OLD MAN

Through awareness. Be more aware of the actions you take while you are awake. Constantly scrutinise your concepts and convictions. When you are ready to sleep, do not intend on putting aside your thoughts and your character. Go to sleep preparing to test yourself.

(MORE)

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

It is dreams that show us what we  
have accomplished and what still  
needs work.

INT. HUT - DAWN

Kid is sleeping. Water pours down on him. He sits up,  
startled.

The Old Man is holding an empty bucket.

OLD MAN

No reaction!

Kid catches his breath with a stupefied look on his face.

EXT. LAKE - DAY

Kid and the Old Man are facing each other, sitting in half-  
lotus positions.

Kid closes his eyes.

CUT TO:

EXT. OCEAN - DAY

A powerful storm violently tosses the water. High tidal  
waves come crashing down. The winds howl.

OLD MAN (V.O.)

Only when the waters calm can the  
floor be viewed.

The winds start to die down. The waves weaken. The storm  
begins to pass. The sun pokes out from behind a cloud.

And then...

A bolt of lightning strikes the seas. The winds roar. The  
waves rise. The sun is swallowed whole by a large dark  
cloud.

CUT BACK TO:

EXT. LAKE - DAY

Kid opens his eyes. His posture is broken. He vigorously  
rubs at the sides of his head.

KID  
I can't do it. I'm sorry. I'm  
only human.

OLD MAN  
(stern)  
Say it again!

KID  
I'm sorry!

OLD MAN  
No! After that... Say it again!

KID  
I said I'm only human.

OLD MAN  
You're only human. Only! Human!  
Being human is a privilege beyond  
comprehension. There is nothing  
only, about humans. Never speak  
with such contempt for something so  
miraculous.

KID  
I'm sorry. I didn't mean it like  
that. It's just a phrase.

OLD MAN  
Eliminate phrases and words you no  
longer need. Speak only how you  
truly feel or don't speak at all.

KID  
I meant no disrespect. I don't  
mock life. It's just... You can  
do many things; things that I  
can't. Every day I spend with you  
reminds me of this fact.

OLD MAN  
I am not here to show you what I  
can do. I am here to show you what  
you can do.

Pause.

KID  
We can all only try to do the best  
we can.

OLD MAN

By acknowledging that there is a best you can achieve, you put up a barrier of limitation. And simply trying to do that best, is another wall you have placed between yourself and the goal. Do not fixate on what you think your best is. Bring forth all the effort that lies within you and put it to use. Hold nothing back for later. There will always be more effort available when later comes. Do it for now. Do it now!

KID

Why are you being so hard on me?

OLD MAN

Man is too easy on himself, which is why the world has become so hard. Man must be hard on himself if he wishes for the world to become easy.

Kid takes in a deep breath. He returns to the half-lotus position. His posture is one of confidence.

He closes his eyes.

CUT TO:

EXT. OCEAN - DAY

The storm persists. Whirlwinds indent giant craters on the surface of the water. The noise is unbearable.

The voice of the Old Man penetrates the bellowing winds. His calm tones speak volumes.

OLD MAN (V.O.)

Focus on the floor. Focus so deep that all else ceases to exist.

The winds gradually weaken. The whirlpools shrink in size. The clouds move along. The waves diminish into ripples. The ripples stagnate. The water turns clear.

The floor comes into view. There are piles of rocks all along the bottom.

OLD MAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
Every action taken, is a stone cast  
into the water. The calmness will  
be temporarily disrupted. But soon  
the ripples will cease. With  
effort, the surface of the water  
can return motionless. The rock  
however, will forever remain  
inside. The floor bed is filled of  
actions done. They are there for  
your review. Observe each,  
carefully. Know what you've done,  
to know what you must do.

A stone drops into the water. Ripples form around the point  
of entry. The bouncing of the water slows. The water  
becomes still.

The stone sinks down to the bottom. It lands on a pre-  
existing pile of rocks. After some settling, the stone finds  
a permanent home.

OLD MAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
Only when the water is still can  
you view the floor. Only then can  
you view yourself.

Kid's face reflects on the surface of the water. He has a  
vague smile on his face.

A breeze distorts the image. The floor blurs.

The wind passes. The water returns placid. The floor  
reappears.

Kid's reflection is visible once again. His eyes study the  
rocks below him.

CUT BACK TO:

EXT. LAKE - DAY

Kid slowly parts open his eyes.

The Old Man sits before him with a smile on his face.

EXT. FIELDS - DAY

Kid stoops forward until only his head and feet touch the  
ground. Keeping his shoulders and back elevated, he rolls  
over into a neck bridge. He now faces the sky.

He twists back to face the floor, to his starting position. He continues to twirl while moving around in circles.

EXT. LAKE - NIGHT

Kid lies on the ground. A large rock rests on his chest. Holding it steady, he executes several sit-ups.

EXT. RUINS - DAY

Kid lies on his back atop of a fallen pillar. His head hangs over the edge. A rope is tied around his head; the other end, around a large rock.

He bends his neck, tucking his chin to his chest. This motion gives lift to the rock. Struggling to keep the weight steady, Kid slowly lowers it back down.

Keeping tension on the tether, he carefully rolls over onto his stomach. The weight pulls his head down over the edge.

He lifts the rock, angling his neck up. He lowers it back down.

Kid twists to his back once again. He lifts the rock, bending his neck, tucking in his chin.

INT. HUT - NIGHT

The Old Man sleeps in his bed. Kid is on the floor. With complete control and balance he performs a one-handed push-up using only three-fingers.

More repetitions follow.

EXT. RUINS - DAY

Holding his arms interlocked behind his back, Kid rolls onto his head. Momentum helps him flip back onto his feet.

Kid travels down the field with a series of headsprings.

He dive rolls over a large stone obstructing his path. He continues flipping once he lands on the other side.

INT. HUT - NIGHT

The Old Man sleeps.

Kid hangs upside down from the rafters. His hands dangle below his head. He holds two buckets filled with water.

He crunches his body and lifts his torso. The buckets add extra resistance. He completes a perfect inverted sit-up and lowers back down.

He strains through more sit-ups. A great deal of concentration keeps the pails level. Not a drop of water spills.

EXT. FIELDS - DAY

A noose swings in the breeze. The rope hangs from the branch of a tree. Kid stands below it, his eyes fixating on the ominous loop.

