

The Imaginary Opponent
by
Barbara Jwanouskos

Characters:

ERIKA, f
 SIFU ADAM, m
 GABE, m
 MAC, m
 MASTER LYNN, f

*Please feel free to cast these roles with diversity in mind.

Kung Fu Notes:

The students of this school study Shaolin kung fu and tai chi. It is not wushu, which is more performative and less combative.

The iron fan referenced in the play is a large metal-spined fan, which makes a loud "pop" when unfurled.

Xingyi is pronounced "sing-yee".

Bagua is pronounced "bah-gwah".

Sifu is pronounced "see-foo".

Sihing is pronounced "see-hing".

Lohan is pronounced "low-hahn".

Text Notes:

/ indicates an overlapping line where the next character should start speaking
 ... indicates the trailing off of a thought
 - indicates a line that has been cut off

Setting:

A kung fu studio. There is a door that leads to a back office and bathroom and another door that is the entrance to the school.

Costumes:

All characters where some type of martial arts uniform - which style is not important. Master Lynn's, at the very least, should be

distinguished from the others somehow by perhaps a badge or more ornate black belt.

A gasp. The sound of fearful breathing.

ERIKA and MAC anxiously wait in the studio. She cannot catch her breath, but gradually starts to breathe slower and slower.

SIFU ADAM enters, concerned. He checks on ERIKA.

SIFU ADAM

Hey.

ERIKA
(reassuring)

Hey...

A moment.

SIFU ADAM

Are you alright?

ERIKA

Yeah, I-

SIFU ADAM

I mean...

You know you're not supposed to leave a seminar like that, right?

ERIKA

No, I know, I just needed-

SIFU ADAM

I mean, this is a big day. I kinda need you to be there for me as an assistant instructor. That's why you're called "sihing." It's our job to lead the others.

MAC

Well, she-

SIFU ADAM

What?

ERIKA gives MAC a look to be quiet.

ERIKA

I know, Sifu Adam, it won't happen again.

SIFU ADAM

I just don't get why would you take off before Master Lynn finished teaching the seminar? She only comes out once a year to teach the Iron Fan Tai Chi Form. There are a hundred fifty students out there, most of them from out of town.

ERIKA

I'm sorry. I wasn't thinking.

SIFU ADAM

This is just so not like you...

If you want to go back to being a regular student, that's fine. I get it. Being an assistant instructor here is not like a paid position or anything. There's not much incentive to be one except an interest in teaching, helping the school and all that...

ERIKA

No, it's not that-

MAC

Well, Sifu Adam, I feel like she was completely justified considering-

ERIKA

Mac.

SIFU ADAM

What? Why?

MAC

I'm sorry, but I think you should say-

SIFU ADAM

What are you talking about?

ERIKA

Look. It's not that big a deal...

MAC

It is a big deal.

SIFU ADAM

What is?

ERIKA

I think I can decide for myself whether this warrants saying something-

SIFU ADAM

Wait, did something happen?

No response.

Tell me what's going on. I need to know.

ERIKA

I just felt... very uncomfortable... with one of the other students.

SIFU ADAM

Which one? Who was in your group?

ERIKA

We don't need to-

SIFU ADAM

Gabe?

MAC nods. ERIKA sees this.

ERIKA

Thanks, Mac, you want to let me deal with my own problems?

MAC

I'm just trying to help.

ERIKA

It's fine. It's not a big deal. I mean we're training to be able to deal with this sort of thing so...

SIFU ADAM

What sort of thing?

No response.

Look, I know you're fine dealing with this on your own, but can you please just tell me what happened? I need to know. You know that.

ERIKA

After Master Lynn finished teaching us the first part of the form and we broke down into smaller groups, I was leading a group with Mac, Gabe and a couple of out-of-town students from some of the other schools. I went through the form just like she taught it-

MAC

That guy had something to say about everything.

ERIKA

It's just- It was very distracting and I just didn't want to make it this thing. I've dealt with challenging students before. Some people learn by questioning, whatever, but then he started getting a little pushy-

SIFU ADAM

How so?

ERIKA

I mean, just saying stuff that wasn't appropriate-

SIFU ADAM

Like what?

ERIKA

Like...

Well, okay, so in between practice sessions, he'd just ask me all these personal questions. "Why'd you start training?" "When did you get your belt?" "When'd Sifu Adam make you an assistant instructor? I thought you had to get to second black before that happened."

SIFU ADAM

Okay... Those don't sound like personal /questions, it sounds like he's just-

ERIKA

It was just the tone.

Then later on when we all were supposed to work with a partner on push hands sparring and applications, he's like, "how /'bout you- Yeah...

MAC

"How 'bout you and me?"

ERIKA

Like he was singling me out or something.

He was being really aggressive when we were sparring. I mean he wasn't working on the principles at all. It seemed like he just wanted to put me in my place.

You know what I'm talking about. Like someone just sort of bulldozes through anything you do. If I got something in, he wouldn't acknowledge it, he'd only push harder.

SIFU ADAM

Push harder in /what way?

MAC

Are you serious? You should have just-

He pretends to punch someone in the face.

MAC (CONT'D)

BAM!

ERIKA

No, you can't just punch someone in the face...

SIFU ADAM

Hold on. Hold on. I'm trying to talk to Erika.

SIFU ADAM

Go on.

ERIKA

Well, as soon as Master Lynn would bring us all back as a group and we'd line up in rank, he just had to take the spot right next to me - you know, because he's a black belt too. Which fine, whatever, but it just felt a little more than coincidental. And one time when we're coming back from group work I hear him say, "if you know so much, maybe you should teach me a lesson."

SIFU ADAM

I don't get it.

MAC

You know in all the kung fu flicks it's like when someone has a problem with another guy, he's always like "why don't you teach me a lesson." It's like a challenge.

Like in "Avatar: the Last Airbender". They travel to the island of Kyoshi where they encounter the women warriors who use these bad ass fans - just like in our seminar!

Anyway, so Sokka, who's one of Aang - the protagonist's friends, thinks that girl fighters can't show him anything he doesn't already know, so he says to their leader, Suki, "why don't I show you some of my moves?"

And then they're all, "Yeah, how 'bout you give us a demonstration?" But then, whoa! Suki just totally owns him when he tries to punch her and she like spins him around and stuff...

The others look at him.

MAC (CONT'D)

It's hilarious.

SIFU ADAM

I've never seen it.

MAC

Oh, okay. Never mind... It's a really good show though. Just saying.

SIFU ADAM

Was he threatening you?

ERIKA

I don't know... I know he said it loud enough for me to hear. Then he kinda just smirks afterwards like, "what? You gonna do something about it?"

I don't know!

There's not some definitive thing I can point to like, "oh, he was hitting on me and wouldn't shut up" or "he punched me out of nowhere."

