

THE ESCAPE

FADE IN:

BEGIN TITLES

(O.S. A POPULAR CHINESE CULTURAL REVOLUTION SONG, "SAILING ON THE SEA RELIES ON THE CAPTAIN" PERFORMED BY WIND INSTRUMENTS, VERY GRADUALLY INCREASED IN VOLUME OVER)

AN OUT-OF-FOCUS PHOTO, sepia toned.

SUPERIMPOSED:

"BEIJING, CHINA, 1966"

THE PHOTO gradually comes into focus - Chairman Mao wearing a red tie, an army hat, and an armband bearing his handwritten "Red Guard" (in CHINESE), waving his right arm and standing on a military jeep.

SERIES OF SHOTS - HISTORICAL PHOTOGRAPHS

A) Photos of Big-Character Posters on campuses.

B) Photos of Red Guards on parade.

C) Photos of Red Guards burning books and beating the counter-revolutionaries.

D) Photos of Chairman Mao meeting excited students crowded in Tian An Men Square, Beijing.

E) Photos of banners that praise Chairman Mao, the Party, and the working class, or accuse feudalism, capitalism, and revisionism.

END TITLES

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. A HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

An old three-story red brick building in a high school.

SUPERIMPOSED:

"CANTON, SOUTHERN CHINA"

INT. CLASSROOM – DAY

A clean and bare classroom. Thirty-nine students, two shares a desk, wait quietly for the teacher.

One student is missing.

Above the blackboard, A CLOCK reads 8:20.

YOUNG TAO, a mature and thoughtful class leader, is puzzled. Sharing the desk with him is LEE BING who has a childish face and curly hair.

YOUNG TAO

Any idea why Teacher Lee is late?

Lee Bing shrugs his shoulders.

LEE BING

(to the empty seat)

What's his excuse this time?

YOUNG TAO

The same old thing - what else?

Sitting in the back is GAO HUA, a tall and masculine fellow.

GAO HUA

(mimicking)

"My Dad's lazy chauffeur overslept again."

Some classmates laugh. Then it is quiet.

THE CLOCK reads 8:25. Young Tao stands up.

YOUNG TAO

Does anyone know what's going on?
Is Teacher Lee sick?

The students look at each another, and have no answers.

Young Tao leaves the room and comes back.

YOUNG TAO

Something's wrong. Teacher Wong is
not there either.

Before Yong Tao returns to his seat, ZHO JUNG and RED GUARD A & B burst into the classroom.

They wear olive drab army uniforms, red ties, and red armbands that have Mao's handwriting of "East Wind" (in CHINESE). A round metal insignia depicting Mao is pinned to their army hats.

Zho Jung slams a large pile of files labeled "Personal File" (in CHINESE) on the teacher's desk.

Each Red Guard is holding a leather waist belt that has a large steel buckle. Zho Jung taps a large wood club on his palm menacingly.

ZHO JUNG

Everybody On your feet.

YOUNG TAO

Why? You are not the class leader.

Zho Jung slaps the club on Young's desk. Lee Bing is frightened. He pulls Young to stand up.

ZHO JUNG

Your father committed a counter-revolutionary crime in 1957. You are no longer the class leader.

Everyone except Gao Hua is on his feet. Zho Jung pretends not noticing that, and raises his club.

ZHO JUNG

Today is the dawn of a great era!
Our beloved Chairman Mao sent our
Red Guard comrades from Beijing to
help us start the great
Proletarian Cultural Revolution!

RED GUARD A

Repeat after me: Long Live the
Cultural Revolution! Long Live
Chairman Mao!

ZHO JUNG

My day has come. Good grades don't
matter any more! Only Chairman

Mao's teaching counts! We will
clean up the books, the teachers
and many of you. Now sit down.

Zho slams the club on the pile of files. A LOUD NOISE. Some
students jump.

ZHO JUNG

I have read all of your personal
files. I know who have the rotten
families like Young Tao's. Rotten
families breed little bastards.

Many are shocked. Zho Jung laughs.

ZHO JUNG

From now on, you little bastard
must criticize your parents every
day in front of us.

GAO HUA

Who are "we"?

ZHO JUNG

We are the natural born
revolutionaries. We are the red
guards of the East Wind.

Zho Jung walks to Lee Bing. He rudely plays with Lee's
curly hair. Lee's face turns red and he is very upset.

YOUNG TAO

Stop it.

ZHO JUNG

Shut up!

Zho Jung continues to rub Lee's hair.

ZHO JUNG

Where did you get these curly
things? Pure Chinese should not
have disgusting hair like this.

LEE BING

My parents and my grandparents are
Han people.

ZHO JUNG

They are capitalist pieces of shit. Tell me, how often do you go to church with your parents?

LEE BING

Sometimes.

ZHO JUNG

There is no God! Chairman Mao is greater than any religion! We will burn the churches, -- and you will rid yourself of the "God" buried under here.

Zho Jung harshly rubs Lee's head again.

Young's eyes are on fire. He tries to push Zho Jung away but Lee holds him down.

Gao Hua has seen enough. He stands up and walks toward Zho.

GAO HUA

Get your hands off him!

The two Red Guards come close and stand behind ZhoJung. The students are getting uneasy.

Lee stands up and blocks Gao.

LEE BING

Gao Hua, I'm fine.

ZHO JUNG

Don't you dare fuck with me.

GAO HUA

My Dad died fighting the South Koreans and the Americans. He is more of a revolutionary than yours! Don't you touch Lee Bing again.