He shuts his eyes tight. He breathes deeply and exhales with force. He rotates his neck and shoulders.

With one final breath, he slips his neck into the noose. He folds his legs into a half-lotus position. There he hangs.

Profound meditation prevents him from passing out.

When the pain is too great, his legs unfurl. He slips out of the rope.

Back on the ground, he calmly exhales.

INT. HUT - DAWN

Kid is asleep on the floor. Water crashes down on him. His eyes gently roll open.

The Old Man stands holding an empty bucket.

Kid sits up with pristine composure. He begins the day by folding his blankets.

The Old Man smiles.

EXT. CLIFF - DAY

Kid and the Old Man stand facing each other.

The Old Man punches Kid in the stomach. Kid stands strong.

There is no emotion in his face. No visible shift in his body. No passion in his eyes. Kid simply stands indifferent.

The Old Man delivers a severe elbow strike to the neck. Kid retains a solid stance.

The Old Man nods. Kid bows.

KID

You said that there were three vital points to the body. What is the third?

The Old Man kicks him in the groin. Kid collapses and curls up on the ground.

OLD MAN

No reaction!

Kid coughs loudly while hunched over. He looks up.

KID

(panting)

How does one train for this?

OLD MAN

First you must stop playing with yourself... while alone.

Kid gets up.

KID

Now hold on. A man's got needs. What's the big deal anyway? It's in our nature. Why deny it?

OLD MAN

Man spends his entire existence defying nature. But when his shortcomings need explaining, he is all too welcoming of her.

Kid nods, acknowledging the failure of his weak excuse.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

You must resist those urges. Usage in such ways will bring sensitivity to that region.

KID

What else?

OLD MAN

The area must be met with force... constantly.

Kid grimaces with concern.

EXT. FIELDS - DAY

Kid stands with his legs slightly parted. He holds his hand out in front of him and closes it into a fist.

OLD MAN (V.O.)

Due to overprotection, it is now  
necessary for drastic exposure.  
That which requires more effort,  
must be given more effort.

Kid attempts to punch himself in the groin. Fear holds him back.

He clenches his teeth and shuts his eyes. He breathes deeply.

In one sudden burst, he hits himself hard below the belt. Kid goes down. He rolls around on the ground, cupping his loins.

EXT. HUT - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Kid is standing at the side of the hut. He parts his legs.

OLD MAN (V.O.)

Constant sheltering breeds  
weakness, while advocating  
ignorance of the outside world.

Kid clamps down on his groin. He tightens his grip. He squeezes hard.

His face grows red. He breathes heavily. He can't take much more. He lets go of himself.

Kid paces back and forth, massaging the sides of his lower abdomen.

EXT. GARDEN - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Kid balances a large beam across his shoulders. Buckets of water hang off each end. He skillfully scoops out a cup of water and pours it on the wild plants.

OLD MAN (V.O.)

The shock of foreign force can  
produce a debilitating effect.  
Gradual exposure provides vital  
experience for building tolerance.

Kid steps away from the plants. With the beam still balanced across his shoulders, he gets into a wide stance.

He closes his eyes and concentrates. After a few deep breaths, he begins pummeling himself in the groin. The hard strikes get his heart racing. He remains on his feet.

He raises his fist higher and connects with greater force.

Both hands now rise above his head. They interlock into a large fist. He pulls it down hard into himself.

He stands with the rod and buckets still balanced.

EXT. CLIFF - DAY

Kid stands before the Old Man. He is extremely focused. He holds his arms at his sides, with elbows bent and tucked. He parts his legs.

OLD MAN (V.O.)  
One must first withstand force  
before one can repel force.

The Old Man kicks him in the groin. It is a powerful strike. The intensity pushes Kid back.

Kid adjusts his stance. Another kick connects. One more immediately follows.

The Old Man stops. There is no reaction on Kid's face. He straightens his stance, exhales, and bows.

The Old Man is pleased. He bows with a smile.

EXT. HUT - DAY

A roasting campfire burns in front of the hut. Kid carries a bundle of freshly washed clothes.

He sets the pile down beside the fire. Kid reaches inside the damp mound of clothes and extracts a pair of pants. He waves it above the flames and twists. He constantly tumbles them in his hands.

The Old Man steps out of the hut. He is in nothing but a pair of shorts. He walks over and takes a seat by the fire.

OLD MAN  
Dry the linens first. I have  
nothing to wear.

Kid exchanges the pants for white linens. He begins to dry them over the fire.

Kid glances over at the Old Man. He opens his mouth to speak. No words come out.

After much internal protest, he decides to go on ahead and ask the Old Man a question.

KID

It is said that fear leads to violence. How exactly are they connected? They seem like they would lead down completely opposite paths.

OLD MAN

That feeling in your stomach... The chill that envelops you when you are preparing to fight...

KID

Yeah?

OLD MAN

That is fear. Violence cannot exist if there is no fear. This is why you must not fear.

KID

I don't fear anything. I rise above those feelings.

OLD MAN

Being brave and overcoming fear is one thing. To not experience fear at all, is quite another. Courage is a reaction to fear. It is a method used to keep the mind from thinking of consequences. It is for consequences alone that all actions must be judged. No longer can we afford to act without care.

KID

How does one come to eliminate fear?

OLD MAN

Through logic... With rationality... And training. Fear will tell you to flee far away. Don't. Use fear to guide you; not away, but towards.

(MORE)

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

Fear blocks the pathway to greater understanding. Cross those barriers and learn more. If you choose to entertain illogical thoughts and irrational theories, fear will consume you. And knowledge will remain hidden.

KID

Isn't it courage that allows one to go towards fear?

OLD MAN

You are thinking in terms of the physical world. Fear does not exist in the physical world. The one flaw of man is his perpetual attempt to physically overcome mental obstacles. Behavior as such can only lead to mass destruction.

Kid stops tumbling the linens. He absorbs the information given to him.

The fire heats up his hands. Kid tosses the fabric, rapidly shaking his hands cool. He juggles the clothes until they are of a moderate temperature.

Kid hands the dried linens over to the Old Man.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

(reaching for clothes)

Fear lies solely in the mind. It should only be battled on the field of the mind.

The Old Man holds the cloth up in front of him. He spots a large tear.

He peers at Kid through the hole.

KID

(embarrassed)

A little accident during the wash.