But his intent when we were sparring was way different than any of the other times I've been with folks. Sure, sometimes in sparring it gets a little rough. I'm okay with that. I have no qualms about getting hit hard or hitting hard back. But this was different.

SIFU ADAM

Without some kind of conclusive action, it's hard for me to do anything-

ERIKA

Do you know what it's like to be attacked? Because that's what it felt like. It felt completely different from sparring. It was not friendly. It was not two peers learning and trying to understand fighting techniques. It wasn't even someone who didn't know his own strength and accidentally hit too hard. I'm saying this was different. That's all I know.

SIFU ADAM

Show me what he did.

ERIKA

Okay, fine. In that last practice session before Master Lynn called everyone back? Here's how it went. We're sparring and-

She squares up with MAC while she speaks.

I block a punch from him- You're me, Mac.

She punches at MAC. MAC blocks.

-and pull him in to strike at the back of the neck.

She nods. MAC grabs her at her wrist and pulls in towards his body and with the other arm side-hand chops at the base of her neck. This should all be done rather gently - they are marking the techniques not at "real time" speed.

Then...

She steps around MAC and not in real time, she sweeps his leg, sending MAC to the ground hard. He's stunned.

Before he can get up, ERIKA climbs on top of him, pinning him down with her body with one arm raised strike MAC's face.

Ha!

Her adrenaline is running. She looks like she might do something more. SIFU and MAC are taken aback.

SIFU ADAM

Erika?

ERIKA

That. And I say "Hey, are you going to stop?" Then, Master Lynn calls us all back and he gets off me.

She gets up off of MAC. MAC starts to get up rubbing his back.

That's how he looked. That's what he did. If she hadn't called us all back and if I didn't call him out, I wonder whether he would have kept on going.

She turns to MAC, offering him help up.

Are you okay?

MAC

Yeah...

ERIKA

Sorry...

MAC

It's fine.

Silence.

How do people like Gabe advance to black belt? Thought they were supposed to have self-control.

SIFU ADAM

It's the difference between testing to black belt because you can parrot back the Art and give Master Lynn her testing fees, and actually asking yourself the internal question about what it means

to be a "black belt" or "sifu" or "master" and if you truly are at that level. Not everyone does that.

SIFU ADAM (CONT'D)

Ultimately, a black belt's just a belt. If you want a black belt, you can give me 40 bucks and I'll get one for you from the back room right now.

MAC

I'm still trying to figure out how to tie this one.

SIFU ADAM

Did you say anything, Erika, or-

ERIKA

Are you trying to say I provoked him?/Because I did not provoke him-

SIFU ADAM

No, I'm saying did you ask him to stop?

ERIKA

You saw what I showed you. It was over before I even knew it. After I called him out, he got off me and just walked off after that. I was like "That's it. I'm done." And I came back here.

SIFU ADAM

Master Lynn will be back in a second and I-

MAC

Well, he's probably with her since he's all buddy-buddy with her...

ERIKA

He is?

MAC

Yeah, he trains at her school in Albuquerque. He kept on bringing it up to me whenever we were on break. I'm like, "I get it."

SIFU ADAM

I need to get the facts straight before I approach Master Lynn about this-

ERIKA

Wait, why?

SIFU ADAM

Well, because he clearly is becoming a threat within the seminar, I'm going to ask Master Lynn for him to leave so he doesn't cause any more disturbances-

ERIKA

Please don't. Sifu-

MAC

Why! You're going to let him push you around?

ERIKA

Because it's just going to turn into this big thing and I really don't want all these rumors to start that I'm a-

SIFU ADAM

What do you want me to do? I have to do something. And I am talking to Master Lynn. It's my job.

ERIKA

Can't you just-

SIFU ADAM

Do you think if I don't address it that this is just going to go away?

No response.

One of the most important things in a kung fu school - any martial arts school, really - is safety and trust. You don't have trust among the students, you don't have a school and you don't have a business.

Now, I'll ask her to talk to Gabe since technically he's her student, and I'll see if she can at least just make sure he moves to a different group after lunch, okay?

No response.

SIFU ADAM (CONT'D)

If it was my school, he'd be kicked out. You know how I screen people before they start taking classes. Master Lynn runs a different ship. That's fine. I guarantee his interest will have waned by then, from what I can tell of him.

ERIKA

Fine. Look, I just don't want to have any more issues with him, okay? I came here to train and learn something new.

SIFU ADAM

Just stay clear of him.

SIFU ADAM and ERIKA playfully spar.

GABE enters the studio.

Gabe, right? From the Albuquerque school?

GABE smiles and shakes SIFU ADAM's hand.

GABE

Yeah, that's right. Man, I gotta say, Sifu Adam, this is a really great seminar you're hosting here. Super inspiring. You know, all those moves with the fan? So deadly...

SIFU ADAM

Ha, yeah... Well, glad you could join us today. I believe you've already met my students Mac and Sihing Erika.

GABE

Oh, yeah, we met.

ERIKA retreats to another corner of the room to practice.

SIFU ADAM

You didn't happen to see Master Lynn on your way back, did you, Gabe?

GABE

Yeah, she's on her way. Mind if I train?

SIFU ADAM

Be my guest. No lunch?

GABE

(laughs)

Real Shaolin don't need lunch.

SIFU ADAM

Right, right...

GABE starts working on Iron Bone Training (hitting a bag of dried beans). MAC looks at him confused. GABE notices MAC.

GABE

Oh, strengthens the bones.

MAC

Hmm.

GABE

You're a white belt, right?

MAC

Huh? Oh, yeah...

GABE

How you liking it?

MAC

Uh... good! It's good.

MASTER LYNN enters the studio.

MAC

Oh, Master Lynn!

MAC bows to her. The others look at him.

SIFU ADAM
(gently)

Mac, you don't need to bow, it's okay...

MAC

Oh, okay. Cool.

MASTER LYNN

So you're...

MAC

Mac

MASTER LYNN

Mac, right...

MAC

Yes, that's right, Mac. I should have introduced myself. Sorry.

MAC shakes her hand.

MASTER LYNN

That's all right, Shaolin means never having to say you're sorry.

She laughs at her own joke.

MASTER LYNN

Isn't that right, Sifu Adam?

SIFU ADAM appeases her. She grins at MAC, waiting for him to say something.

MAC

...Are you enjoying San Francisco?

MASTER LYNN

Yes, it's always nice to get out here. It's a shame it's only during our annual visit. Have you been to any of our other seminars at any of our other schools - the main school in Albuquerque or...?

MAC

No, unfortunately not. I'm new. I didn't even know kung fu schools had seminars and that type of thing. It's a lot different than I expected.

MASTER LYNN

Hopefully in a good way.

