

A Day at the Dojo

by

Andy Romine

Andy Romine
afromine@gmail.com

FADE IN:

INT. OUR EYELIDS -- BLACK

A scattering of ghostly cherry blossoms float through the black void. A LONELY, MEDITATIVE FLUTE plays as we hear MASTER Master Fu's calming voice.

MASTER FU (O.S.)
Now, apprentice, breathe in -- all
the way down into your belly. Good,
good. Concentrate. What do you
feel?

Our stomach rumbles, loudly.

MASTER FU (O.S.)
(sighing)

OUR EYES OPEN
TO:

INT. TRAINING VILLAGE TRAINING DOJO

We are seated in a small training dojo. MASTER FU, a wizened little man, is balanced on his STAFF, effortlessly holding a pose and looking a little annoyed at our lack of concentration. We see WEAPON RACKS and TRAINING DUMMIES. There are small SHUTTERED WINDOWS in each wall and a FRONT DOOR behind us. Against the wall in front of us is a SHRINE containing the VASE OF THE ANCESTORS an ancient and important artifact of The Golden Mountain. More on that soon.

MASTER FU
Yes, well. Despite your appetite,
you are mostly one of the most
promising apprentices we've had at
this dojo in some time.
(Less enthusiastic)
Much more promising than some I
could mention.

Master Fu hops off his staff and gestures towards the TRAINING DUMMIES.

MASTER FU
Now, let's try that Typhoon Fist
technique one more time. We'll
start with the practice dummies.

We have some time to practice punching the wobbly training dummies, all the while, Master Fu hops around, providing bits of encouragement in his curmudgeonly way.

MASTER FU
 (various, as we spar)
 Yes, very good!
 Keep at it, apprentice!
 Try not to hit it so hard.
 No, harder than that!
 Are your eyes still closed?
 Maybe I was wrong about you.
 That was almost...satisfactory.
 (And finally...)
 (Sighs.)
 You still haven't mastered the forms.

Twice during the exercise, the ground shakes, and there is a distant booming. Master Fu doesn't notice.

As the exercise ends, Master Fu hops up onto a window sill and performs a perfect TYPHOON FIST PUNCH. Without touching them, his punch reduces the panda dummies to an explosion of scraps. Master Fu regards us with a raised eyebrow and crooked smile.

MASTER FU
 (slightly disappointed in us, slightly proud of himself)
 Maybe we should try the advanced training dummies.

THREE ADVANCED TRAINING DUMMIES pop up out of the floor via TRAP DOORS. They are made of three spinning sections, each with a crude PADDLE ARM or WEAPON. Master Fu waves at us to start punching them, watching our progress closely. As before, he hops around, providing encouragement and critiques of our technique.

MASTER FU
 (various)
 Begin, now!
 Better!
 Yes, yes. Can't you feel the qi flowing?
 Is that your stomach growling again?
 Didn't you eat just before practice?
 Don't break it! These dummies are expensive!

Sloppy! Who taught you that move?
 No, wait, I think I already know.
 (And finally...)
 (Sighs.)
 Hm. If these were real enemies, I
 might be a little worried.

While we train, the rumbling/booming happens three more times, each more intense than the last. Master Fu, still fixated on our training, doesn't notice.

Master Fu repositions himself on top of one of the dummies, shaking his head.

MASTER FU
 I'd hoped to see a little more
 progress from you today,
 apprentice.
 (sighs.)
 No matter. We have one more test to
 go. Next -- the fire rings!

FLAMING HOOPS drop from the ceiling and the lighting turns dramatic as the flames crackle menacingly. Master Fu grins, relishing this a little more than he ought to.

At that moment, a tremendous BOOM shakes the dojo, knocking Master Fu off his staff. He's finally noticed!

MASTER FU
 What was that?!

The FRONT DOOR suddenly bursts open and FIRST DISCIPLE CHAN sticks his head in, clearly worried.

CHAN
 Master Fu! The village is under
 attack. The bandits have a cannon,
 they--
 (noticing us and
 grinning)
 Oh, hi there! Didn't know you were
 in here. I bet Master Fu's got you
 doing all sorts of boring
 "exercises," huh? Wanna go for
 noodles later? I promise I won't
 eat all of them this time!

MASTER FU
 (angry)
 Chan! Must you always think with
 your stomach? The bandits!

Master Fu hops towards the door. Outside we catch a glimpse

of the Mountain Village. VILLAGERS run past, pursued by RED ARM BANDITS close on their heels. There's an EXPLOSION and the dojo shakes. There's shouting. Howling. The clank of weapons.

MASTER FU
 (to us, gruffly)
 No. You stay here, student. I must
 go and help defend the village.
 (pointing at the shrine)
 You must protect the VASE OF THE
 ANCESTORS. Defend it at all costs!

The TRAINING DUMMIES retract back into the floor, and we see the Vase of the Ancestors sparkling on the shrine. With that, Master Fu vanishes out the door.

CHAN
 (giving us the thumbs up)
 Aw, dont' worry, kid. You got this!
 Noodles later, 'k?

Chan ducks back outside, closing the front door with an audible THUNK. The sounds of battle continue, and the occasional explosion rocks the dojo. Each is successively worse, and the Vase of the Ancestors ROCKS PRECARIOUSLY. It always seems that it is about to fall as WE TRY TO STEADY it. No matter how clumsy we are, though, it somehow manages to stay upright.

One by one, the WINDOW SHUTTERS burst OPEN, and a leering RED ARM BANDIT appears, thrusting a SWORD or SPEAR inside. We can BLOCK or DEFLECT the weapons, but the bandits never quite manage to climb inside. Chan yanks one bandit away from the window and hurls him into the distance. Master Master Fu beats back another bandit. All the while, they shout encouragements and critiques from outside.

MASTER FU
 (various, alternating
 with Chan)
 Don't worry about the bandits,
 protect the Vase!
 Chan! The bandits are over HERE!
 That one shows a lot of promise,
 don't you think?
 (Grunting)
 Take out that cannon on the ridge!
 Press the attack!
 (And finally, in
 unison...)
 I think we've got them on the run!

CHAN
 (various, alternating
 with Master Fu)
 Aw man, why'd these guys attack
 now? I was supposed to go hang with
 Min-ya tonight!
 Where'd they go?
 Wow, Master Fu, I really like that
 new trainee!
 (Grunting)
 Hi-ya! Just come back here and I'll
 noodle the heck outta you!
 (And finally, in
 unison...)
 I think we've got them on the run!

The action happens faster and faster. The Vase bumps and jumps and begins to glow, ever brighter. Just as Chan and Master Fu speak their FINAL lines in unison, a CANNONBALL BLASTS the dojo's walls to splinters. Chan sails past us, crashing into a WEAPONS RACK. He gets up woozily, but his foot's trapped under a HEAVY MACE and ASSORTED DEBRIS.

CHAN
 (dazed and unfocused)
 Owie. Oooo, look at all these
 noodles spinning around me. Have
 you ever seen so many--

MASTER FU
 (winded)
 Chan! Are you okay?
 (To us)
 Is it safe?

The Vase, still glowing, continues to bump and jump. Chan's eyes widen.

CHAN
 (still a little punch
 drunk)
 It's The Ancestors! They wanna help
 defend the village, too!

MASTER FU
 Chan, I think you're right! Quick,
 apprentice, unseal the Vase!

Chan can't tug himself free. The CANNON lobs intensifying fire towards the dojo, though the shots go wide, fortunately. Our efforts to open the Vase of the Ancestors are fruitless, until...

CHAN
(getting an idea)
I know! We have to do this
together, dude. Bring the Vase
here.

We carry the Vase of the Ancestors to Chan. He grins
fiendishly grabs the lid.

CHAN
(confidently)
Wahoo!

With that, he flicks the lid of the Vase off, and STREAMS OF
MYSTICAL KUNG FU ENERGY, aka the Will of the Ancestors, pour
forth.

MASTER FU
(to us)
Now, point the Ancestors toward the
bandits' cannon!

We have control of the Vase, and aim it at the cannon. A
BURST of KUNG FU ENERGY blasts the cannon apart. The bandits
scatter, and the villagers clap and cheer. The Ancestors
stream back into the Vase and it ceases to sparkle.

The battle is won!

MASTER FU
(leaping to our side and
gently taking the vase
from us)
Good job, apprentice! Your methods
are a little unusual, but you saved
the village!

CHAN
(winking at us)
Told you that you could do it!

MASTER FU
(almost deadpan, more for
Chan than us)
I never had any doubts.

Chan's stomach growls and as he bends down to knead it, he
easily frees himself from the MACE and DEBRIS that traps
him. Master Fu's jaw drops and he gives Chan an irritated
look.

CHAN
(sheepish)
Er, um. Guess I wasn't really
trapped after all.

MASTER FU
Go on Chan, we'll clean up here.
You help out in the village.

CHAN
Sure thing, Master Master Fu!
(to us)
Still on for noodles later?

With a bounce and a cheer, Chan leaps back out into the village and vanishes from view. Master Fu smiles as he balances himself once more on his staff.

MASTER FU
You really have done well,
apprentice. Perhaps one day, you
may even become as great as the
First Disciple.
(a beat, then wearily)
Maybe that's not so hard, actually.
(recovering)
Now, before we clean up this mess,
sit, resume your breathing, and
close you eyes. What do you feel?

The LONELY FLUTE begins to play once again, and our eyelids grow heavy. We close them...

EYES CLOSE TO:

INT. OUR EYELIDS -- BLACK

The flute continues, and ghostly cherry blossoms drift by. We begin to SNORE. Loudly.

MASTER FU
(voice fading out,
annoyed)
Wait? Are you asleep? We haven't
even finished the lesson yet! I'm
not going to clean all this up by
myself.

The music swells as we

FADE OUT:

END