The Old Man shakes his head and sighs. He proceeds to wrap himself in his garb.

Kid grabs a small batch of clothes and begins to dry them.

KID (CONT'D)

Is peace the complete absence of violence?

OLD MAN

By far, it is not. Violence and sex are long intertwined. The act of sex is in part, an act of violence. The same strong impulses and intense emotions rule over both. The brain does not differentiate the two. It is the mind that forces their distinction. Violence will persist, for sex needs to exist.

KID

Then what is peace?

OLD MAN

Peace is balance.

KID

How do we attain balance?

OLD MAN

Balance is both internal as well as external. Internal balance is achieved through moderation. It allows one to stand on level ground.

The Old Man places his hand parallel to his eyes, palm facing downward. He holds it completely level. With his other hand, he animates the figure of a man. Two fingers represent its legs.

The Old Man walks his fingers to the center of his hand. There it stands perfectly balanced.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

The world is no longer level. Too many consume too much... escape too often. Far too many pass on their responsibilities.

The Old Man raises just his wrist. His hand tilts dangerously to one side.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

If you attempt to stand on uneven ground without adjusting, you will fall.

The two fingers stubbornly stand at a 90 degree angle. They slide off the slope.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

To stand on an unbalanced world,  
adaptation is required. You must  
struggle harder. You must do more.  
Only then will you be doing just  
enough.

The fingers return atop a level hand. As the hand begins to tilt, the fingers lean in the opposite direction. The hand forms a steep slope. The fingers lean further towards higher ground.

Though the fingers are forced to stand at an awkward angle, they stand nonetheless. They retain their balance.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

Fear, violence, and sex are all a part of normal life. But because man is prone to abuse, the balance has shifted. Being normal is simply too damaging. Because so many thirst for more and more, we must train to function with less and less. Do not let this dishearten you. Our potential allows for us to do more. And more we shall do. This is why we must eliminate violence completely. In order to do so, fear and lust must also cease. Only when we lean against the tilt can we sustain balance.

Kid hands over several articles of dried clothes to the Old Man. The Old Man begins to fold them.

Kid grabs some more wet garments and tumbles them over the fire. Kid peers into the flames dancing before him.

KID

Fight fire with fire.

OLD MAN

Fight fire with fire and burn the whole world down. Peace is not a prize to be won by way of competition. Peace is lived with the absence of contest. The only way to stop the fire is to stop fuelling it.

Kid passes him some more clothes. He gets another batch of damp ones and begins drying them.

The Old Man continues to fold the clothes handed to him. He neatly stacks them in a pile beside him.

KID

Doesn't it ever bother you? To constantly give, simply because others want to keep taking? I'm getting angry just thinking about it.

OLD MAN

There can be no anger as long as there is understanding. Man is still foolish. He has always craved for more. He is just now beginning to see, more is only made possible by losing something else. As a single being with two eyes, one can clearly view the pile of more growing before them.

The Old Man points to the pile of dried clothes beside him. It is stacked high.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

They cannot see that this pile only grows because a pile elsewhere diminishes.

The Old Man points to the pile of wet clothes beside Kid. It is almost gone. Only a few articles of clothing remain.

KID

That's why people have begun reusing things rather than discarding them.

OLD MAN

Again man searches for a solution, focusing on the physical items before him, when it has always been his want of these items that needed to be addressed.

KID

Why does man want?

OLD MAN

Because he fears.

Kid hands over the last batch of clothing. The Old Man folds them.

KID  
Fear creates want?

OLD MAN  
When man fears danger, he wants safety. When man fears discomfort, he wants convenience. When man fears the world he has created for himself, he wants to escape. When man fears another, he wants to kill.

Kid looks down sadly.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)  
Only when one no longer wants, will one no longer fear.

EXT. HUT - DAWN

Kid sits outside, leaning against the hut. His hands are trembling. He tucks his hands underneath him. His whole body now quivers.

The Old Man exits the shack. He looks up at the skies while stretching out his chest and shoulders. With legs fixed firmly on the ground, he twists his torso, loosening his back.

Out the corner of his eyes, he spots Kid. The Old Man stops his morning workout. He looks on, worried.

Kid struggles to keep still. He shifts his body to apply more weight onto his hands. He turns briefly and finds the Old Man observing him.

Kid quickly turns to face forward. He explains himself, all the while avoiding eye contact.

KID  
I don't think I can go on fighting it any longer. It's too stressful.

OLD MAN  
There is no such thing as stress. There is only what you must do next. What you must do may differ from what you thought had to be done. Take in the new findings, adjust your plan, and do what you now must do.

KID  
I know I have to stop, but...

OLD MAN  
(interrupts)  
Say it again!

KID  
I need to stop.

OLD MAN  
No! Before that. Say it again!

KID  
I said I know I have to st...

OLD MAN  
(interrupts)  
Knowledge is the application of memory. It is the actual usage of the things you have learned. To say you know you shouldn't and to do it anyway, means you have chosen to forget. At this very point in existence, you do not know it. The willingness to forget is called ignorance.

Kid rocks back and forth.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)  
Man is as destructive a creature as he is, due to his uncanny ability to forget so easily. Man chooses to forget so he can escape. He chooses to forget so he can indulge. And when he eventually does come to remember, he labels his past actions as mistakes. It is not a mistake when you have intentionally chosen to forget. It is an act of ignorance. Experiences are only experiences when they are remembered and consulted while making decisions to come.

KID  
You're right. I don't know anything anymore.

OLD MAN  
Now you are making progress. Tell me what bothers you.

Kid remains silent. He continues to rock in place. He shuts his eyes, sighs, and reluctantly speaks.

KID

You said that I shouldn't...  
play... while alone.

It takes a moment for the Old Man to catch on.

OLD MAN

Oh. I see.

KID

I'm fighting the urge, but look at  
me...

OLD MAN

Yes, look at you. You look no  
different than any addict.

KID

I've never been as weak as I am  
now, when giving in to these urges.

OLD MAN

Desire is the most fleeting feeling  
of them all. The very feeling of  
want, in itself, is the absolute  
apex of pleasure. The path will  
never feel more enjoyable than the  
initial want. There is no need to  
proceed any further.

KID

I don't want to proceed down the  
path of desire. I don't want to  
give in. I just don't know how to  
fight it.