She chuckles at herself.

MAC

I really didn't expect this much stuff to learn. It's a lot to take in. The forms, the culture, the rules...

MASTER LYNN

It's more than a lifetime of training and to become proficient in any one of the areas we have... well, it takes a lot of practice.

GABE

It doesn't happen overnight. Getting to your black belt takes years. But don't worry. You'll get there one day. We all get there. Or we quit. One or the other. There are black belts and there are quitters.

MAC

Right, right. I can see that. Good for you, man...

Well, I'm liking it so far. It's given me a lot even in just a month.

MASTER LYNN

We offer more than any other kung fu schools out there. I would even say more than any other martial arts system. I mean where else can you get meditation-

MAC

Right.

MASTER LYNN

-bagua-

MAC

Sure.

MASTER LYNN

-xingyi-

MAC

Uh huh.

MASTER LYNN

-weapons-

MAC

Oh, cool.

MASTER LYNN

-animal styles-

MAC

Ooh...

MASTER LYNN

-iron bone training and conditioning? /There aren't any. Trust me.

MAC

Oh, iron bone training, that sounds intense.

MASTER LYNN

These other disciplines? I feel sorry for them. Want to know karate? Well, that's our first 18 lohans. That's karate! Our Art encompasses so much.

GABE

Meaning by yellow belt - three months into our Art - you know the basis for karate.

MAC

Oh... well, that's cool...

MASTER LYNN

And they don't even get to learn the unique and colorful weapons we have. The 18 classical Chinese weapons! Who offers that? Who?

MAC

I don't know!

MASTER LYNN

Only Shaolin!

SIFU ADAM

Yep, that's why he comes here...

As I mentioned when I was signing him up...

MASTER LYNN

Oh, you are in excellent hands with Sifu Adam. He is a model for all the other instructors. He really has taken his Art to a high level of proficiency. Every time we come to San Francisco, more students attend than any other festivals I teach. It's very inspiring to see. What brought you here?

MAC

Well, I guess I just watch a lot of kung fu movies...

MASTER LYNN and GABE exchange a look.

MASTER LYNN

Oh...

Well, everybody comes in here looking for something. The ones that stay and continue to push themselves... I think they are the ones who find something useful from it.

GABE

It's not for everybody. You can train in a lot of martial arts and get cocky. This will make you disciplined. Like me? I do the warm-ups every day. Whenever I get a chance to do them. I do them on my lunch break. My co-workers make fun of me, but I don't care. You

GABE (CONT'D)

build skill over time, but you gotta continually test yourself. Otherwise, it's useless. You're just collecting movements.

MAC

Right, right...

GABE

I mean that's what I love the most. The discipline. You can't get through life without being disciplined. And this teaches you how to develop power, but also how to control that power, wield it. If you have a weapon, then you don't just rush out to use it. And at the same time, why would you pretend that you didn't have it? That's what you are with martial arts - a human weapon.

MAC

Yeah. Pretty bad ass.

GABE

I came into this Art and it gave me something, you know?

MAC

Oh, okay.

GABE

That's why I train hard every day. I take this seriously, you know? It's not a joke to me.

MAC

Definitely not. No joking.

ERIKA

Hey, Mac, you want to practice the form?

MAC

That'd be great.

GABE

Oh, sorry, didn't mean to keep you from your friend over there...

MAC

Oh, uh...

MAC tries to make his way over towards ERIKA. MASTER LYNN cuts in, blocking MAC.

MASTER LYNN

And plus, you get to meet so many wonderful people and colorful characters at all of these out of town seminars! I really hope you'll think of joining us at our next one in Albuquerque on the 15th, I'll be teaching one of the rarest kung fu forms we have, the Daggers of the White Eye-browed Monk! It's a hundred a fifty dollars, but it is absolutely worth every penny. You'd be hard pressed to find a better deal.

SIFU ADAM

So true. Master Lynn, if I could-

MASTER LYNN

And this is Sihing Erika, right?

ERIKA

Oh, yes, hello, Master Lynn. It's nice to officially meet you.

MASTER LYNN

We usually wait until a student is at second black level before they start officially assistant instructing. Sifu Adam must put a lot of faith in you.

SIFU ADAM

Erika works very hard, Master Lynn.

MASTER LYNN

Now, you left the seminar early if I remember correctly.

ERIKA

Well, uh... yes. I apologize, I just needed some air.

MASTER LYNN

Guess being in the park wasn't enough?

ERIKA

Uh... Well, I-

MASTER LYNN

I'm joking.

ERIKA

Oh, haha, yeah, sorry...

MASTER LYNN

I'm sure you had a good reason.

ERIKA

I just wanted to say, Master Lynn, that it's really inspiring to train with you. When I started there weren't any other women, so I could really relate to a lot of the stories Sifu Adam told about your experience training in the Art.

MASTER LYNN

Oh...

Well, thank you. I appreciate that.

The training was a lot different then.

MAC

How was it different?

MASTER LYNN

Well, for one thing, the Grandmaster didn't care about making people "comfortable". He'd have us hold a posture for hours until we either collapsed or got it right. He said it wasn't a good class unless someone "puked or passed out". It didn't matter how hard we trained,

it was never good enough. It was difficult and that's why only a select few ultimately stuck it out and got to "master" level.

SIFU ADAM

Only one out of every ten students walking through that door make it to first black.

ERIKA

But it must have been hard being the only woman around with a bunch of aggressive guys.

MASTER LYNN

You know, I don't know. I sometimes wonder if I would even be here if I hadn't been pushed hard.

GABE

I think it's necessary to be pushed hard if you want to progress. Especially in this.

MASTER LYNN

That's true.

ERIKA

You didn't feel like some of the guys you trained with had it out for you?

MASTER LYNN laughs. During the following, she might use SIFU ADAM as her training partner and "act" out pieces of the fight with him.

MASTER LYNN

Oh, I know some of them had it out for me...

I remember one time I was paired up in sparring with this guy that hated me being there. It was a different time, you see, so martial arts were considered to be more of a "guy thing". He didn't think I should be there and he wanted to make that known. So, we sparred. I got some good strikes in, and then he punched me full force, full contact in the face. I was lying on the floor and no one helped me up. In fact, the Grandmaster just said, "Well, will you quit?"

I had a bruise all down the side of my face for weeks and I had to go to the hospital to reset my dislocated jaw. For six weeks, I could barely talk and every time I yawned or sneezed, I had to support my chin with my hand. I still came back and trained. I sat out of sparring and during that time, I watched this guy's every move. I saw what he was good at and what he left open. I practiced my iron bone training.