ZHO JUNG

You are a fucking disgrace. You, Young Tao and Lee Bing are a rotten gang of three. People die

everyday. Your Dad died in the war
as a soldier; but my Dad won the
war as a colonel.

Gao charges forcefully toward Zho and grabs his uniform by
the collar. He pulls Zho up to his face. Zho drops his
stick to the ground.

GAO HUA

Say that again, and I'm going to
kill you.

Lee pulls Gao's hands off Zho Jung and pushes Gao away.
Young quickly shields Lee and Gao from Zho Jung.

YOUNG TAO

Stop! That's enough.

Red Guard A swings the belt at Young. Young ducks. But Red
Guard B's swing connects. Blood oozes.

The class is frightened and divided. Most are on Young's
side. The tension is high.

Zho Jung regains his composure and picks up his stick from the
floor. He motions to the Red Guards to back down.

ZHO JUNG

You motherfuckers! Lousy little
bastards! I will not forget this.
You watch out.

GAO HUA

I'll be waiting for you.

Zho Jung and the Red Guards walk out the room. Lee uses a
piece of paper to press on Young's wound to stop the
bleeding.

INT. YOUNG TAO'S HOME. NIGHT

It is a small room with a dim ceiling light. A large bed
with a mosquito tent occupies half of the room. A small
window is open high above a desk. Family photos lie on the
desk. A dresser sits between the bed and the desk.

In the middle of the room, Young Tao's mother, ZHANG LING sits on a stool burning papers and books inside a large ceramic pot. She has a kind and pretty face despite the wrinkles of age.

Next to the pot is a large pile of books. A girl's DOLL leans against the pile. The doll is slightly weathered and has pink cheeks and red lips.

The smoke irritates Zhang Ling's eyes.

Young Tao walks in with a bandage on his forehead.

ZHANG LING
Close the door.

YOUNG TAO
Are the Red Guards coming to
search our house?

ZHANG LING
They will.
(looking up)
What happened to your head?

YOUNG TAO
I bumped into a wall. It's fine.

Young picks up a few books, among them are "Gone with the Wind" and "The Count of Monte Cristo" (in CHINESE, subtitled).

YOUNG TAO
They are not counter-
revolutionary.

ZHANG LING
Yes, but they're not revolutionary
either.

YOUNG TAO
Mom... I'm no longer the class
leader. The Red Guards took it
away.

The fire flickers and casts shadows on Zhang's face. She is sad from hearing the news.

ZHANG LING

They can take away your title.
They can't take away the things
inside you.

Young tries to understand what his mother just said.

YOUNG TAO

But it's not fair. I love Chairman
Mao, and I'm doing a good job for
the class.

ZHANG LING

What is fair? When the communists
took over the country, your Dad
brought the family from Hong Kong
to China. He loved this country.
He wanted to help -- what a good
life we had in Hong Kong -- see
what we have now.

Young's eyes fall onto a picture that is sticking out from
the books. He pulls it out. It is an old picture of his
mother holding him in front of Tiger Balm Garden in Hong
Kong.

YOUNG TAO

How old was I?

ZHANG LING

Barely a year old.

YOUNG TAO

We looked good, didn't we? I want
to keep it.

ZHANG LING

But look at our dresses and where
we were. We can't keep it.

Young Tao hesitates for a moment, and hands the photo over
to his mother. She takes it from him and puts it back under
the pile.

YOUNG TAO

What did Dad do wrong?

ZHANG LING

I've kept the truth from you. I didn't want to distract you from your studies. Your father did nothing wrong. Always remember that.

(a beat)

Nine years ago he criticized the poor management of the company.

YOUNG TAO

So he just wanted to help?

ZHANG LING

He was not born poor and he had a good education. The Communists don't trust the educated. When they've educated their own, they sacrifice those they don't trust.

YOUNG TAO

So they betrayed him.

ZHANG LING

Heaven has eyes, Young Tao. He protected your father in the labor camps. He's been living in the small Town of Seven Star-Peaks since.

YOUNG TAO

I know. I learned how to ride my bike there.

Young places a thick book in the flame that smothers the fire. He bends down to blow on the flames. The ashes fly.

Zhang uses a bamboo pipe to blow air onto the fire. An errant spark ignites a piece of paper and burns the skirt of the doll. Young tries to pat out the flames with his hands.

ZHANG LING

Go get some water.

YOUNG TAO

(jokingly)

If the house burns down, there'll be nothing for them to search...

ZHANG LING

Stop your nonsense.

Young brings back a bowl of water and sprinkles it over the burning paper. A large smoke is generated.

Zhang Ling stands up and fans the smoke out the window.

YOUNG TAO

Let me help.

Young's sister, YOUNG LILY, enters the room. She immediately notices her doll and grabs it.

YOUNG LILY

That's mine!

ZHANG LING

You're too old for that.

YOUNG LILY

I'm saving it for my child. Look at what you did to her!

YOUNG TAO

It was an accident.
(turning to his mother)
Let her keep it.

ZHANG LING

(shaking her head)
Hide it well.

Lily places the doll in the dresser and covers it with several pieces of clothing.

ZHANG LING

(standing up)
I'm tired. Finish up and put out the fire when you're done. I am going to bed.
(holding Young's hand)
I've prayed for another year of peace so you can finish your studies and go to the medical school. Now that hope is gone.

She looks away from him so he will not see her crying.

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For the complete script (for production or representation consideration only)
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