OLD MAN

First and foremost you must  
physically take a step back. This  
will take you out of the fog that  
clouds your judgement. It will  
free up the space needed for you to  
view yourself from the outside.

Kid stands up. He takes a giant step backward. His trembles reduce to minor quivers. His breathing returns to normal.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

Relieving oneself is greatly  
helpful. Pressures building within  
the body search for relief.

(MORE)

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

The body's call for attention may often be misinterpreted as an urge. Expelling the body of waste matter will decrease pressures without having to resort to those other means.

KID

(to himself)

I must be more aware. I must fight harder.

OLD MAN

One should also limit the intake of tea leaves and other substances that are known to drastically increase energy. You may find yourself unable to control these added influences.

KID

Caffeine stimulates the central nervous system. Got it.

OLD MAN

And of course, keep away from violence. Never forget the undeniable link between rage and lust.

KID

Thank you.

OLD MAN

Understand that these are all practical methods. They can only help offset the things that physically affect you. Mental urges will remain with you for as long as you have life; but so will choice. Rationality and effort can keep you from veering off your path.

Kid bows. The Old Man nods. He then heads his separate way.

After a few steps he stops to turn back.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

When all else fails, there is always headstands.

KID

Headstands?

OLD MAN  
(pointing to his head)  
It gets the blood rushing back to  
the head.

Kid smiles appreciatively.

EXT. RUINS - DAY

Kid looks down upon a large boulder. He bends at the knees and slides his hands underneath it. Using all the force he can muster, he lifts it up onto its edge and pushes it over.

Again he bends, lifts and pushes. He repeats, rolling the boulder down the field.

The pace quickens. He soon begins lifting the boulder before it can settle on the ground. The rocking momentum lightens the load.

The Old Man sits on a fallen stone column. He attempts to patch a tear on a large piece of fabric.

Kid sets down the boulder and nears the Old Man with an ecstatic smile on his face.

KID  
I can't believe I was able to push  
it all the way over here. How much  
do you think it weighs?

OLD MAN  
Don't speak of numbers!

The Old Man hands Kid the large cloth.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)  
Hold this.

Kid holds the fabric out in front of him. The Old Man pushes Kid's arms further apart.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)  
Hold it tight.

Kid stretches out the linens. The Old Man places a patch over the hole. Setting it in place, he begins stitching.

Kid speaks from the other side of the fabric.

KID  
I just wanted to know how much it  
weighed for personal reference.

OLD MAN

Scales restrict the mind. Digits cause for false evaluation in regards to ability. Reaching some measurable limit does not imply those same limits can be reached while under tension. It also does not imply that those very limits cannot be overcome while under tension.

KID

Shouldn't one be familiar with their abilities?

OLD MAN

One must ultimately know their capabilities and limits. However, this is not learned by numbers. It is achieved through practice and awareness of the self. Focus not on digits but on the effort you are willing to give the task before you.

KID

But we're able to do so many things accurately with numbers. Man is a mathematical creature.

OLD MAN

Numbers can be assigned to inanimate objects without flaw. But if a living being is known for one thing, it is its ability to be unpredictable. Numbers lose their accuracy when applied to living beings because they do not take will into their calculations. Will cannot be measured.

Kid loosens his grip on the cloth. He lets it droop down the middle. He looks the Old Man in the eyes.

KID

Can I ask you something?

OLD MAN

Yes.

(referring to the fabric)

But hold it tight!

Kid stretches out the cloth. He is no longer in view of the Old Man.

The Old Man resumes sewing. Kid speaks from the other side of the linens.

KID

I was wondering... I can see the whole plant thing, but why is this style called Soil Technique?

OLD MAN

No matter how you mistreat the soil, it never fights back. Soil has no wants. It has no uses for itself. Its sole purpose of existence is to sustain everything else. This life is not for everyone; but this life is for everyone.

Kid lets the cloth droop once more. He looks into the Old Man's eyes.

KID

I understand.

OLD MAN

Okay.  
(referring to the fabric)  
But hold it tight!

Kid lifts the cloth into place. The Old Man continues stitching.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

Tomorrow we learn strikes.

Kid lets go of the fabric completely. It falls to the floor. Kid stands in shock. His mouth hangs long.

INT. HUT - DAWN

The Old Man sleeps in his bed. Water pours down on his face. He jolts up to a sit.

Kid stands over him holding an empty bucket.

KID

Morning!

The Old Man wipes his face, breathing heavily.

EXT. RUINS - DAY

Kid sits with his back leaning against a vertical column. Ropes are tied around his arms and legs.

The Old Man is seated on the opposite side of the same broken pillar. The ropes are tied to his limbs as well.

OLD MAN (V.O.)  
Strength comes from speed.  
Speed... from flexibility.

The Old Man pushes his arms forward. The tension of the rope pulls Kid's arms back. Discomfort shows both on his face and in his voice.

OLD MAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
The body must be constantly  
stretched to its limits.

The Old Man pulls his feet together. The ropes part Kid's legs. The taut cords force him into the splits. Kid screams.

EXT. FIELDS - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

OLD MAN (V.O.)  
Train to reach those limits as  
quickly as possible.

Kid throws a series of punches. He stops to shift his body into a Plant Stance. He begins punching again. These strikes look far different than those before.

Each pose represents a specific type of tree.

Kid stops and contorts into yet another position. Another set of punches vary greatly in form.

The Old Man circles him, observingly.

EXT. GARDEN - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

OLD MAN (V.O.)  
The boundaries of what one can do  
may grow. Grow with it. Always  
strive to break through the new  
walls.

Kid displays an arsenal of kicks. After a series of strikes he moves into a different pose. Each stance is followed by more kicks that represent their own unique styles.

His legs resemble the branches of bushes and trees, whipping through the air.

Kid continues his training as the Old Man waters the plants in the garden. The Old Man gives his undivided attention to the flowers. No longer does he feel the need to glance over at Kid.

EXT. HUT - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Kid and the Old Man eat a bowl of noodles for lunch. Kid hurries down his meal. He uses chopsticks with his right hand.

As he digs to collect a batch of pasta, another pair of chopsticks captures his. He tries to wriggle free. He can't. He looks up at the Old Man.

The Old Man uses his chopsticks to remove Kid's utensils from his hands. He waves the sticks out in front of Kid.

Kid attempts to reclaim his chopsticks. He reaches out with his right hand. The Old Man pulls back. He shakes his head disparagingly.