So then, when we sparred for a second time, I knew that this wasn't a game anymore. If he wanted to spar that hard, I was going to bring

MASTER LYNN (CONT'D)

it. And I did. I swept him and on the way down, I kneed him in the face. He broke his nose and was bleeding all over the place. And that was it. He never bothered me again. After that, everyone knew I would go that hard if called upon.

Sometimes, it's just a matter of understanding how far you are willing to go.

Beat.

Okay, okay, enough story time. I'm ready for lunch, Sifu Adam! Now, where you taking us? And you're buying, I presume?

She laughs at her own joke.

SIFU ADAM

Well, if I could just talk with you a second actually?

MAC

(to ERIKA)

You wanna go through the form?

ERIKA

Yeah, let's go over there.

MAC and ERIKA retrieve their iron fans and take a far corner of the room and practice the iron fan form. They practice while MASTER LYNN and SIFU ADAM talk.

ERIKA meditates while practicing the iron fan tai chi form. MAC follows along, replicating her movements, though he may flow less and be less sure of his movements.

MASTER LYNN

Let's make this quick. We're supposed to re-group at 1:30.

SIFU ADAM

I'll be quick.

SIFU ADAM looks over at GABE, who takes a second, then realizes that SIFU is looking at him.

GABE

Oh, sorry...

MASTER LYNN

Gabe, why don't you go through the form with the others?

GABE bows to MASTER LYNN and SIFU ADAM. MASTER LYNN nods him away.

During this section, the "pops" from the fan as the students practice underscore the conversation between MASTER LYNN and SIFU ADAM.

GABE joins the others. ERIKA exchanges a look with MAC, but they continue practicing. GABE's movements are more forceful and choppy, but he appears to know what he's doing.

SIFU ADAM monitors the students for a second.

While the students practice the form, their movements may bleed into MASTER LYNN's storytelling. We're somehow in a space where reality's physics have become tenuous.

MASTER LYNN

So, what is it? We have to get to lunch.

SIFU ADAM

I know-

MASTER LYNN

I don't understand why you're being so snippy with me today. I really don't ask that much of you...

SIFU ADAM

Uh...?

I'm sorry. It's been a long day.

MASTER LYNN

I know you pay a lot to bring me out here, but this way we all gain more students. It really is a small sacrifice that I'm asking each sifu to make.

SIFU ADAM

No, I know, your visit is covered on my end. You don't have to worry about that. This is about something else.

MASTER LYNN

What?

SIFU ADAM

It seems like there's been a disagreement between the students...

MASTER LYNN

Who?

SIFU ADAM

Well...

SIFU ADAM gestures to GABE and ERIKA discreetly.

MASTER LYNN

He's one of my top black belts.

SIFU ADAM

Well, I know, but- During the seminar, there were a couple interactions between them that-

MASTER LYNN

What?

SIFU ADAM

It might be best if went into the back room to discuss this further...

MASTER LYNN

How do you know "something happened"?

SIFU ADAM

Well, I just learned right now-

MASTER LYNN

So, you didn't see it?

SIFU ADAM

Well, no, but-

MASTER LYNN

You didn't think to question others, find out if this is /actually true?

SIFU ADAM

This is one of my most senior students we're talking about. I doubt she would make something /like this up.

MASTER LYNN

Look, I was monitoring the seminar and I didn't see anything that suggested that there was any kind of problem-

SIFU ADAM

Well, something happened. Perhaps the intent was different. We need to do something about it so we're ensuring a safe space for-

MASTER LYNN

Well, of course it's safe. Don't be silly. All the Shaolin Kung Fu Centers are safe for people to train at.

SIFU ADAM

What if we separate them? I think if they just attend the seminar, but we keep them away from each other, then-

MASTER LYNN

No!

SIFU ADAM

No?

MASTER LYNN

Sifu Adam, that's ridiculous! I'm not giving "assigned seating" to adults. These are adults we're talking about. Not elementary school children. I'm not separating anyone. They can work out the issues by themselves.

SIFU ADAM is taken aback.

MASTER LYNN

Come on...

Sifu Adam, the situation is as plain as the nose on your face.

SIFU ADAM

I don't see-

MASTER LYNN

It's a power struggle.

They're both trying to prove something. I'm not getting involved in that. Look, I've been doing this long enough to recognize when people have issues with authority.

It's like the story of Wu Song from *The Outlaws of the Marsh*. Remember? Wu Song's traveling. He stops at an inn and drinks a lot of wine, telling everyone all about how he's this great martial

artist. The innkeeper tries to cut him off at three cups, but Wu Song keeps on going and he drinks 18 of them.

Innkeeper warns him not to leave - that there's a dangerous man-eating tiger out there. Wu Song figures the innkeeper's just trying to get him to spend more money, and he thinks, "besides, I can take a tiger." So, he passes out in the forest.

Well, then it turns out that the innkeeper's right. There is a man-eating tiger out there. And it's just about to attack him in his sleep, when Wu Song leaps to his feet and jumps the tiger's back. We have a move for it in one of the forms, remember?

She demonstrates the move.

SIFU ADAM
(impatiently)

Yeah, Master Lynn, /I'm familiar with the- Okay...

MASTER LYNN

Then, Wu Song starts beating the tiger, pummeling it while riding its back. The tiger can't get Wu Song off and it eventually wears itself out and keels over. Dead. He kills it. Wu Song kills the tiger.

SIFU ADAM

Yes, of course.

MASTER LYNN

Do you see what I'm getting at?

No response.

The point of this story is learning how to subdue your emotions. The tiger is anger. The anger within each of us. Wu Song is holding onto anger and riding it, managing it, controlling it until it dies. This is kung fu.

But it's also a story about being ready for any attack - whether that's physically or emotionally. Will your martial arts protect you

when the time comes? This is what it's all about. Remember where the words "kung fu" come from. "Gong fu" meaning "time and effort". These emotions that are brought up are the very reason all of us are here. We're learning through time and effort the skills to address fear and anger both internally and externally.

How can we step into this fight when this is a learning opportunity for both of them? We have to let students fight their own battles, hard as it may be.

SIFU ADAM

I understand that, but this is different.

MASTER LYNN

(sighs)

What did he do?

SIFU ADAM

Look, can we talk about this in my office? I think that would be better.

MASTER LYNN leads the way to the back office. SIFU ADAM follows. Reality has shifted back to "normal".

GABE has stopped working out. He grabs a drink of water. He watches MAC and ERIKA go through the form. MAC stops.

MAC

What's after you open the fan in the beginning?

ERIKA

What?

MAC does the form as he speaks.

MAC

You know, "step right, open the fan"?

ERIKA

Uhhhhh...

GABE

Can't remember?

ERIKA tries to think of the form. She performs the part of the form MAC is talking about.

ERIKA

Like that?

MAC

Wait, what?