Kid grows confused. He reaches for them once again. The Old Man pulls back.

OLD MAN (V.O.)

Learn to use both hands and legs,  
equally.

Kid uses his left hand to grab the chopsticks. The Old Man lets him take it.

Using his left hand, Kid attempts to properly grasp the sticks. With tremendous strain he somehow manages to hold them, albeit not in proper form.

Kid fails miserably to pick up even a single strand of pasta. He holds the bowl close to his face and uses the chopsticks to scoop the noodles into his mouth.

The Old Man looks on, shaking his head.

EXT. RUINS - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Kid stands with each of his hands and legs tied to long ropes. They are tethered to large rocks far behind him.

Kid takes turns striking with each limb. Using his left leg Kid attempts a kick. The rock tied to his leg is pulled forward.

OLD MAN (V.O.)

For every move taken with the dominant limb, train thrice as many with the limbs you are less accustomed to.

Kid punches with his right hand. The powerful strike pulls the rock tied to his right hand, over a great distance. Kid punches with his left hand. The rock tied to his left hand, is tugged slightly forward.

Kid uses his left hand for two more strikes. Only now do the rocks tied around his hands, lay within equal distances of each other.

The ropes slack as the rocks near him. Kid paces forward. The ropes tighten once more.

Kid kicks with his right leg. The stone tied to his right leg leaps forward.

EXT. LAKE - DAWN (CONTINUOUS)

OLD MAN (V.O.)

When you grow comfortable using one hand, cease using that hand. Learn everyday tasks exclusively with the other hand.

Kid brushes his teeth. He notices he is using his right hand. He switches hands and attempts to brush.

Awkward motions make it difficult. His speed is greatly reduced. Regardless, Kid continues brushing.

EXT. HUT - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

OLD MAN (V.O.)

When your least accustomed hand has gained dominance, revert back to the other hand. You will see it has forgotten much. Help jog its memory.

Kid uses a hammer to drive nails into wooden boards. He patches up one wall of the hut. He swings the hammer in his left hand with great skill.

He pauses to look at his hand. He switches the hammer into his right hand and continues working.

It feels awkward. He slowly hits a nail with minimal force. Kid concentrates hard to make each strike connect.

EXT. LAKE - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

OLD MAN (V.O.)

Soon you will have grown accustomed to life itself. You will be performing duties without much thought at all. When you find yourself in a routine, you must break the pattern. Turn every chore into a new experience.

Kid washes dishes near the pond. He stands in a wide Horse Stance.

After cleaning a small pot, he dries it using a piece of cloth. He positions the pot to rest upon himself.

He balances massive piles of dinnerware on his feet, knees, thighs, shoulders, and head.

With painstaking care, Kid flicks up a wet bowl using his free foot. He catches it in his hands and proceeds to scrub it. Once dried, he places it atop a pile of other bowls balanced over his knee.

EXT. HUT - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

OLD MAN (V.O.)

Never let eating become a routine. Eat while concentrating on nothing else but eating. Your mouth will fill of textures and tastes you have never known.

In an intense meditative manner, Kid consumes his meal. His eyes and mouth show signs of new experiences, yet he eats the same noodles and vegetables he always has.

EXTREME CLOSE UP on Kid's novel eyes.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. HUT - NIGHT

EXTREME CLOSE UP on Middle Aged Man's experienced stare.

Kid is all grown up. He is now a Middle Aged Man. He sits across an even elderly Old Man.

A crackling fire provides warmth as well as light.

OLD MAN

The moves you have been training, are not for the purposes of striking. This is why there has never been an emphasis on aiming. This is why there were never any targets.

MIDDLE AGED MAN

The throwing of a fist is never self-defense. There is no such thing as a defensive weapon.

OLD MAN

Flexibility increases speed.

MIDDLE AGED MAN

Speed increases strength.

OLD MAN

Strength is what one can do with the body.

MIDDLE AGED MAN

Power is what one can do with the mind.

OLD MAN

Strength is often used to control others.

MIDDLE AGED MAN

Power is solely the ability to control oneself.

OLD MAN

Many abuse brute strength in search of power. They only find weakness.

MIDDLE AGED MAN

One only seeks power when he lacks power.

OLD MAN

You must train to fight. And fight well... So you can fight yourself.

MIDDLE AGED MAN  
Your only enemy in all the  
universe.

OLD MAN  
Only when we start fighting  
ourselves, will we stop fighting  
each other.

EXT. HUT - DAWN

The Old Man is asleep in his bed. He is very frail and ill. The sounds of heavy breathing fill the room. They are not coming from the Old Man.

The Middle Aged Man lies with his back on the floor. His eyes are wide open. He sucks in air and blows it out. He repeats. His eye begins to twitch.

He presses down on his eyelid with his hand. Soon, his hand begins to shake. His breathing grows faster. His whole body trembles.

He sits up. He turns to the Old Man and watches him slumber. Without disturbing him, the Middle Aged Man rises and exits the hut.

CUT TO:

EXT. CLIFF - DAWN

The large mountain in the background glows with the rays of the rising sun. The sky is a bright orange.

The Middle Aged Man stands upside down on his head at the edge of the cliff. He holds the headstand with perfect posture. His hands are placed near his chest in meditative poses.

His body no longer quivers. He is serene.

EXT. HUT - DAY

The Middle Aged Man tends to a pot of boiling water, suspended over a fire.

He opens a small container. Inside are dried herbal leaves. Very few are left. He collects all of them.

He places the herbs into a bowl and begins grinding them. He then pours the powder into the pot and stirs.

INT. HUT - DAY

The Old Man lies in bed. He is extremely weak.

The Middle Aged Man kneels beside him with a cup of hot water in his hand. He tips the cup into the Old Man's mouth. Not much goes inside.

The Old Man wheezes and coughs.

MIDDLE AGED MAN

Drink up, old man. There wasn't nearly enough herbs, but it will have to do for now.

The Middle Aged Man tilts the cup into the Old Man's mouth once more. The Old Man rejects him, pushing him away.

OLD MAN

No. Let me speak. There is one last thing you need to learn in order for you to reach absolute potential.

MIDDLE AGED MAN

Please... You should eat something first.

OLD MAN

If I eat, I will not speak. I do not dare take another breath for granted. It must be spoken now.

The Middle Aged Man reluctantly retires the cup. He uses a damp cloth to pat the Old Man's weary forehead.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

The final lesson is... truth. Truth is a thing gravely underestimated and more often than not... misused. The truth comes in but three forms. The truth one tells others; the truth one tells himself; and the truth one shields away from the core of his very being.

(beat)

The truth told to others may begin with very little truth. It gains the status of truth from the shroud of doubt one covers it in. Doubt can attribute truth to even the greatest of falsehoods.

(beat)

(MORE)

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

The truth told to oneself is a mixture of the perspective gained from experiences, and pure hopeful fantasy. The parts forming this mixture may vary in amounts, but both are indeed present.

(beat)

The truth one shields from his inner being is one that every man feels but continues to deny. It is a truth so profound that if one chose to accept it, no longer could he go on doing the things he does.

MIDDLE AGED MAN

Which is?

OLD MAN

Lie.

The Middle Aged Man submerges the cloth into warm water. He twists the sponge to drain out excess water, before returning to massage the Old Man's face.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

Too many lie to one another. Too many lie to themselves. Lies have become so rampant they now form the foundation of logic for new lives. It must end. We must stop all lies. Stop entertaining fantasy. Fantasy is not necessary for hope. As long as one remains true and does his part, there will always be hope.

MIDDLE AGED MAN

Man lies to protect himself. That is how he survives.

OLD MAN

There is no purpose to surviving if only to live a lie. Priority must be given to the truth. Dying truthfully will never bring about mass destruction. The same cannot be said for living under fallacy.

MIDDLE AGED MAN

How does one seek out the truth?

OLD MAN

The truth does not lay hidden. It is all around us.

(MORE)

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

One does not seek it; one needs only to open his eyes and view it. Lower your shield. Take off the mask you wear in public. Take a look at the walls you have built to keep others away. They have confined you. Break down these barriers. Expose yourself and embrace the truth.

MIDDLE AGED MAN

(agreeing)

The truth must be told.

OLD MAN

There is a large difference between speaking the truth and being truthful. To become truthful, one must come to know the wisdom of truth.

KID

And what is that?

OLD MAN

Knowledge is not an object that one possesses; it is an action that one performs. Wisdom is action absent of arrogance.

KID

Then truth is an action as well. But I don't understand the connection to arrogance.

OLD MAN

Arrogance is fantasy. Arrogance is ascribing oneself attributes that one does not really possess. Actions done with arrogance have no wisdom to them. Wisdom is truthfulness. Only a life of humility can lead to truthfulness.

The Old Man coughs uncontrollably. The Middle Aged Man rises to his feet.

MIDDLE AGED MAN

Rest, old man. I shall return with more herbs.

He heads for the door.

OLD MAN

Wait. There is one more thing.

The Middle Aged Man returns.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

The truth is the most offensive thing in the world. Understand that you will face great adversity when sharing it with others.

MIDDLE AGED MAN

How can something so beautiful be seen as so repulsive?

OLD MAN

Things that occur in the physical world can only affect one externally. Anything that affects one internally is caused by oneself and oneself alone. One, internally inflicted however, has been known to lash out at the physical world.

MIDDLE AGED MAN

Does grievous trauma not leave scars?

OLD MAN

Damage sustained externally heals in specific ways. The body follows certain procedures. Internal damage can cease to exist the moment one chooses to heal. There is no physical process to mental healing. Any pain that remains within one is deliberately chosen to be kept painful. Blaming it on external occurrences is a defensive excuse for man to retain his fantasies, while passing on his responsibilities.

MIDDLE AGED MAN

How can I approach them truthfully, when they display such hostility?

OLD MAN

Be cautious, never callous. Understanding is not only your perspective; it is understanding individual perspectives as well.

MIDDLE AGED MAN

Must I speak in ways they can relate?

OLD MAN

To change the message so that it is more approachable is to place restrictions on what others can achieve, based on your own judgements. When words are turned relatable, others can grasp concepts quicker, but the meaning is lost. What little change this may bring about will hit an impenetrable wall, for the path you have paved is largely incomplete. When words are spoken from your perspective, in your own terms, the meaning shall remain whole, but most will not be able to interpret its context. Thus, very little change will come of it. It is an intricate combination of the two that creates universal perspective.

(beat)

Know, anything you speak will be converted a thousand fold by the ears and the minds of those that have heard your voice. Corruption is inevitable. Keep the source pure. It is the only way the truth can eventually be stumbled upon.

MIDDLE AGED MAN

I will not let you down. I will not let the others down. I will not let me down. I will speak the truth. I will become truthful.

The Old Man wheezes heavily. It is as if he is suffocating.

The struggling ceases. The Old Man releases a peaceful sigh. He begins to lose consciousness.

OLD MAN

(fading)

Then the duty is done. I hope I have fulfilled the responsibilities given to me by birth.

The Old Man closes his eyes.

The Middle Aged Man does not shed a tear. He brushes his hands across the Old Man's pale cheeks.

## MIDDLE AGED MAN

You have reached potential, old man. It is all anything could ever ask of you.

CUT BACK TO:

EXT. CITY OUTSKIRTS - DAY

The Middle Aged Man sits under the grand tree. His story comes to an end.

The audience packs the fields; they have tripled in quantity.

## MIDDLE AGED MAN

Man wishes to control every aspect of the universe. And so he forces his will upon things he perceives as problems; only to create more. He will never succeed. It is outside the reach of his potential to control everything. The one thing man has complete control over are his actions. The one thing he refuses to accept responsibility for at all costs.

The crowd is silent for the most part. Older members hang their heads, evaluating their lives. The younger radicals whisper amongst themselves.

## MIDDLE AGED MAN (CONT'D)

Peace is not a goal. It is a means. Peace is something to be lived daily; not dreamed about nightly. Peace is not in the hands of nations or established groups; but in the hearts of individuals. An individual can make leaps and bounds of change within the span of his life. Man as a whole, walks step-by-step. Man can take that next step only when more of its individuals have made leaps and bounds.

(beat)

People live peacefully enough... until confronted. Then violence pursues under the guise of defense. What are morals and convictions if they are to be used only under controlled circumstances?

(MORE)

## MIDDLE AGED MAN (CONT'D)

He who truly lives in peace, dies  
for peace.

(beat)

Action is what can bring internal  
peace to the external world.  
Taking responsibility for what you  
are responsible for, is the action  
of peace. Pass up on your  
responsibilities and you pass up on  
peace.