ERIKA starts again, doing her movements slowly yet dynamically so that it's clear what she's doing. MAC joins in. He mouths the instructions too.

ERIKA

So, step right, open the fan. Sink down into reverse bow as you slice six times, starting with palm down.

MAC

Okay....

ERIKA

Close the fan. Then triple attack as you open the fan, cut off the head...

MAC

Cut off the head...

MAC stops to watch ERIKA perform this section of the form.

ERIKA

Open the fan towards you, mule kick.

MAC copies her.

MAC

Open the fan, mule kick.

ERIKA proceeds with performing the form.

ERIKA

Pivot while the leg is still up and close the fan.

MAC thrusts, but notices his fan is in the other hand. He stops.

MAC

Wait, how does the fan get in this other hand?

ERIKA

Uh...

Well, you only change hands in the beginning.

MAC runs through the form full-out to the pivot and close the fan part. ERIKA joins in.

MAC

Because it's "Slide out with the left to bow, chan breath, "immortal points the way", then "step forward right, open the fan".

He stops.

Right?

ERIKA

Oh, you lift the leg, block with the fan and then take it in this hand.

MAC

Oh!

ERIKA

Then, slide out to bow stance and block to the temple as you thrust with the fan? Like number three lohans?

MAC

Okay, got it, then step forward and open the fan.

GABE

(to himself, but loud enough to hear)

Not how I remember it...

ERIKA and MAC look at him.

ERIKA

Hey, you remember it differently? Be my guest.

GABE

You can teach it however you want. I don't care.

ERIKA walks away from GABE.

Pssh. Okay...

GABE performs the moves during the next section. ERIKA runs the form on her own. The "pops" from her fan might have a bit more gusto now.

GABE

So, the first two moves are stabs to the eyes.

MAC

"Stab to the eye," huh. Brutal.

GABE

The fan comes down on the head like a hammer fist next. You're trying to knock them out.

MAC follows along with GABE, but then becomes lost.

MAC

Okay...

I totally don't remember this part.

GABE

It's right before the chop off the head part.

GABE does the rest of the form solo with a forceful intent. His version looks different than what ERIKA was doing. ERIKA stops to watch.

MAC

Huh...

GABE finishes the form.

MAC

Does that look familiar to you?

ERIKA

I mean... it looks-

GABE

Let's just do it again. Remember to pivot the hip. It's like when I turn my hip this way, I feel much more power, you know?

GABE demonstrates a punch, turning with his hips.

It's all body mechanics anyway. Proper alignment. It's the least amount of effort for maximum result.

GABE begins the form again. MAC follows along reluctantly, but messes up.

MAC

(to himself)

Shit...

ERIKA

That was right, Mac.

GABE

Triple attack.

MAC

Oh, yeah...

MAC does the "triple attack". He pauses again, stuck.

GABE

Wave the fan and walk.

MAC does the move, but then stops.

MAC

We just learned this, why don't I-

ERIKA

Cover then cross step.

GABE

Cover then smash kick.

GABE does a smash kick. MAC turns, confused.

MAC

Smash kick?

ERIKA and GABE demonstrate as they speak.

ERIKA

Yeah, the smash kick is later./You cross step and crouch with the fan.

GABE

No. It's "smash kick, close the fan, deflect around, cut off the head". I know the form.

ERIKA

You're just missing the crouch part. It's before all that-

GABE

Walk with the fan, turn and smash kick. That's it.

ERIKA

Um...

I'm pretty sure it's "walk with the fan, cover with the fan, cross step, crouch down and twist, close the fan, then the smash kick. Deflect around, then cut off the head."

GABE

I know there's a smash kick and turn.

ERIKA

There's no turn, Gabe. I just /went over it-

MAC

You know, it almost sounds like /you're both right...

GABE

Well, I remember it.

ERIKA

Maybe you're thinking of a /different form. It's not in this one.

GABE

I'm not thinking of a different form. I remember it, Sihing Erika. I'm not the one who left the seminar-

ERIKA

Whoa, okay, never mind-

MAC

Man, moves aside, isn't the iron fan cool, though?

GABE

I'm a black belt too, you know, you don't need to act like-

MAC

Like, I don't know when you'd ever use it unless you were carrying the fan around just in

ERIKA

I'm not trying to act like anything, I'm just-

case...

GABE

Yeah, whatever, it was like this from the beginning. You have this chip on your shoulder. "Oh, I'm Sihing Erika. Listen to me, everyone."

ERIKA

Why are you being so-

MAC

Guys! It doesn't matter-

GABE

I'm not saying that /you're wrong. Don't get all mad. I'm just saying I don't remember it that way.

ERIKA

I just did it. I'm not getting mad. I just don't get why you feel the need to question /everything I say?

MAC

Guys!

GABE

Really? You're gonna act like I'm the one with the problem? This is /ridiculous...

ERIKA

Well, you're the one who brought it up! I'm just asking. I'm just trying to get some clarification, okay? Is that okay with you, Gabe, or do I need to check with you on everything now because you're some kind of kung fu mastermind that gets to assess the skill of everyone around him?

Pause.

GABE

(laughs)

What?

ERIKA

Nothing. Never mind.

GABE

No, you don't think I have it right, do you? I know I haven't been a "black belt" as long as you, but-

ERIKA

I don't care about how long you've been a black belt. It's not about that, okay?

GABE

Well, what's wrong then?
Look, I'm just trying to get it right.

ERIKA

You crouch after the "cover the fan" part.
She demonstrates.

MAC

Oh, right! Yeah, I totally remember that part because Master Lynn said this symbolized "cooling the flames of anger".

ERIKA

There were just a couple things/not exactly-

GABE

That it?

MAC

You know I'll bet you /everyone has their own interpretation and in some ways they're all right

ERIKA

You asked. I'm just /trying to help. If you don't want me to-

MAC

No, no, no, don't stop-

GABE

No, I'm really curious.

MAC

Erika, just go through the next part. Please. It's actually coming back now. I almost have it memorized.

ERIKA

Fine.

ERIKA does a portion of the form.

GABE

I don't remember it like that.

She stops.

ERIKA

Okay, I don't have to-

GABE

No, look, I just remember it like this.

GABE does a portion of the form. It looks different than how ERIKA did it.

ERIKA

Whatever, fine. You're right, Gabe! Happy?

GABE

Look, I remember it this way because this is an actual move you could use. That's important. If you do the wrong thing in the wrong moment, it will leave you vulnerable. Maybe there are a hundred times that you get into a conflict with someone and nothing happens. And here's the one time - the one time - that something happens and you need to defend yourself. What do you do then? Will your art defend you?

SIFU ADAM enters, holding the door for MASTER LYNN, who walks in.

Oh, there's your sifu. Why don't you just ask him if you think I'm wrong.

ERIKA

I know there's a "crouch with the fan" part.

MASTER LYNN

Sifu, thank you for bringing this to my attention. I will handle it from here.

GABE
 Okay, so? I know there's /a part
 where-

SIFU
 May I ask what you're gonna do?

ERIKA
 I know it because I did clarify
 it with Sifu Adam.

MASTER LYNN
 Well, since he's my student, I
 think the decision is up to me.

SIFU ADAM whistles to get the students'
 attention.

SIFU ADAM
 You guys! I'm sorry, but please! I'm trying to talk with Master Lynn
 about something. It really doesn't matter whether your hand is like
 this-

He puts his hand one way.

-or like this-

He puts his hand another way.

It's about how you apply it. Work on applications. Stop arguing over
 minutiae.

SIFU ADAM turns back to MASTER LYNN.
 GABE gives ERIKA a look like, "see?".

MASTER LYNN
 (low, to SIFU)
 We'll do the seminar and then I'll talk to him. I'll let him know he
 can't come to the next seminar we have here, okay? Let me just use
 the facilities...

MASTER LYNN walks to the back changing
 room/restroom.

SIFU ADAM

You guys, Master Lynn and I are leaving for lunch in a second. I'm going to change and then you all are going to have to practice somewhere else, okay? I gotta lock up the school. Erika, that means you too. Don't kill each other while I'm gone.

SIFU ADAM walks into the back office.

MAC practices on his own, humming the theme song to a martial arts related video game (like "Street Fighter" or "Mortal Kombat").

MAC begins verbalizing his internal monologue - an imagined kung fu fight scene between himself and an imaginary person.

MAC

Oh, you have a problem with me?
Want to fight?
Little did you know...
I have an iron fan!

MAC pops open the fan.

GABE

So, Mac, right?

MAC

Yeah.

GABE

Can I just show you something real quick? My application is like, okay, you punch in and I-

MAC marks a punch into GABE.

-block, grab your wrist and twist around.

GABE blocks MAC's punch, grabs his wrist, and twists around, taking MAC stumbling with him.

MAC

Oh, okay...

MAC rubs his wrist.

GABE
(to ERIKA)

So, what's yours?

ERIKA

I mean, so the "chop off the head" part could just be a throw, like-

She makes eye contact with MAC, they set themselves. MAC marks a punch for her. ERIKA blocks and moves out of the way, ducking, then grabs around MAC's neck and with both arms, does a mini-throw, marking it.

...and then throw.

MAC

Oh, that's cool. I didn't see that...

ERIKA

Yeah, it's basically like those first one-step techniques we learn, but just with a slightly different angle. It's just a fight-ender, that's all.

GABE

"Fight-ender". Okay.

ERIKA

Even if you smash kick /your opponent away he still might come after you.

MAC

Guys, seriously, let's drop it.

GABE

No, no, it's cool. I see your point. I get it. I guess I just imagine breaking someone's neck when I kick, so you know, "fighter".

MAC

You both have a point!

ERIKA

Not if the attacker is really being a jerk and is motivated enough to come after you again.

GABE

I guess I just don't worry about that.

MAC

Luckily, it's so rare that we'd actually ever get attacked...

ERIKA

Yeah, that's funny. Must be nice.

GABE

Have you ever even been in a real fight?

ERIKA

What are you talking about? Look, I don't feel the need to get into a "real" fight in order to prove my skill. That's not why I do this. It's not the only reason I do this.

GABE

It's just...

ERIKA

What.

GABE

No, it's just, how's this going to end a fight, you know?

ERIKA

What do you mean?

GABE

I mean, like in a real fight you're not trying to do a cool move-

ERIKA

It's not a "cool move"-

MAC

Well, actually it is kind of a cool move...

GABE

You're trying to get away. It's different when someone has kill intent. You want to immobilize them. I mean would you know how to use your kung fu if the situation called for it?

ERIKA

Look, never mind. I was just trying to help...

ERIKA goes back to stretching, loosening up, etc. GABE frowns; perhaps he does something absent-mindedly like open and close the fan so that it pops.

GABE

So, that's it then, you're just going to bow out, just peace out, "not gonna play with us anymore"? Take your toys and go home?

ERIKA

What the hell? I'm just trying not to get into something with you, okay?

GABE

So, what am I doing wrong?

ERIKA

Well, there's a whole spiritual side to this particular type of kung fu that you aren't even acknowledging. Yes, you are right, it's self-defense against an attack, but is trying to be as non-violent as possible.

It's a part of the philosophy and the approach and you can't just take that out of what this is. It's a part of every move and form. If you just want to learn how to fight, you should go somewhere else that just concentrates on that.

This is about something else. Something higher. Like even this fan form. You know what a fan symbolizes in this form? It's about reviving life. That's what you do when someone passes out, right? With a fan?

She demonstrates reviving with a fan.

But it's not reviving someone simply physically, it's reviving their spirit. It's a purification. And it's masked as a weapon. The fan isn't thought to be deadly at all. So all this is covering what's within. It's just like tai chi. It's like they say, "Real tai chi when looked at appears very simple. All of the gong fu-

MAC

"Gong fu"?

GABE
Time and effort

ERIKA
Time and-

-effort, yeah-

ERIKA (CONT'D)

ERIKA and GABE truly see each other for a moment.

-so, "All of the gong fu - the time and effort - is on the inside. The inside is trained so that it will affect the outside. Change occurs from inside out."

Imagine if you could let all your tension go. Not just physical tension, but emotional tension, psychological tension- all these things. I don't know anyone who is truly relaxed like that...

GABE

I train hard for a reason. This is my life. I don't know what you do. You buy into all this spiritual stuff, but this is about discipline and structure to me.

I came here because my life before this was the absolute opposite of that. There were things that were very difficult for me to stop doing, understand? Maybe you don't know what it's like, but for some of us, that's a reality.

And out here in San Francisco, you can have the luxury of ignoring everyday problems, but every so often in your life you have to confront something about yourself that you don't like. And boy, let me tell you, you really want to be on the right side of that equation when you come out the other side.

ERIKA

Look, I get that. I do. I really do. When I first came here I was intensely angry all the time. At everything. I mean you tell yourself that you should just shut up and that it's just you and no one else, but why does it feel so debilitating?

I couldn't take it. I wasn't even thinking clearly anymore. I thought everyone was out to get me. Then, I saw a flyer on a pole for kung fu and tai chi lessons and I thought, "Well, maybe that would be good, I could kick some ass and get inner peace. Sort of a two-fer".

GABE

That's why I'm saying that you can't take the end point - the fight - out of this. It's a martial art. It's designed so that you survive.

ERIKA

No, but you need more than just the physical in order to survive. There's this saying, "you conquer your inner enemy and you can conquer the enemies outside of you". I believe that.

I came here and the first day of class, Sifu Adam told us this story about the forms - that every movement, every posture connects to

some legend - and that legend connects to some philosophical concept. You don't get that going to a gym. We come here for something more.

GABE

Everyone comes here because of something. I agree with that. This is the type of place that gives it to us. I was not doing good when I found his place, understand?

You don't get it...

I'm not perfect, sure, I'll admit that, but...

ERIKA

Yes, exactly, you're not perfect. That's the point.

GABE suddenly shifts considerably.

GABE

I'm sorry.

I didn't realize you were such an expert.

ERIKA

No, I'm not saying that. I'm saying no one's perfect.

MAC

I mean it's in our manual. It talks about the Buddhist and Taoist monks who kept these systems sustained over the years because they were trying to get closer to enlightenment or become one with the Tao.

ERIKA

Yes, exactly.

GABE

Even monks have to fight sometime. What would you do if your land was getting invaded and everyone you knew was killed? Would you fight then? I know you would.

MAC

Sure, the monks might have fought, but they were also trying to preserve something that was beyond fighting.

I mean, is it so impossible to think that they were onto something by talking about a spiritual and psychological state when they describe the forms? Otherwise, why name them after stories? Why not just name the movements "swirl" and "punch". "Block". "Kick".

A story can mean so much more than just describing an attack or defense.

ERIKA

It's not like you're fighting against a real opponent when you go through the forms, you're fighting yourself. It's imaginary.

GABE

Yeah, and what's that say about you?

ERIKA

Why are you getting upset? I don't get it...

MAC

Everyone fights themselves. It's not directed at anyone in particular.

GABE

Not me. I love myself. I don't have any problems with myself. Other people, maybe, but not me. There's nothing inside of me that I need to "heal".

ERIKA

Just stop talking.

SIFU ADAM enters through the doorway from the office with a jacket over his uniform. He pockets a wallet as he's followed by MASTER LYNN, who now has her purse.

MASTER LYNN

Okay, all set.

SIFU ADAM

Okay, guys, time to lock up.

GABE

I mean, Erika, I just want to know, what do you do if someone suddenly attacks you?

GABE leaps onto ERIKA and puts her in a headlock, tightly. She grabs at his arm. MAC tries to pry him off.

GABE

See, how do you defend yourself from an attack like this? Your skill better be strong in order to get out of it. Intent is the key. No one trains this way.

MAC

Hey, man!

Stop!

Stop it!

SIFU ADAM rushes over. Before he gets to GABE, MASTER LYNN yells.

MASTER LYNN

Gabe!

GABE looks up, then lets Erika out. As he loosens his grip, she pushes him off and strikes him in the nose, causing him to bleed.

GABE

Ow! What the hell?!

SIFU ADAM supports ERIKA.

SIFU ADAM
(to ERIKA)

Are you okay?

ERIKA pushes him away.

ERIKA

Keep him away from me. That's the second time he- I don't want to be near him. I should be calling the fucking cops-

MASTER LYNN

What is going on in this place? This is completely inappropriate behavior.

MAC

Gabe attacked Erika.

GABE

It was a joke! I was trying to make a point. I had control of what I was doing. It wasn't like I was going to hurt her.

SIFU ADAM

That's enough. This is unacceptable.

MASTER LYNN

Gabe, go wash up.

GABE leaves to the bathroom.

MAC

(low)

You really gotta watch yourself. Guys like that don't hold back when they're threatened. You don't know what he's might do. I know.

ERIKA

Oh, and I'm just supposed to let him keep on attacking me? He choked me, Mac! Then I'm the one that has to watch myself? Around a person like that? I'm always the one that's supposed to watch myself so I don't piss them off? I mean what the hell? One minute ago you're telling me how I have to stand up for myself and how I have to say something. And now I do something- You don't see me attacking people then calling it a joke. I know what that was. I know exactly what that was.

MAC

I'm just saying... Don't make it worse, okay? Don't provoke him. Don't give him a reason. He's not-

ERIKA

I didn't give him anything, Mac. Whatever.

MASTER LYNN

Just calm down. Everyone. That's enough.

MASTER LYNN points at ERIKA.

She is not allowed at the second half of the seminar.

MAC

What?

ERIKA

What? That's not fair.

SIFU ADAM

Master Lynn...

MASTER LYNN

This is absolutely inappropriate for anyone - especially an assistant instructor - to retaliate in this manner.

ERIKA

He attacked me!

MAC

We all saw it.

MASTER LYNN

I said that's enough. This is my system. I think I know how to handle things. I've been doing this for a long time. Why do you think we have certain protocols? Certain rules? It's to protect against instances like this. There are rules in place. There are rules. You can't have a kung fu studio- You can't teach kung fu without these rules and if someone stops an attack, you can't lash out like that.

SIFU ADAM

Master Lynn, be reasonable.

MAC

I mean if anything, they would both be kicked out...

ERIKA

Thanks, Mac.

MAC

Well, just, logically speaking-

SIFU ADAM

Master Lynn, look, we all saw what happened. Gabe clearly wasn't going to stop until you said something.

GABE enters back in the room holding tissues to his nose.

GABE

This is bullshit. I was trying to show something, okay? I didn't mean to- Can't you take a fucking joke? /I swear to god...

MAC

Some "joke"...

ERIKA

You know that wasn't a joke.

GABE

Uh, yeah it was. Just calm down over there. Don't /act like this such a big deal when you were doing shit too. I hate that. When people act like this is all one person's fault.

ERIKA

Don't you dare tell me to calm down.

What kind of system promotes this kind of behavior from their students? I mean, who are you, Master Lynn? Of all people, you would think that you'd understand-

MASTER LYNN

How dare you.

SIFU ADAM

Master Lynn, maybe both of them should just go home. Gabe, why don't you go back/to your hotel, and-

ERIKA begins to pack up.

GABE

Hell no! I paid to come out here. I took time off from work and I am paying good money to learn this seminar. I'm not going anywhere unless it's back out to the park to learn the second half of the form from Master Lynn. You can't tell me what to do.

SIFU ADAM takes out his wallet and rifles through it and takes out a hundred dollars and thrusting it into GABE, who lets it fall.

SIFU ADAM

Here. There's your money back. Now get out. I have the right to turn away business from anyone walking through my door-

GABE

Is he serious? I was just joking!

MASTER LYNN

Just relax, Gabe.

SIFU ADAM

I'd like you to leave. Now.

GABE

What...?

MASTER LYNN

Sifu Adam, don't be ridiculous. Pick up the money. He paid for the seminar.

SIFU ADAM

No.

GABE

I paid good money to see this form.

SIFU ADAM

Is seeing another form really that important?

GABE

Yes!

MASTER LYNN

The only thing that's happening here is that Erika is not allowed to come back to the second half of the seminar. Everyone gets mad when they are hit or attacked, it is your responsibility when sparring to tap out or bow out or say when you're finished. It's not-

MAC

She couldn't even talk!

MASTER LYNN

As I was saying, once the attack is over, you don't try and "get one in" just to prove a point. You don't retaliate like that. Not in these circumstances and not in any kind of full on sparring session. We aren't barbarians here. We have standards. And we have rules for when those standards are broken.

SIFU ADAM

So, we're not supposed to get involved when a sparring session has clearly turned sour? That's our responsibility as the leaders of the school. If we're not there to show the difference check students when they get out of control, /then who are we?

MASTER LYNN

We're instructors not babysitters.

SIFU ADAM

Yeah, well, sometimes even adults have to be told how things work. And guess what? In life, if someone is threatening you, you have a right to defend yourself. There's only so much you can take before allowing another person to push you around becomes too much. And in this situation, I have to side with my student. We were here. We saw what happened, end of story. If Gabe wants to train, that's great. He doesn't get to train here.

GABE

You can't kick me out of the Art!

SIFU ADAM

No, but I can kick you out of my own school. Whether Master Lynn chooses to kick you out of the "Art" is her choice.

MASTER LYNN

The only person I've kicked out is Erika.

ERIKA

I didn't-

SIFU ADAM

She might not be welcome to train under you, but she has every right and opportunity to continue training with me.

MASTER LYNN

You can't just continue to train someone I've kicked out.

SIFU ADAM

Why not?

MASTER LYNN

Because a student is supposed to honor their master! That's what this is about!

SIFU ADAM

That is NOT what this is about. This is about a student who has been continuously threatened by one of your students and a master who won't acknowledge the responsibility she has to ensure all students are safe regardless of who they are.

GABE

What's he talking about?

SIFU ADAM

We just talked about how Gabe threatened and attacked Erika at the seminar, which is why she left so abruptly.

GABE

What? Who told you that?

SIFU ADAM

We talked about separating them during the seminar. You knew this and were going to talk to Gabe about not coming back to San

Francisco in the future. I mean you heard what he said just now. You can't have students talking like that to one another!

GABE

Hey, wait a minute. At the seminar I was just trying to make friends.

ERIKA

Are you kidding me right now?

GABE

I went hard because I knew she could take it. She's another black belt. She's an assistant instructor. I get that. We're supposed to challenge each other.

ERIKA

The intent was completely different than regular sparring-

GABE

Who are you to say what my intent was? You're not me! You don't even know me. You can act like you do, but you don't. All I was trying to do is say what my point of view is. And all I was saying is that in a real fight-

ERIKA

Here we go.

GABE

-you don't have time to think about strategy in the same way that you do when we're sparring. You're trying to stay alive. That's all I was trying to say. And training makes you better at being able to respond to that if the time comes. I don't have it out for you. If anything-

SIFU ADAM

Okay, let's just calm down here-

GABE

If anything you're the one that has it out for me.

ERIKA

What? That's ridiculous.

GABE

Is it?

MAC

Well, it seemed like you had a lot to prove during our practice session just now.

GABE

What was that?

SIFU ADAM

Calm down, everyone. Look how much commotion this is creating.

MASTER LYNN

We used to just settle this by letting them spar it out.

GABE

Fine by me.

SIFU ADAM

We are not doing that.

ERIKA

You think I'm afraid of you? I am not afraid of you. I just want to tell it like it is. If you want to fight let's fight.

SIFU ADAM

No one's fighting anyone.

MASTER LYNN

Well, at least we'd be able to stop this discussion and they could get out whatever competitiveness they feel towards one another.

ERIKA

I don't feel like I have anything to prove to him. I just don't like it when people get in my face and try to do this thing where they have to be stronger or a better fighter or whatever.

GABE

Who says that's what I'm trying to do to you? Huh?

MAC

Well, if that were the case then why do you feel the need to argue over every hand position or how it should be used?

GABE

You know, when you get to a certain level you should be able to take a punch and you shouldn't be so fragile.

ERIKA

I am not fragile.

GABE

I mean, I don't know, maybe it was easier for you with folks going light on you because you're a girl or whatever. Guess I should have been punching like, "oh, here you go".

He lightly taps ERIKA. As he touches her, she slaps his hand away.

ERIKA

Don't touch me.

GABE laughs.

GABE

(singsong)

Sor-ry.

MASTER LYNN

I don't have time for this. I have a seminar to run. Gabe, you're coming with me. Let's get going.

(to ERIKA)

You're not coming. I don't care if you stay here or what you do, but I am not teaching you.

SIFU ADAM

Master Lynn, you need to resolve this.

MASTER LYNN

This is resolved. Come on.

ERIKA

Why because I don't want to fight your student?

SIFU ADAM

Erika.

MASTER LYNN

I don't know who you think your enemy is here.

ERIKA

I don't think anyone is my enemy. You want me to take a hit, is that what will make okay to hit back? When am I allowed to hit back?

She squares up with GABE and then pushes him hard. He shakes his head.

SIFU ADAM

Erika, stop.

GABE

I'm not fighting you.

ERIKA

Why not? All the sudden you want to back down. You want to teach me a lesson, go ahead. Hit me.

She pushes GABE.

Go on, hit me.

She pushes him again.

Now you're not going to fight now that you're in front of your master? Now you're the bigger person? Go on. This is what you wanted to do, so do it.

She pushes him again. He grabs her wrists.

GABE

You want to fight, we can fight.

ERIKA

Good.

SIFU ADAM tries to separate them.

No! I'm doing this.

SIFU ADAM backs away.

MASTER LYNN

You're making a big mistake.

ERIKA and GABE begin to spar.

GABE

See, this is what I'm talking about. It's different now, isn't it?

ERIKA strikes GABE. GABE puts her in a hold and laughs. She repeatedly strikes his head. He becomes angry and pushes her off of him. She falls to the ground.

SIFU ADAM

Okay, that's enough!

SIFU ADAM tries to get in between them, but ERIKA gets around him and immediately strikes GABE again. GABE leaps to her and strangles ERIKA. She gasps. MAC and SIFU ADAM try to pry him off.

SIFU ADAM

Gabe! Get off!

MAC

Stop! Now!

ERIKA, in her struggle, thrusts her palm onto GABE's throat. He keels over, letting go of her, gagging for air, then passes out.

ERIKA scrambles away.

SIFU ADAM

Erika?

MASTER LYNN

What is happening here?

MAC and SIFU ADAM try to help GABE.

MAC

He can't breathe!

MASTER LYNN turns to ERIKA.

MASTER LYNN

What did you do?

ERIKA

I don't know.

END OF PLAY.