The members of the audience show disgust in their face.  
Others become apprehensive. They don't want to listen any  
longer. Young adult males begin to leave. A lone female is  
amongst them.

On her way out, the RADICAL TEEN halts in place. She lifts  
her drooping head and turns to audibly voice her opinions.

## RADICAL TEEN

(angry)

Why should I? Why should I be  
peaceful when others simply do as  
they please?

## MIDDLE AGED MAN

Why should I, is a question anyone  
from any viewpoint can ask. It is  
also a question that will never  
lead to change no matter how often  
it is brought up.

A handful of people continue to leave. A CONCERNED MAN steps  
back, making enough room for them. He stands on his toes and  
yells out to the Middle Aged Man, over their heads as they  
pass.

## CONCERNED MAN

(loudly)

If we aren't getting anything in  
return, we don't have a reason to  
change the way we live.

## MIDDLE AGED MAN

Is peace not a great enough  
motivation?

## CONCERNED MAN

What about third world countries?  
I can't see how people of extreme  
poverty would care about peace,  
knowing what it takes for them to  
survive on a day-to-day basis.

## MIDDLE AGED MAN

It is when there are no more possessions that convictions hold the greatest value. It is all that is truly left.

The Concerned Man watches the group of teens walk away. He drops his head before sitting back down.

The audience retains large numbers. Their whispers fall silent as the Middle Aged Man begins to speak.

## MIDDLE AGED MAN (CONT'D)

Most of you will try and use the messages you have heard today to help yourselves and others around you. You will pick the parts you find agreeable and discard the rest. For a while you will feel as if you can accomplish anything. As if there were no mountains you could not climb. You will begin doing the things you speak. All will go well, until you are confronted. Then... you will choose to forget. You will stop doing the things you speak. You will use any and all tactics at your disposal to survive. You will engage in violence. You will disregard morals during crises. You will think only of yourselves and the very few who really matter to you. And all this here... today... will have stood for nothing.

(beat)

Some of you may argue that this will not become of you. You may say you will stay on the path you have chosen, regardless of the hardships to come. And a few will stay true... but most will turn back. Unless you find the person you truly are, you will never find the path leading to the person you wish to become.

(beat)

I know most of you may snicker. You may label me a utopian who speaks only fantasy. A person with his head up in the clouds. And you may be right... But I am not one who simply speaks.

(MORE)

## MIDDLE AGED MAN (CONT'D)

I am one who, does. I physically do the things I speak in the real world. Is that not enough to grant practicality? Is it still fantasy, when it is actually being done by at least one person? Is it really absurd to beg of you to stop repeating the same mistakes that have always led to failure? Is it so asinine of me to suggest something different that perhaps, has a chance at success? Am I the crazy one?

The audience is completely silent. There is nothing more they can say.

## OLD BLACK MAN (O.S.)

It can't be you...

An OLD BLACK MAN stands in the crowd. He supports himself with a familiar walking cane. A close-knit group of young strapping men gather behind him.

He squints his eyes, getting a better look.

## MANAGER (OLD BLACK MAN)

It is you.

The audience parts down the middle, isolating the Manager and his entourage.

## MANAGER (CONT'D)

What's all this nonsense about you not fightin' anymore? Fightin's in your blood, baby. There ain't no gettin' rid of it. You were the greatest of all time. And I've seen some greats.

The entourage creates an opening between them. A FIGHTER in a hooded robe exits out the circle of men. In his left hand he grips the Silver Claw.

## MANAGER (CONT'D)

In fact, I'm standin' with one right now.

The Fighter stands beside his Manager. The Manager removes the claw from his hand. He proceeds to uncloak him.

The Fighter is just a young white male, barely out of adolescence.

The Manager takes off the Fighter's robe. The Fighter's slim, muscular build is revealed. He weighs no more than 120 pounds.

The Fighter glares directly at the Middle Aged Man.

FIGHTER

I can't be the best until I've  
beaten the best.

The Fighter heads down the path parted by the crowd. He marches directly towards the Middle Aged Man. A determined fire burns in his eyes. It is a look all too well-known.

The Middle Aged Man steadily rises to his feet. He steps out from beneath the shade cast by the grand tree.

MIDDLE AGED MAN

Then you have come in vain. There  
is no best here.

FIGHTER

Enough talk, old man! I've held  
the Silver Claw for months on end.  
Anyone that stepped up, got knocked  
down. I've won every bout I've  
ever been in. Yet, I've never won  
at all. There's no victory unless  
it's earned. I'm the greatest  
fighter in the world. Today, I  
earn the right to say it.

MANAGER

That's what I'm talkin' about baby.  
Earn your rights. Prove it to  
everyone.

The Manager walks over to the two.

MANAGER (CONT'D)

Now you both know the rules. There  
ain't none. Use any means  
necessary to make sure the other  
guy don't get back up.

FIGHTER

Let's do this!

The Fighter rolls his neck and shoulders.

MIDDLE AGED MAN

I will not fight you.

FIGHTER

Then you're just gonna have to take a beating, old man.

MIDDLE AGED MAN

Yes. I am.

FIGHTER

Say what?

The Fighter gets into his stance. He holds his fists slightly out in front of his face. He tucks his chin low.

The Middle Aged Man takes his stance. He lets his hands hang loosely at his sides. He holds his head high.

MANAGER

Let's get it on!

The Manager slices his cane through the air and moves back.

The Fighter moves in cautiously. The Middle Aged Man stands motionless.

FIGHTER

You better start fighting, old man. Don't think I'm gonna hold back just because you look like you haven't eaten a meal in a few days.

MIDDLE AGED MAN

Do what you must.

The Fighter throws a punch. The Middle Aged Man does not hesitate. He does not flinch. He does not block. He does not duck. He does not hide.

The crowd gasps. Women turn their heads away.

The Fighter cracks the Middle Aged Man square on the chin. The force is great enough to turn his head. However, his neck holds strong.

The Middle Aged Man remains on his feet. He faces forward, maintaining eye contact with the Fighter. His eyes relay a message of friendship.

The Fighter is distraught. He has never seen someone take a punch without reacting to it. He turns to his Manager.

FIGHTER

What's with this guy?

MANAGER

Well he ain't called the greatest  
for no reason now. Hit him again!

The Fighter returns with another thunderous shot. This one causes the Middle Aged Man to stumble backward.

The Middle Aged Man is quick to regain his balance. His eyes glow even warmer.

FIGHTER

Block! Fight back! Do something!

The Fighter hits him twice in the abdomen and backs off. The Middle Aged Man gives him no reaction.

The Fighter screams ferociously. He delivers a powerful kick, knocking the Middle Aged Man down to a knee.

A FIT YOUNG MAN steps in from the crowd. Expanding his chest in an intimidating manner, he stares down the Fighter.

FIGHTER (CONT'D)

(to the Fit Young Man)

What're you looking at? Trust me,  
you don't want any of this.

The Middle Aged Man rises.

MIDDLE AGED MAN

(to the Fit Young Man)

No! Do not interfere!

Blood drips from his mouth.

MIDDLE AGED MAN (CONT'D)

(to the crowd)

Anyone who fights in defense of me,  
may as well attack me yourselves.

The Fit Young Man squeezes his fists tightly. With much discord, he steps back into the audience.

The Middle Aged Man slouches before the Fighter. He awaits his next move.

The Fighter turns to his Manager.

FIGHTER

I can't do this. He's not fighting  
back.

MANAGER

Can't you see what he's doin'?  
He's mockin' you. He's not  
fightin' cause he don't see you as  
a threat! Are you gonna let him  
disrespect you like that?

FIGHTER

I am to be feared. I'm the  
champion of the world!

MANAGER

Then show him you're the champ!

The Fighter charges at the Middle Aged Man. He furiously hits him with several blows. Three consecutive punches to the face topple the Middle Aged Man.

The Middle Aged Man supports himself up with a knee and a hand. He rises. A nasty cut swells over one of his eyes. His other eye maintains an amicable glare.

Jumbled emotions confuse the Fighter.

FIGHTER

(pleading)  
Please just fight.  
(angry)  
Block!  
(concerned)  
Dodge...  
(irritated)  
Something!  
(mournful)  
Anything...  
(grievous)  
Don't make me have to do this.

The Middle Aged Man keeps his hands down. He raises his chin high.

The Fighter screams out. He lands a heavy kick.

Blood and saliva spill from out the Middle Aged Man's mouth. He falls to the floor.

FIGHTER (CONT'D)

Just stay down.

The Middle Aged Man begins to stir. He gets back up. His nose is broken.

The Fighter is beside himself.

FIGHTER (CONT'D)

Stay down!

The Fighter launches a messy attack. He hits him high and low. He gives him everything he has.

The crowd is stunned. They clutch their stomachs and mouths viewing the disturbing display before them.

The assault is over. The Middle Aged Man falls.

The Fighter stands stooping over him. He heaves, completely out of breath.

The Middle Aged Man does not stir. He lies unconscious on the ground.

The Fighter is relieved. He smiles as he looks down at his opponent. As sweet as victory tastes at first, its core is most bitter.

The smile fades as a hint of remorse grows on his face. The Fighter turns and begins to slowly walk away.

The audience begins to mumble. The Fighter frantically looks around. He witnesses several people gasping and pointing behind his direction. The Fighter turns around.

The Fighter watches in amazement as the Middle Aged Man urges himself to his knees. His frail body trembles terribly.

The Fighter's throat dries up.

FIGHTER (CONT'D)

No. No!

The Fighter kicks at him fiercely, putting him back down.

The Middle Aged Man doesn't give up. He continues to crawl to his knees.

The Fighter turns to his Manager.

FIGHTER (CONT'D)

This guy's crazy. I don't know what to do.

The Manager hands him the Silver Claw.

MANAGER

Take it.

The Fighter's eyes are in disarray. Fatigue is getting to him.

FIGHTER

What?

MANAGER

Can't you see he's makin' a fool out of you? Look at all these people. They're all laughin' at you.

The Fighter looks around at the crowd. He feels their gaze piercing through him.

FIGHTER

(to the crowd)

No. Don't laugh at me...

MANAGER

He's no ordinary man. Your ordinary skills can't hurt him.

FIGHTER

I'm not just some punk kid! I'm the champion!

MANAGER

Alright then, champ. Do what it takes to win.

The Fighter takes the claw. He slides his hand into it. He grips it tight.

The Middle Aged Man stands on his two feet. He involuntarily leans to one side while arching forward. He is a bloody mess.

The sight of him triggers a spark in the Fighter.

FIGHTER

I said stay down!

The Fighter charges at the Middle Aged Man. The Middle Aged Man remains steadfast.

The two collide. A soft wet impact follows.

The crowd falls silent.

Soon, a faint scratching noise fills the ambience.

The Fighter is grinding his teeth. He stands nose to nose with the Middle Aged Man. They hold direct eye contact with one another.

The Middle Aged Man smiles heartily. He struggles to raise his arms. With palms held open and exposed, his hands hover around the sides of the Fighter's face.

The Fighter follows every movement of the Middle Aged Man's hands with his eyes. He continues to bite his teeth.

The Middle Aged Man brushes his hands down the Fighter's cheeks. The Fighter loosens his clenched teeth. He looks deeply into the eyes of the Middle Aged Man.

The Middle Aged Man opens his mouth to speak. Blood sputters out of his mouth.

MIDDLE AGED MAN

(fading)

I forgive you. Please... forgive yourself.

The Fighter tightly shuts his eyes. A whimper expels out through his teeth. He pushes the Middle Aged Man off of him.

The Middle Aged Man floats to the floor.

Everyone in the audience expresses a different reaction.

Several people cry; others just watch with their mouths hanging open.

A few younger males shake their heads in disappointment. Some of them forcefully hold their eyes closed with their hands.

Many members of the audience begin to leave.

The Middle Aged Man's body hits the ground. His head bounces off the pathway. It then hangs off to one side. His eyes remain open. They forever gaze with the warmth of friendship.

The Fighter stands with the Silver Claw in his hand. Fresh blood trickles down off its sharp prongs.

The Manager turns away. He begins to leave. The entourage follows him.

The once united crowd clears the area. The people all head their separate ways.

The Fighter overlooks the body of the Middle Aged Man. He drops to his knees.

EXTREME CLOSE UP on the Fighter's face.

It is a look of complete and utter... failure.

It is a look of worthlessness.

And then, there is a glimmer.

A glimmer of hope for change...

FADE TO BLACK: