

Distribution Agreement

In presenting this thesis as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for a degree from Emory University, I hereby grant to Emory University and its agents the non-exclusive license to archive, make accessible, and display my thesis in whole or in part in all forms of media, now or hereafter now, including display on the World Wide Web. I understand that I may select some access restrictions as part of the online submission of this thesis. I retain all ownership rights to the copyright of the thesis. I also retain the right to use in future works (such as articles or books) all or part of this thesis.

David Sporn

4/17/12

McTavish
A Supplement
by

David Sporn

Dr. Bill Brown
Adviser

Department of Film Studies

Dr. Bill Brown
Adviser

Dr. Rong Cai
Committee Member

Dr. Julia Bullock
Committee Member

2012

McTavish
A Supplement

By

David Benjamin Sporn

Dr. Bill Brown

Adviser

An abstract of
a thesis submitted to the Faculty of Emory College of Arts and Sciences
of Emory University in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of the degree of
Bachelor of Arts with Honors

Department of Film Studies

2012

Abstract

McTavish

By David Benjamin Sporn

In a world defined by a Zen Koan, an impulsive Southern wanna-be country singer, her professorial grandfather; a martial artist and his sifu; a young Jewish writer contemplating life as a Zen Buddhist acolyte, the sharp bright-eyed boy he used to be; and an oddly loquacious mannequin named “McTavish,” search for love and fulfillment.

My mother tells me that when I was really young I had not interest in film or television. I wouldn't sit down and watch like other kids. This I don't remember. The first exposure to film that I remember is watching an old VHS tape of a mediocre superhorse cartoon called “Solar Man” over and over. My first memory of going to the movies was going to see *Beauty and the Beast*. A couple of years passed and all I wanted to do was watch movies. I would spend hours walking the aisles of our local Blockbuster. I particularly liked eighties action movies, I would devour anything with Schwarzenegger or Stallone. James Cameron, Mario Kassar, and John McTiernan were like gods to me; so were any of those names that flashed across the screen before the explosions commenced.

McTavish
A Supplement

By

David Benjamin Sporn

Dr. Bill Brown
Adviser

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Emory College of Arts and Sciences
of Emory University in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of the degree of
Bachelor of Arts with Honors

Department of Film Studies

2012

Acknowledgements

I would first like to thank Professor Bill Brown for agreeing to be my advisor for this film. After showing him the dailies of the Chinatown sequence, the first footage shot for the film, he explained to me that a director never likes his dailies as much as the first time he views them, nor hates them as much as the second time. This wisdom colored my perspective throughout the rest of the production. Secondly, Dr. Brown pushed me to find an experienced cinematographer worth his salt. If I had not followed this advice, my film would have fallen into an abyss long ago. I must also thank Grandmaster Tak Wah Eng, a Kung-Fu master who resides in New York's Chinatown, and one of the first people other than my parents and my cats to see the script. Master Tak is a guiding light, equipped with a deep humanity that few, if any of us, will ever possess. He allowed me to invade his kwoon, with a class in progress, no less, so I could have a truly authentic location, that even Hollywood set dressing would be unable to match. I would also like to thank Master Tak's student, New York City Transit Police officer Warren Man, for agreeing to appear before the camera. In the business of locations, I would like to thank Robert Schultz for the use of the Burlington Road Building Stage, Bryan Malone for generously opening the Star Bar for us, and Whit Marschalk for allowing a film crew to invade the various and sundry parts of his house and garden. I must also thank Professor Matthew Bernstein for accepting my thesis proposal, and putting up with me for my on again / off again time at Emory. Thanks to my skilled crew: Chris Mills (a lifesaver), Lucas Clyde, and David Weissman, as well as Ryan Lakestream, Sean Steffen, Mark Rozeman, Jimmy Mullens, Taylor Montague, Laurie Garner, and Brian Richey. I also want to thank my mother for her help with the storyboards (and against her better judgment driving in Lower Manhattan) and my father for doing it all. I cannot forget Andrei Petrov, Yang Hongsoo, Devin Masterson, and the SB crew for their encouragement and moral support as well as listening to me bluster about story ideas. On the subject of blustering about story ideas, I must also thank Charles Dibe, Stephanie

Blackwood, Cinder Chou, Haley Stahl, Mac Fischer, and Ainsley Bartholomew, with whom I enthusiastically toiled in the production office of *Lola Vs.* I must also thank Gunnar Hovstadius who had the unenviable job of figuring out how to dress a mannequin, as well as Phil DiConstanzo whose skill supplied the mannequin with his distinguished yet fun coif. A film is not complete without music, and therefore, I would like to thank Enrico Arcaro, Phil DiConstanzo, and Marcus Prime for their contributions. Lastly, but most importantly I would like to thank my wonderful cast (Paul Westby, Kelly Spicer, Jess Levis, Chris Peterson, McTavish, Paul Coleman, Tak Wah Eng, and Warren Man) for breathing life into what otherwise would be a jumble of words.

Table of Contents

Introduction - 1

I have to make a movie - 8

Abandoning Ideas - 9

A Cohesive World- 10

Why a Mannequin? - 13

Chinatown, NYC - 14

Principal Photography / Post Production - 15

Conclusion - 17

Appendix - 19

Introduction

My mother tells me that when I was really young I had no interest in film or television. I wouldn't sit down and watch like the other kids. This I don't remember. The first exposure to film that I remember is watching an old VHS tape of a mediocre superhero cartoon called "Solar Man" over and over. My first memory of going to the movies was going to see *Beauty and the Beast*. A couple of years passed and all I wanted to do was watch movies. I would spend hours walking the aisles of our local Blockbuster. I particularly liked eighties action movies, I would devour anything with Schwarzenegger or Stallone. James Cameron, Mario Kassar, John McTiernan were like gods to me; so were any of those names that flashed across the screen before the explosions commenced. It was around this time that I was becoming more and more convinced that I wanted to make movies, although I also wanted to be a Wall Street executive, an astronaut, or a truck driver. I started making short movies recorded to VHS with my best friend Andrei Petrov. Together we did all the behind the scenes work (writing, directing, shooting, set design, makeup design, special effects) and played every role. While they were all violent spy films that borrowed heavily from *The Terminator* (1984) and *Demolition Man* (1993), as well a morass of first person shooters, they taught the basics of framing and practical lighting, as well the value of breaking the entrenched rules of cinema. At ten years old, we, like the *Nouvelle Vague* before us, simply had no idea.

By the time I was twelve I had seen many of the great works of cinema, by the usual suspects of great directors: Bergman, Hitchcock, Fellini, Hawks, Houston.

However, it was around this time that I saw two movies rented from the local library, one independent and one foreign, that changed my view of what cinema could both constitute and achieve. The first was *Pushing Hands* (1992). *Pushing Hands* is Ang Lee's first feature, first collaboration with James Schamus, and first film since his thesis film over six years earlier. *Pushing Hands* is a humanistic family drama that gently examines the innate culture clash between the old and the young within a biracial family. The film deals with the fallout of an old Taiwanese Tai Chi master coming to White Plains to live with his son and his son's Caucasian wife. While the film is low budget¹ and possesses a few mild technical snafus, the film is incredibly well observed, and to my twelve year old eyes placed character and universal familial issues over plotting in a way that I heretofore had never seen. Cinema, for the first time (as far as I had known) had presented life refreshingly as no more than itself. The film also introduces Lee's use of open space within restricted areas (a kitchen, a living room) that I believe defines his style, and pulls me forward in wanting to create my own variation, which nonetheless could not be captured in McTavish, given the narrative material.

Tampopo (1985) was the other film that challenged what I believed cinema should be able to express. I had never before seen self-reflexive cinema, or much of Japanese cinema besides a smattering of Kurosawa films or Sonny Chiba movies. The film begins in a crowded movie theater. A Yakuza gangster and his girlfriend are searching for a seat. The gangster notices the audience and begins a direct address, complaining about noisy patrons. The film he is watching becomes the film

¹ Internet Movie Database estimates a \$400,000 budget.

² Andrew O'Hehir. "A Nightmare on Elm Street": Wake me when it's over.

we are watching. The gangster continues to reappear throughout the course of *Tampopo* in scenes (sexual tension with an oyster, reciting a recipe as he lays dying) that have tenuous connections to the film's themes. Juzo Itami is breaking all the rules. Better yet, he gets away with it.

These two films in particular shaped my attitude on cinema but did little to shift my enjoyment away from action and horror films. I have always been squarely in the shadowy corner that Manny Farber once referred to as "termite art." A Fuller or a McTiernan may speak more directly to our base instincts and our collective shared history than De Sica. I have studied martial arts since I was five years old, ever since I followed a classmate to a local Kenpo dojo. Thus, from an early age I was inundated with East Asian philosophy. The fusion of Japanese and Chinese culture that I learned at the dojo coupled with bedtime stories from *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones* (1919), and a constant stream of Chinese and Italian businessmen parading through my house forced me to become at least psychologically multicultural. We all are in varying degrees. Stories across the world all return to the same source material again and again. This is why I have never viewed "McTavish" as a Japanese story, or a story about being Jewish in the suburbs. It is simply, much like *Pushing Hands*, a human story. Being a pre-teen thoroughly ensconced in the world of martial arts, I began to want to collect martial arts related *tchotchkes*, and found myself regularly patronizing a martial arts shop called Superior on Main Street in Norwalk, Connecticut. I distinctly remember the right wall near the register shelving about thirty Hong Kong action films imported from HK, usually by Tai Seng. The man who owned the store recommended three films, all by John Woo: *A Better*

Tomorrow (1986), *The Killer* (1989), and *Hard Boiled* (1992). The visual dynamics of these films were stunning. The Hollywood action machine had never produced anything even remotely similar. The slow-motion gun battles produced a heightened reality that heightened perception within the viewer. The core of all three of these films were the bonds of brotherhood, friendship, and family. It was as if the Tai Chi master of *Pushing Hands* now had two guns and a toothpick. Watching these movies to the point of wearing out the discs, I had an epiphany; film, whether we are watching Colonel John Matrix impale his former partner with a pipe or Imasu freezing in a doorway to blurt out an English “I love you,” works best when the action is dependent on the relationship of characters in a closed unit.

For high school, I attended a tennis academy north of Tampa, Florida. I stopped thinking about becoming a filmmaker. I still collected Criterion DVD’s and tried to watch as many movies as possible, but my passion for filmmaking only manifested itself by shooting short videos of golf carts doing donuts on the soccer field. However, I started to become far more interested in horror, the genre that I feel best tackles social issues. “McTavish” may be a comedy but it does have horror elements. I was now sixteen or seventeen, and was able to watch all the movies that I used to stare at on the horror shelf at Blockbuster. Craven, Cronenberg, and Carpenter examined familial and small unit relationships through a very different lens. These directors viewed a Lynchian darkness just underneath the innocent veneer of the Spielbergian suburbs. These filmmakers chronicled a time that as Andrew O’Hehir notes, some “mighty weird shit”² appeared over and over on the

² Andrew O’Hehir. “A Nightmare on Elm Street”: Wake me when it’s over.

nightly news. These films mirrored reality. It seemed that every night another kid disappeared from behind the white picket fence of their seemingly innocent suburban utopia. I was utterly fascinated. Nonetheless, it never spurred me to trade my racquet for a pen. I saw myself on the fast track – a couple years in college, and then I would be an investment banker. Sure, maybe I'd pop into Cinema One and Two once in a while, but film wasn't what I wanted to with my life. And that's why I followed my friend Yoji Masouka to Emory. I wanted to wear a suit, and sit in front of a monitor, and cold call companies about stocks, and be like Charlie Sheen in *Wall Street*. And that's why I took Introduction to Film with Nina Martin as my Freshman Seminar.

I can't say that the Freshman Seminar did much to reignite my passion for film. At the time I was mostly taking math and economics courses. I badly wanted to matriculate to the Business school. Professor Martin did, however, introduce me to the films of Dario Argento. After watching the opening of *Suspiria* (1977) in class, I became fascinated with the use of colored light in the film's first seven minutes. While this type of lighting is, of course, not confined to Argento films, this particular sequence has stayed in my head since the first time I watched it. My attraction to this lighting should be especially evident in the second half of the apartment sequence in "McTavish". Nonetheless, the apartment's lighting design was also deeply influenced by Christopher Doyle's work in *Fallen Angels* (1995), Cruise and Kidman's bedroom in Stanley Kubrick's *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999), and Kim Ji-Woon's lighting of domesticated living spaces in *A Bittersweet Life* (2005). Anytime I was

not studying or playing tennis or doing anything else that college freshman do, I was watching movies with friends. At the beginning of my second semester at Emory, the Kiyoshi Kurosawa horror film *Cure* (1997) was playing at White Hall. I have rarely been so frightened by a film. Kurosawa's use of static framing and ultra-minimalist sound design was mesmerizing. Walking back to Dobbs Hall, in the twenty-five degree night, still shaking from that film, scanning the shadows for killers, every noise around me amplified, I realized that maybe I still wanted to make movies.

I spent the following summer at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts. I enrolled in two classes: 'Sight and Sound' and 'Color Sync.' These classes are the school's first two major production classes. In Sight and Sound, a student directs five extremely short black and white 16mm reversal films with numerous restrictions. In Color Sync, which is the more advanced course, students direct one seven to ten minute synced sound color super 16mm film. Before taking Sight and Sound, I had little actual production experience. We edited our five films on Steenbeck flatbed editors. My first short, a silent travelogue of Chinatown, became stuck in the projector during its first screening because I didn't properly flatten the tape used to hold the separate cuts of filmstock together. My next four films for the class were a series about a tennis player who has of nightmarish encounters with the past after he choosing the game over his girlfriend. The character is so single-mindedly obsessed with his profession, that the sport eventually destroys him. The theme of obsession also pervades my Color Sync film, "Mummuza." "Mummuza" is the story of a man in his mid-fifties, whose life has never moved forward since being rejected by a

popular girl in high school. In the short, he relives his encounter with her in the titular rowboat. Similar themes of obsession and nostalgia are evident in “McTavish.” Jacob, the protagonist, is obsessed with a Zen koan that he heard as a child in the form of a bedtime story. He has trouble moving forward with his life, because he is consumed by finding meaning in the riddle. “McTavish” is not just Jacob’s search for meaning, but my own. It is my hope that by exploring the koan, its meaning might become evident. And who’s to say, maybe the meaning has been right there before us the whole time.

I Have to Make a Movie

Last April, I was sitting in Dr. Bernstein’s office discussing an honors thesis. At the time I really wanted to expand a piece that I had written for his film criticism class about the changing nature of the suburbs in the modern slasher film. I also wanted to write about Wong Kar Wai, one of my favorite directors, but Professor Bernstein reminded me that there had already been a great deal written on that particular director. My last idea was an auteur study of Paul Verhoeven, the terrific but sometimes underappreciated Dutch director who redefined the American action film in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In the end, I decided my first choice was the best, and commenced researching suburban setting of slasher films. A couple of days later, I was pacing around the ground floor of the Rich building and saw a newspaper clipping about Jessica Hershatter’s honors film, “Undone.” Last year, Jessica was the first Emory student to ever direct a film as an honors thesis. As a film major, it seemed that directing a film would be a natural capstone to my undergraduate education. It would give me a chance to apply all the information

that I have learned as a Film/English major. Actually, as I have learned during the course of this production, making a film is a chance to apply almost every skill or tidbit of information I have gleaned from my time at Emory. The only question now was what kind film to make. Originally, I wanted to shoot a Hong Kong style gangster short in the vein of *A Better Tomorrow*, but I quickly realized that style of filmmaking was not feasible on a student budget. I had to direct a small intimate character based film that harkened back to the closed unit character relationships that I have always loved.

Abandoning Ideas

I find the suburbs utterly fascinating. I'm from the suburbs, and its where I am most comfortable. After abandoning the Hong Kong gangster film idea, I decided that I wanted to write a suburban drama in the style of Ang Lee's *The Ice Storm* or Todd Field's *Little Children*. I wanted to focus on a playground, and the people who pass through it. The film would observe the how children relate to each other, to their parents and other adults. I tried to avoid the melodrama of the films that inspired me. No children were going to die or even be injured, no affairs would commence, there would be no pedophiles. I didn't want to depict the suburbs as a place of repression and unhappiness. In practice, however, this means that nothing ever really happens, which is a major problem for a narrative film. I worked on the script for two months and was never able to shape it into a form that had a cohesive narrative. I was never able to create a compelling reason for someone to watch the movie. In the end, I had to abandon it.

The problem with my idea was that the story had no core. It was not about anything. Around this time, I was working with Master Tak Wah Eng on developing a television program of moral tales based on Chinese philosophy. This prompted me to reread a collection of Mumon's koans. Like Jacob, I have always been fascinated with the cat story. My father used to read it to me when I was in elementary school.

Nansen Cuts the Cat in Two

Nansen saw the monks of the eastern halls and western halls

Fighting over a cat.

He seized the cat and told the monks:

“If any of you say a good word, you can save the cat.”

No one answered.

So Nansen boldly cut the cat in two pieces.

That evening Joshu returned and Nansen told him about this.

Joshu took off his sandals, and placing them on his head, walked out.

Nansen said:

“If you had been there, you could have saved the cat.” [sic]³

I started to think that maybe I could use film as a tool to explore the koan. This is how “McTavish” came about. For the next month or so, I toyed with the idea, but was unable to get a narrative to coalesce around the Koan. I thought about applying the koan to my suburban playground story, but I soon realized that was a dead end.

³ Paul Reps and Nyogen Senzaki. Zen Flesh Zen Bones pg 128-129

A Cohesive World

Last summer, I was working as an intern for the production coordinator of a feature shooting in Manhattan. In mid-June, I was sitting at my desk, tabulating purchase orders when the idea for “McTavish” hit me. I quickly scribbled it down: In a world defined by a Zen Koan, an impulsive southern wanna-be country singer, her professorial grandfather; a martial artist and his sifu; a young Jewish writer contemplating life as a Zen Buddhist acolyte, the sharp bright-eyed boy he used to be; and an oddly loquacious mannequin named “McTavish”, search for love and fulfillment. These are quite a few story threads for a short film, so my next job was to try to create a cohesive framework.

The short film is traditionally similar in structure to a short story. Short films are contained, they have one narrative line and usually take place within a closed space. My idea for “McTavish” read more like a condensed feature, with multiple major characters and narrative lines. However, as the idea developed, it began to focus on Jacob’s search, with the other lines (the Kung-Fu master, the mannequin) commenting on the protagonist and the film itself. The story has its own diegetic space in which all the characters, the mannequin included, are searching and even reaching out for a specific meaning in their lives, whether they are familiar with the central koan or not. A story must be structured in the way that will best serve the story’s core and its central themes. In this pursuit, the writer has little choice. “McTavish” may focus on Jacob’s search for meaning and the possibility of love, but it is more generally an exploration of the koan. In many ways there are an infinite number of correct answers and only one wrong answer, all found within the

purview of an ordinary day. At the end of the koan, the great Zen master Mumon comments⁴:

Why did Joshu put his sandals on his head?

If anyone answers this question,

He will understand exactly how Nansen enforced the edict.

If not, he should watch his own head.

By the end of the film Jacob may know how Nansen enforced the edict. My hope is the same can be said about the viewer. The various narrative lines of the story are conscious attempts to elucidate the answer to Mumon's question. I also wanted to deconstruct the short film. The deconstruction is itself a metaphor for the koan. A late scene in the film, has the characters (not always in character) gathered around a table, deconstructing everything that has come before, realizing that their third act revelations may not be especially insightful or even revelations at all. This particular story had to be written in three acts, even though most shorts contain only a single act. The writer's job is to follow the characters to their eventual goals. Twisting the character's arcs to maintain a traditional narrative is highly unfair. Each story presents its own set of challenges, and its thematic core dictates the type of narrative that is to be placed upon it. In a 1957 interview in the Paris review, Truman Capote said:

"Since each story presents its own technical problems, obviously one can't generalize about them on a two-times-two-equals-four basis. Finding the right form for your story is simply to realize the most *natural* way of telling the story. The test

⁴ Paul Reys and Nyogen Senzaki. Zen Flesh Zen Bones pg 129

of whether or not a writer has divined the natural shape of his story is just this: after reading it, can you imagine it differently, or does it silence your imagination and seem to you absolute and final? As an orange is final. As an orange is something nature has made just right.”⁵

Writing “McTavish” I was forced to follow the path dictated by the koan. It would not be my place to attempt to restrict the breadth of the koan. Who am I to dictate a single answer to Mumon’s question?

Why a Mannequin?

The office I worked in last summer was in New York City’s Garment District. My particular block had six separate mannequin stores that supplied department stores. Since a major part of my job consisted of acting as a gofer, I would pass the mannequins several times a day. That is probably why when I first wrote down the logline, I included a mannequin. I wanted a character that could be outside the narrative, unaffected by human aspirations. An omniscient character that could tell the story without being directly involved. This was not to be the case. The mannequin, named McTavish, rarely interacts with any of the characters but yet seems to know all their backgrounds. However, he is not entirely unbiased. He has opinions, which change over the course of the film. In the end he may even shift the narrative direction. McTavish’s final recantation of the Ni NI Roku incident at the end of the film, may be colored by scenes he has witnessed between Jacob and Mary-Lou, but then again, who am I to judge?

⁵ Pati Hill “Paris Review”. Truman Capote, *The Art of Fiction* No. 17

After I had already started writing the script, I went to the Japan Cuts section of the New York Asian film festival to see a film called *Milcorze: A Love Story*. The film was shocking. It told three thematically related stories that were all set in the same diegetic world. The director's incredible grasp of a whole range of cinematic tools prompted me to do a little research. His name was Yoshimasa Ishibashi and this film was his first feature. Delving deeper, I found out that he was a well-known video artist whose work has been exhibited in museums around the world. Yet, in certain circles, he is best known for a late night television series that he wrote and directed called *Vermillion Pleasure Nights*. The show had a recurring segment featuring a family of mannequins. While his mannequins differ from "McTavish," they are fully posable; the segments demonstrate the comedic and even dramatic possibilities of a static frame with immobile characters.

Chinatown, NYC

"McTavish" is comprised of four separate yet interlocking narratives. The main narrative follows Jacob and details his relationship with Mary Lou. This narrative line is peppered with appearances and asides by the Mannequin, which I hope illuminates the main narrative. Early in the film, there is a five-minute flashback to Jacob's childhood which consists entirely of drawings. The fourth narrative line follows a Chinese martial arts master and his student. The student entirely corrupts the koan in a way that I hope will reveal a deal of truth. The Chinatown sequence was shot first. It was shot during a single ten hour day at Grand Master Tak Wah Eng's studio on the Bowery. A friend of mine, who is currently a student at the School of Visual Arts, was the cinematographer. The rest

of the crew were all Chinese students of Master Tak. The Chinatown scenes were filmed with a different camera than the rest of the movie. The cinematographer shot these scenes with my Cannon XH-A1. We arrived at the studio in the middle of a class, which Master Tak graciously allowed us to film. All the students in the class appear in the final film. Master Tak portrays the martial arts master and his student Warren Man, a New York City Transit Police Officer, portrays the student. Much like the mannequin scenes, the Chinatown scenes serve to comment on the koan, and inform the main narrative. It was an unusual opportunity to film within an authentic location.

Principal Photography / Post Production

I filmed the Chinatown scenes over Christmas break. Arriving back in Atlanta, I now had to get a crew together, and cast actors for what would be the majority of the film. I was involved in a serious car accident during the fall semester, which resulted in pushing pre-production forward at least two months. It was mid-January- I had no crew, no cast (save for a mannequin), no locations, and a set budget of \$5,000 (which always balloons over the course of production.) My first priority was to find a cast. Unless a movie is extremely experimental, it tends to be hard to make without actors. I broadcast an email to all theater majors, as well as put up flyers in both the theater and film departments. I received two responses. Luckily the responses were both from extremely motivated highly talented young actresses. I cast these two actresses, Kelly Spicer and Jessica Levis, as Mary Lou and Charlie respectively. Both are tremendous in the film. For Jacob, the protagonist, I always wanted to cast against type, the character is described as New York Jewish in

the script. Even back when I was writing the script, I envisioned my friend and fellow film major, Paul Westby, in the role. Paul is a member of the Emory acappella group Aural Pleasure, and possesses a deeply resonant voice. Last year, I was impressed with his intensity and vocal ability in a Theater Emory production of *Rent*. Jessica is also a member of Aural Pleasure, and the two have an easy rapport that enhances their scenes as brother and sister. These three actors are the core of the film.

Professor Brown suggested that I hire a professional cinematographer, after he was disappointed with the original dailies from Chinatown. I reached out to four cinematographers that he recommended. One cinematographer that I met with, Ed Myers, recommended his colleague Chris Mills. Chris had been attracted to the script when Ed explained it to him. Once Chris was on board the production rapidly moved forward. Now that the actors were cast, I hired Lucas Clyde, an extremely talented sound mixer, and David Weismman, a recent Emory alum as gaffer. These three are the core of my crew. A number of Emory film students have worked on various days in assistant positions. The first day of shooting lasted over fourteen hours, and included shots outside of Chris' colleague's Whit Marschalk's house (where we later shot the croquet game) and the interior of my apartment. Later locations included the black box stage at the Burlington Road Building, and the Star Bar, in Little Five Points.

Principal photography was long but smooth. We shot on and off from February 27th to April 14th. All the lulls in shooting were due the complexity of the actors' schedules. Happily, there was absolutely no on-set strife. Nor, were there

any major technical problems. I edited film in Final Cut Pro, and my sound mixer, Lucas Clyde, aided me with sound design. The original music in the film was composed by Enrico Arcano, a student of Master Tak. His composition, originally intended for the Grandmaster, perfectly captures the spirit of the film. The rock songs are by our family friend, Phil DiConstanzo. The additional compositions are by Marcus Prime, a Swedish house producer with whom I grew up in Connecticut. As stressful as it has been, the production and postproduction of this film has really been one of the great joys of my life. I will always be glad to have had the opportunity to work side by side such an array of talented co-workers.

Conclusion

I wanted to direct a movie as way to apply everything I've learned at my time at Emory. From Lacanian psychiatry to mathematics to the writing of Yukio Mishima, these lessons were at some point necessary in the course of this project. Some of these you will see referenced directly on screen, others were absolutely necessary to build the movie behind the scenes. I wanted to do something different, absorb all the lessons I've learned and create something that can possibly be called 'new.' One of my main goals was to elucidate a koan that has always fascinated me. I hope I have to a degree succeeded, or at the very least drummed up some interest in what I consider one of the great stories. My other goal was to deconstruct the short film. I wanted to mix the pieces around and see what could be created. However, in the visual medium these goals will always be less important than entertainment. Above all, I hope that this film is entertaining. If a film fails in this single goal, all other have been rendered moot, because the filmmaker has lost

his/her audience. This has been a special project for me because it deals with themes that have fascinated me since childhood. More universally it deals with people's inability to act and move forward. In the end, whether we place our sandals on our head, cut Nansen down, or do jumping jacks; we are all happier when we act, move forward with our lives, and maybe find love. I call McTavish a Zen love story, but I hope that it resonates as a human story.

Work Cited

Hill, Pati. "Truman Capote, The Art of Fiction." *The Paris Review*. Spring-Summer 1957: Online.

O'Hehir, Andrew. "A Nightmare on Elm Street: Wake me when it's over." *Salon*. 30 April, 2010. Web.

Rep, Paul., and Nyogen Senzaki, eds. *Zen Flesh Zen Bones*. Singapore: Tuttle Books, 1957. Print.

McTavish
by
David Sporn

With Eternal Dedication and Respect for Mumon and Yukio Mishima

October 5, 2011

David Sporn
41 Island Way
Westport, CT 06880
203.856.9572
WGA # 1524446

TITLE CARD: NI-NIROKU

FADE IN:

1

INT. BLACK BOX STAGE

1

SNOW FALLING

MCTAVISH (V.O.)
(in Mifune-esque JAPANESE,
with ENGLISH SUBTITLES)
On February 26, 1936,
(beat)
It was snowing in Tokyo...

THE SNOW IS LIT RED.

MCTAVISH (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Ni-niroku. That was the day of the
incident. A group of young
officers staged a coup d'etat
against the bourgeois interests
controlling the Emperor!

AN EXTREME CLOSE-UP OF MCTAVISH. A MANNEQUIN.

MCTAVISH (CONT'D)
(screaming)
They screamed:
"Revere the Emperor-Expel the
Evils!"
"Showa-ishin!"

PULL BACK. McTavish is sitting on a leather sofa. Projected
on the wall next to him are images of a small raked Japanese
garden and koi pond. A shag carpet is at McTavish's feet.

MCTAVISH (CONT'D)
To the officers' surprise, Showa
crushed the rebellion with his
imperial soldiers; not even
allowing the officers to save face
by performing seppuku. Or hara-
kiri, the more vulgar term with
which you Americans may be
comfortable.

McTavish clears his throat.

MCTAVISH (CONT'D)
 (switches to un-accented
 American English)
 Why am I telling you this?
 (agonized)
 Is there solace here?

CUT TO:

TITLE CARD: A BEDTIME STORY

2 INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE NIGHT 2

The camera follows a woman in her mid-thirties up carpeted stairs. She opens a white door.

FADE TO:

3 INT. BEDROOM NIGHT 3

Cluttered boy's room. Posters for Star Wars, Doom, Mario, Terminator. Shelves with books, Transformers, Star Wars action figures. A toy chest overflowing with Matchbox and Hot Wheels, laser guns, sports supplies. A Lego base has been constructed at the foot of the bed. A little girl, CHARLIE, seven, is sitting up in the bed, on top of the covers. Her brother, JACOB, eleven, still wearing his gi and greenbelt from karate class earlier that day, is on a beanbag chair playing N64.

The SOCCER MOM enters the room.

SOCCER MOM
 Jacob, Charlie. Time for Bed.

Charlie looks up at her but doesn't speak. Jacob ignores her, totally intent on Star Fox.

SOCCER MOM (CONT'D)
 Hey! I said time for bed, you two.

Charlie doesn't move. Jacob grudgingly looks up at his mother.

JACOB
 Just let me finish this level.
 There are no mid-level saves.

SOCCER MOM
 Too bad.

CHARLIE

Come on, tell us a story.

Jacob keeps playing. He looks back up at his mother, crashes the starship, tosses his controller a couple of feet onto the carpet, and retreats to the edge of the bed. The soccer mom walks over and turns off the T.V.

SOCCER MOM

Ok, who's turn is it to pick a story?

CHARLIE AND JACOB

(in unison)

Mine!

Charlie tries to push Jacob off the bed.

JACOB

Hey it's my bed, you little creep.

SOCCER MOM

Come on, stop that. You want a story or do you want to go straight to bed?

CHARLIE

More Kant!

Jacob makes a sour face.

JACOB

No more ontology!

SOCCER MOM

Ok. I'll pick.

CHARLIE

I want Paddington.

SOCCER MOM

Ok, how 'bout 'Paddington Takes a Bath?'

CHARLIE

Please!

JACOB

No, we just heard that one.

CHARLIE

Please, Please, Please!

Jacob reaches off the bed, and retrieves *The Gateless Gate*, a small book of Zen koans he seems to have been hiding under the mattress. He hands it to his mom.

SOCCKER MOM

Where did you find that?

JACOB

It was in the closet in the study.
Read us one.

SOCCKER MOM

(sly)

Hai.

She skims the table of contents.

SOCCKER MOM (CONT'D)

There's a famous one I used to read
back in college about a cat.

Charlie perks up.

CHARLIE

A cat?

SOCCKER MOM

Well, there's a cat in the story.

She sits down on a chair next to the bed.

SOCCKER MOM (CONT'D)

Ok, here goes.

She begins to read.

SOCCKER MOM (CONT'D)

(reading)

Once upon a time, *Nansen* (a great Zen master) *saw the monks* (*his students*) *fighting over a cat*. He *seized the cat and told the Monks:* "*If any of you say a good word, you can save the cat.*"

CHARLIE

(worried)

What's a good word?

The soccer mom smiles warmly.

SOCCKER MOM

He means something smart.

She begins reading again.

SOCCER MOM (CONT'D)
*No one answered. So Nansen boldly
 cut the cat into two pieces.*

CHARLIE
 (shocked)
 In pieces?

Jacob feigns cutting a cat in half.

JACOB
 Cool.

SOCCER MOM
 Actually, this is just
 illustrative, there was never a
 real cat.

CHARLIE
 So a cat wasn't really hurt?

SOCCER MOM
 No, of course not.

She goes back to the book, slightly unsure about the fate of the cat.

SOCCER MOM (CONT'D)
*That evening Joshu (another
 student) returned and Nansen told
 him about this. Joshu removed his
 sandals and, placing them on his
 head, walked out. Nansen said: "If
 only you had been there, you could
 have saved the cat."*

She closes the book.

JACOB
 Why did Joshu put his sandals on
 his head?

SOCCER MOM
 I'll leave that for you two to
 figure out.
 (beat)
 Come on, Charlie, bed time. Love
 you both.

CHARLIE

If I was Joshu, I would have taken
the sword and cut Nansen in half.

JACOB

So would I.

CUT TO:

TITLE CARD: MISHIMA'S OLE' COUNTRY ROADHOUSE

4 INT. MISHIMA'S OLE' COUNTRY ROADHOUSE FIFTEEN YEARS AFTER 4

An odd fusion of a neo-Japanese sake parlor and a honkey-tonk. The wall has projections of Roppongi and Kyoto instead of windows. The bar is stocked with an amalgamation of southern bourbons, Japanese scotch, PBR, Japanese beers, Shochu, and Sake. Directly over the bar a confederate flag hangs next to a Japanese flag. Over that is a small photograph of Frank Sinatra. One row up are three Andy Warhol portraits of Yukio Mishima. Even further up, by the ceiling, hangs a lone picture of Hank Williams. The bar is lit with neon. A girl is SINGING "Hey, Good Lookin'" and playing an acoustic guitar by the side of the bar, bathed in the light of Roppongi.

Jacob enters, spots an empty seat at a high-top table. Across from him sits a well-dressed older man - PROFESSOR DEREK FEATHERLOO. The professor motions Jacob to sit.

JACOB

How do?

Professor Featherloo gets up from his chair and forces Jacob into an extremely involved Gangsta handshake. They sit back down at the high-top.

The bartender calls from the bar.

SHELDON THE BARMAN

(gruff)

What will you have?

JACOB

(to the bartender)

Sweet potato shochu, please.

Professor Featherloo downs the rest of his nearly empty beer.

PROFESSOR FEATHERLOO
 (to the bartender)
 Another.

Professor Featherloo spins around in his chair and examines the room.

PROFESSOR FEATHERLOO (CONT'D)
 I can get any waitress in this
 joint like that.

He snaps his fingers.

The bartender looks up. Jacob motions at the bartender, by way of apology.

Professor Featherloo points to a tan athletic WAITRESS with an amazing body taking an order in the corner.

PROFESSOR FEATHERLOO (CONT'D)
 (obsessed)
 I can get that one with the ass,
 over there, for you.

JACOB
 (at a loss)
 Damn, dude!
 (slight beat)
 I bet you could. Name's Jacob, by
 the way.

PROFESSOR FEATHERLOO
 I am Professor Derek Featherloo,
 formerly of Columbia University,
 where I taught sociology. My
 current research involves the
 sexual politics within the Yakuza
 culture.

JACOB
 OKAAAY.
 (beat)
 Do you...

PROFESSOR FEATHERLOO
 I've been coming to Mishima's for
 twenty-seven years now. What
 brings you here?

JACOB
 I like shochu.

PROFESSOR FEATHERLOO
 By the by, that's my granddaughter
 (he motions to the singer)
 Miss Mary Lou Featherloo. I
 could'a gotten that girl straight
 into Columbia...

Professor Featherloo takes another gulp of beer.

PROFESSOR FEATHERLOO (CONT'D)
 Maybe, she's better off.

Professor Featherloo turns and starts eye-fucking the
 waitress.

PROFESSOR FEATHERLOO (CONT'D)
 (loud, to Jacob)
 What?

The waitress and a couple of the customers turn to look.

JACOB
 I didn't say anything

PROFESSOR FEATHERLOO
 Smart guy.
 (beat)
 Today I imported two trailers worth
 of Chinese novelties.

JACOB
 Chinese novelties?

PROFESSOR FEATHERLOO
 You know, paper fans and shit.
 What they sell to the tourists down
 in Chinatown.

JACOB
 Nice. Real classy.

Professor Featherloo pulls out a cigar and starts chomping on
 it.

PROFESSOR FEATHERLOO
 Its a shame you can't smoke in
 restaurants anymore.

JACOB
 You can't smoke anywhere anymore.

Mary Lou's set ends. Scattered applause. She puts down her guitar and comes over to the table. She's wearing a western dress and talks like Elizabeth Cook.

MARY LOU

Grandpa!

She kisses him on the cheek and grabs an empty chair from an adjacent table.

MARY LOU (CONT'D)

(to her grandfather)

Who's the young man?

(immediately)

Hey handsome, what's your name?

PROFESSOR FEATHERLOO

This is my friend, Jacob.

(to Jacob)

What's your last name, son?

JACOB

Gold.

MARY LOU

So what's that you're drinking Jake Gold?

JACOB

Shochu.

MARY LOU

Show-what?

She cracks up.

PROFESSOR FEATHERLOO

My granddaughter has shown little interest in Japanese culture. I can't for the life of me understand why.

(beat)

You, on the other hand, show the proper aptitude.

Jacob smiles, then tries to hide the smile.

JACOB

I hope to travel over there, I've always dreamt of living at a Zen temple.

Mary Lou starts laughing uncontrollably while she's drinking and spits up her beer.

PROFESSOR FEATHERLOO
Like Mizoguchi of the Golden
Temple?

Jacob opens his mouth to retort.

MARY LOU
(to Jacob)
So honey, you wanna' dance?

She takes him by the hand and they begin to walk towards a space next to the bar. The image of Kyoto is projected on them as they begin to dance.

Jacob leans in and speaks softly to Mary Lou.

JACOB
I once had a dream. It spanned my
entire childhood.

She moves her lips closer to his.

MARY LOU
Jeez, honey. Shut up and dance.

DOLLEY THROUGH MARY LOU AND JACOB TO THE BAR.

McTavish is seated on one of the stools, facing the camera.

MCTAVISH
It's damn difficult to edify young
people these days. Jacob knows as
much about Zen as I do about
curling. Which is to say, fucking
nothing. Between you and me...

THE CAMERA CLOSES IN SLIGHTLY

MCTAVISH (CONT'D)
...he's a freelance copywriter born
and raised in Scarsdale.

McTavish SNORTS.

MCTAVISH (CONT'D)

There he is in the arms of that beautiful girl and all he can think about is being some fucking Zen acolyte. Jesus. There's beauty inches away from his face and do you even think he'll make a pass at her? Fuck no! The kid's a dreamer. But, he doesn't know how it feels, and I'm not even talking about sex, just as Mishima wrote, "that time in our lives when every day was spent on tenterhooks."

PAN BACK TO JACOB AND MARY LOU DANCING

FADE OUT.

TITLE CARD: A REGULAR KASHIWAGI

5 INT. KWON MOTT STREET DAY 5

Austere. Traditional. Wooden floors and cracked plaster walls.

A young Chinese MARTIAL ARTIST (mid-twenties) in a black gi stands at attention, eyes straight.

OTHER MARTIAL ARTISTS PRACTICE IN THE BACKGROUND OUT OF FOCUS

PUSH IN ON THE MARTIAL ARTIST

MARTIAL ARTIST

(very earnest, loud)

My name is Go. I will tell you a tale of great import, to demonstrate discipline and fortitude.

He straightens his posture further, to exaggerated attention.

MARTIAL ARTIST (CONT'D)

Many years ago, during the Muromachi period, in the Temple of the Golden Pavilion...

He gives a side-long glance towards his off-screen sensai.

MARTIAL ARTIST (CONT'D)

...Joshu was sitting with his cat in the great hall. Two acolytes, one of the Eastern hall, the other, the Western hall, come upon Joshu and his cat. They seize the cat. Master Nansen happens by - suprised by the goings-on. Suddenly, Joshu grabs a sword and advances towards the master. Nansen removes his sandals, kowtows, and begs for his life. The monks release the cat, which jumps on Master Nansen's back and immediately falls asleep.

The young martial artist takes a military step back and crosses his hands in front of him, fists clenched.

MARTIAL ARTIST (CONT'D)

(in a deep voice, loud)

UUTZ

He gives another sidelong glance to his sensei, then once again looks forward.

His sensei, furious, knocks him out with a single roundhouse kick to the head.

CUT TO:

TITLE CARD: CHARLIE'S TWENTY-TWO AT 21

6

EXT. GLASS SIXTY STORY BUILDING

6

A young man, JONATHAN, stands relaxed, Dressed business formal. He sips on bottle of electrolyte water and checks his Blackberry. Charlie, 22, leaves the building, dressed in a business suit with a tight skirt.

CHARLIE

Jonathan, I hope I didn't keep you waiting.

He looks at his watch.

JONATHAN

You're right on time.

CHARLIE

The WAC acquisition was no sweat. A done deal. We've got it.

JONATHAN
For sure?

CHARLIE
It's Miller Time.

JONATHAN
Charlie. You're amazing.

She smiles.

JONATHAN (CONT'D)
You're gorgeous!

CHARLIE
Gorgeous and amazing.

JONATHAN
You're coming over tonight, right?

CUT TO:

TITLE CARD: OF BAKING CAKES AND KISSING BOYS

8 EXT. PROFESSOR FEATHERLOO'S BACKYARD DAY 8

Sunny Afternoon.

SOUND OF A MALLET HITTING A BALL. THE BALL ROLLS THROUGH A WICKET. SHOT ON THE LEVEL OF THE BALL

PROFESSOR FEATHERLOO (O.C.)
Well played.

The Professor takes his turn and roquets Jacob's ball across the lawn. Play continues.

PROFESSOR FEATHERLOO (CONT'D)
When are you going to wake up, boy?

JACOB
Sir?

PROFESSOR FEATHERLOO
Your ball has been roquetted and the girl's baking a cake.

SMASH CUT TO:

9 INT. PROFESSOR FEATHERLOO'S KITCHEN DAY 9

Traditional southern kitchen. Mary Lou is baking a cake and putting the finishing touches on a plate of cookies.

SMASH BACK:

10 EXT. PROFESSOR FEATHERLOO'S BACKYARD DAY 10

Jacob picks up his mallet, opens his mouth, but can't think of a single thing to say. After a few beats he walks over to his ball and hits it back into play.

FADE TO:

11 INT. PROFESSOR FEATHERLOO'S KITCHEN DAY 11

Mary Lou talks to herself as she bakes.

MARY LOU

(half-singing)

Just like Momma used to make, cream
the butter, butter and cream, cream
the sugar, 'till fluffy and mean.
Then, beat the eggs and add
vanil...la.

She stops, thinks.

MARY LOU (CONT'D)

Almond.

She's emptying out a cabinet looking for almond extract, which she finally finds. Suddenly she brightens up, and grabs some bourbon.

MARY LOU (CONT'D)

A splash in the bowl.

She pours some into the bowl.

MARY LOU (CONT'D)

And a splash in me.

She takes a gulp. Puts down the bottle. Opens a window and sticks her head out.

MARY LOU (CONT'D)

Be havin' cookies and lemonade
before you know it.

(MORE)

MARY LOU (CONT'D)
 What you want on these cookies
 boys? Suga', caramel, nuts,
 chocolate?

JACOB (O.S.)
 Anything is fine.

Mary Lou goes back to work. She pours the wet ingredients into the dry and mixes them. She sticks her finger into the batter and tastes it. Gets thoughtful for a beat then pours more bourbon into it.

MARY LOU
 (to herself)
 Anything is fine! Stupid-ass!
 When is anythin' just fine?

She opens another cabinet.

MARY LOU (CONT'D)
 What we got? Got some chocolate,
 got some nuts.

She picks up the nuts.

MARY LOU (CONT'D)
 Eeww, guess we don't got no nuts.

She sticks her head out the window again.

MARY LOU (CONT'D)
 Anybody 'round here got any nuts?

JACOB
 What's that?

MARY LOU
 I said, do you got any nuts?

She closes the window, not waiting for an answer.

MARY LOU (CONT'D)
 Boy don't know if he got no nuts.

She rolls the dough, beats an egg, brushes the egg onto the dough. She sprinkles chocolate onto the cookies.

FADE TO:

Mary Lou steps out of the house, and picks up a mallet.

Jacob's ball once again lands near Professor Featherloo's ball, and the Professor roquetes him once again. After the Professor's turn, Jacob hits his ball back into play, again too close to the Professor's ball. After which, Professor Featherloo stops play and leans on his mallet.

MARY LOU
Cake's in the oven.

She drops a red croquet ball next to Jacob's.

MARY LOU (CONT'D)
Who's turn is it?

JACOB
Your's, I guess.

She hits her ball through a wicket. It's the professor's turn. Jacob and Mary Lou both turn towards him, but he's still just leaning on his mallet.

PROFESSOR FEATHERLOO
As I was telling Jacob, I attended the Sanja Matsuri, the Shinto festival in Tokyo last year. Its one of the few times a year that an outsider such as myself and the Yakuza can both be viewed in their natural environment. It is also one of the few times an American can witness Yakuza enforcers in their underwear which is certainly a sight. They show off their tatoos as they carry shrines, in what I contend, must be a mating ritual quite similar to the male peacock.

A beat as Mary Lou looks over at Jacob.

PROFESSOR FEATHERLOO (CONT'D)
That being said, booked your plane ticket yet?

JACOB
Well, I...

PROFESSOR FEATHERLOO
If you haven't, I have a wonderful travel agent, when is your merry embarkation?

JACOB

Well, I...

PROFESSOR FEATHERLOO

(darkening)

Lord All Mighty! If we were boxing
you'd be in a coma. My G-d, son,
you are in a coma.

MARY LOU

(flirty)

He's not in a coma, just asleep.

She walks right up to him then starts pestering him with her
fingers.

MARY LOU (CONT'D)

(singing)

Heppy Heppy Heppy Dey.
Heppy Heppy Heppy May.
I love it when the day's in May,
Heppy Heppy me!

He steps back, still smiling.

JACOB

Lay off.

Mary Lou steps towards him. She brushes her fingers along
Jacob's face.

MARY LOU

Wake up!

She moves towards him, places her hands on his shoulders and
kisses him.

PROFESSOR FEATHERLOO

Jacob, my boy. Don't you know the
cat story?

JACOB

Yeah, Nansen cuts the Cat in Two.

MARY LOU

Do you get it?

JACOB

Sure I do. The Gateless Gate, it's
about duality.

MARY LOU

What does that mean?

JACOB

You know, the Gateless Gate,
Mumon's book, it's about the dual
nature of the world. But you're
not supposed to truly understand
any of the koans until you gain
enlightenment.

MARY LOU

I understand the story 'bout the
cat.

JACOB

No. No-one really understands it,
that's why I'm going to the Golden
Temple. To seek enlightenment.

MARY LOU

But, I'm telling you, I understand
it.

Jacob's getting frustrated. His whole world's closing in on
him.

JACOB

What?

MARY LOU

The cat was never really there.
Nansen and Joshu go out to lunch.

She starts laughing.

JACOB

You really don't have the aptitude.

MARY LOU

Sure I do. Just not the interest.
Better things to do like bake cakes
and kiss boys.

PROFESSOR FEATHERLOO

She's right you know.

JACOB

About what?

PROFESSOR FEATHERLOO

The cat. All cats.

MARY LOU

The cat was saved. The monks were
enlightened.

(MORE)

MARY LOU (CONT'D)
 Nansen received a Federal grant.
 And when the fuck are you going to
 Japan?

Jacob takes a couple steps. Breathes deep.

JACOB
 It's my turn.

He whacks down at the ball in frustration. The ball takes off, arcs up, and smacks Mary Lou in the side of head. She collapses sideways, unconscious, like the Tower of Piza.

CUT TO:

13 INT. PROFESSOR FEATHERLOO'S LIVING ROOM LATER 13

Mary Lou is on the couch, her eyes still closed. The professor and Jacob are standing over her. She slowly regains consciousness and looks up at Jacob.

MARY LOU
 Asshole!

PROFESSOR FEATHERLOO
 Do you smell something burning?

MARY LOU
 (entirely pissed)
 My cake!

FADE TO BLACK.

TITLE CARD: THE TAO THAT CAN BE SEEN

14 EXT. STREET NIGHT 14

Jacob is walking back to his apartment. Beer in hand, obviously intoxicated.

JACOB
 (to himself)
 I don't get the cat! Of course I
 get the cat. I get the damn cat as
 well as anyone fucking else who's
 not enlightened. She doesn't think
 I know the fucking thing's
 illustrative. And why did she have
 to be standing there? It wasn't my
 fault she was standing there.

(MORE)

JACOB (CONT'D)
 How the fuck am I supposed to know
 where the ball's going? Its not
 like I'm English.

He drains his beer and disposes of it in somebody's mailbox.

JACOB (CONT'D)
 Damn cat!

FADE TO:

15 EXT. JACOB'S APARTMENT NIGHT 15

He makes it back to his apartment. Stumbles up the steps.
 Grabs his keys out of his jacket. Unlocks the door. Steps
 in.

JACOB
 Oh. Shit!

CHARLIE (O.S.)
 Nice to see you too.

CUT TO:

16 INT. JACOB'S APARTMENT NIGHT 16

Charlie's stretched out on the couch, wearing a tank-top and
 track pants.

JACOB
 What are you doing here?

CHARLIE
 Your landlady let me in. Nice
 lady. You look like shit.

JACOB
 Thanks, Charlie. You look great.
 I'm surprised to see you.

CHARLIE
 Got my bonus. Took a few days off.

JACOB
 You want a beer?

Charlie points to the half-drunk beer on the coffee table in
 front of her.

CHARLIE
 Helped myself.

He grabs another beer from the refrigerator.

JACOB
Haven't heard from you for a while.

Charlie plops her bare feet up on the arm of the couch.

CHARLIE
Been busy. Mergers and
Acquisitions. Big business. You
know how it is.

He laughs and settles into a chair next to her.

JACOB
Yeah, I guess I do.

She scans the room and smirks.

CHARLIE
I can't believe you still have it.

JACOB
What?

CHARLIE
The N64, when I was like ten I
could kick your ass in Goldeneye.

JACOB
No way.

CHARLIE
Boot it up.

Jacob downs the rest of his beer. Gets up, turns on the N64 and walks to the kitchen to retrieve another beer. Charlie turns on the T.V. and mutes the volume.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
(softly)
I met someone.

JACOB
(from the kitchen)
What did you say?

CHARLIE
(louder)
I met someone.

JACOB
So?

CHARLIE
So, we're moving in together.

JACOB
You're moving out of your
brownstone on 74th street?

Charlie smiles.

CHARLIE
It's history.

JACOB
You loved that place. You've been
saving to do the renovations.
Weren't you gonna' take down the
wall between the kitchen and the
living room?

CHARLIE
Yeah, but so what? I'll put the
money into shoes.

Jacob gulps down the beer and winces. Pushes off the chair
and runs to the bathroom. SOUNDS OF VOMITING.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
(calling)
You OK in there?

JACOB
(sarcastic, through vomit)
Never better.

Charlie grabs a controller from the table in front of her and
presses start.

CUT TO:

17 INT. KWON MOTT STREET SIFU'S OFFICE DAY

17

Cramped, white cracked plaster walls strewn with pictures of
weddings and tournaments, wooden floors, piles of paper,
martial arts equipment scattered helter-skelter; in truth
little different than the adjacent work out area.

The Sifu and his student are seated on two small folding
chairs, facing each other. The martial artist has an ice
pack pressed to his face.

MARTIAL ARTIST

Sifu. I'm sorry for being so full of myself. It occurred to me to stop speaking - but, at the time, I was certain...

The martial artist's voice drops off unsure of what to say.

MARTIAL ARTIST (CONT'D)

Of course I was at fault. I would understand it if you dismissed me from this school.

The Sifu looks up at him. Smiles.

SIFU

That's OK. There's just one thing I don't understand. We are Chinese, Lu. Why would you give yourself a Japanese name?

The martial artist drops his head in shame.

The Sifu pats him on the shoulder.

SIFU (CONT'D)

Don't worry.

CUT TO:

18 INT. JACOB'S LIVING ROOM LATER

18

Charlie's asleep on the couch. Jacob is sitting on the floor, wearing a pair of sweats and no shirt, sitting very straight, still playing Goldeneye. He glances over at Charlie, and pulls the covers up over her shoulder. He walks into his closet and grabs a button-down shirt. He picks his jacket up from where he left it, grabs his keys, and leaves his apartment.

CUT TO:

19 EXT. MISHIMA'S OLE' COUNTRY ROADHOUSE NIGHT

19

Mishima's is a hole in the wall. Doesn't look like much from the outside. A man in a black suit and black t-shirt works the door. Jacob approaches.

The man blocks Jacob's path.

BOUNCER
Private party tonight. Can't let
you in.

Jacob tries to walk right past him. The BOUNCER blocks him
again.

BOUNCER (CONT'D)
(very polite)
Sorry, sir. Closed to the public
tonight.

JACOB
I gotta' see somebody in there.

BOUNCER
You on the list?

JACOB
You don't understand, its like I'm
seventeen again.

Jacob tries to push past the bouncer. The bouncer puts his
hand up on Jacob's shoulder to stop him. Jacob grabs the
bouncer's hand, locks up his wrist, rotates his arm, and
brings the bouncer down to his knees.

BOUNCER
Ouch.

JACOB
Sorry.

He pushes past the bouncer and opens the door.

JACOB (CONT'D)
Gateless Gate.

CUT TO:

20 INT. MISHIMA'S OLE' COUNTRY ROADHOUSE NIGHT

20

The place is pretty crowded. Mary Lou is performing in her
usual spot. Jacob moves through the crowd, the bouncer is
following him about ten feet back.

JACOB
Hey, Sheldon. Sweet potato shochu.

Sheldon the Barman sees the bouncer headed towards Jacob and
calls him off.

SHELDON THE BARMAN

He's OK.

The bouncer grimaces and backs off. The Barman pours the drink. Jacob leaves the drink on the bar. Walks over to Mary Lou. He's right in front of her. She looks puzzled.

SLOW MOTION STEP PRINTING

He grabs her by the wrist and yanks her over to the left side of the bar, where they originally danced. They are once again in the light of Kyoto.

They kiss.

HOLD THE SHOT

A release.

DOLLY THROUGH THEM.

FADE TO:

21 INT. BLACK BOX STAGE

21

McTavish is sitting on his sofa next to the Japanese garden.

MCTAVISH

I want to apologize for
before...it's all too easy to loose
sight of yourself...put on airs.
To keep a consistent and positive
self-image...I shouldn't have
delivered that screed in such an
egotistical and self-conscious
manner...well, never mind.

(beat)

It's possible I read too much,
watch too little TV, not enough
time spent on social
networks...Anyway, as you
witnessed, everything works out in
the end...

(more adamant)

I'm trying to be more serious
minded...regarding life..

(softer)

(MORE)

MCTAVISH (CONT'D)
 regarding myself...
 (back to normal volume)
 Times change, I change...
 (beat)
 I hope I'm improving myself.
 (beat)
 But at the end of the day, the
 story is a lie. Nansen leaves the
 monastery. Joshu commits seppuku.
 The cat becomes master...or at
 least he is the only one left.
 (a beat)
 Sometimes I feel that I am the
 cat...Sometimes the Master. But
 mostly, gladly, I am me. And I can
 live with that.

FADE TO BLACK.

TITLE CARD: ENDINGS AND AWAKENINGS

22

INT. BLACK BOX STAGE

22

The actors are gathered around a conference table. Behind the table is the bar, with only a couple of bottles still standing. Broken glass and spilled liquor on the floor. Projectors continue to shine images of Roppongi and Kyoto.

Seated at the table are Jacob, Charlie, Jonathan, McTavish, Mary Lou, Professor Featherloo, the Sifu, the martial artist, and Sheldon the Barman. The actors are talking to each other. After a couple moments they get back in character.

PROFESSOR FEATHERLOO

Well, speaking for myself, that was a pleasant diversion. I hadn't had a chance to play croquet yet this season. Besides, it's so difficult to keep young people's attention these days.

MARY LOU

Grandpa. I think you did just fine.

PROFESSOR FEATHERLOO

The proper apportionment of knowledge is a frustrating and difficult process.

SIFU

It's often just a matter of time.

PROFESSOR FEATHERLOO
I am so much happier than I was at
Columbia.

JACOB
(with pride)
I got it.

All the heads turn towards him. Skeptical.

LU
(still bruised on his
face)
Nansen's story causes trouble.

The Sifu leans forward and gives Lu a threatening glance. Lu
shrinks back.

Charlie looks straight into the camera.

CHARLIE
Turn the fucking projectors off.

The projectors switch off.

MCTAVISH
May I interject?

MARY LOU
I think you've already said enough,
honey.

JACOB
(out of character)
You know, I was kind of proud of
myself for finally getting it.

Two men in robes enter. The Sifu springs to his feet and
bows.

SIFU
(loud stage whisper)
Spirits of Nansen and Joshu.

NANSEN
(to Jacob)
Of course, you didn't.

JOSHU
You didn't even get the girl.

MARY LOU
That's news to me.

She looks over to Jacob.

JONATHAN
It's really not that difficult.

PROFESSOR FEATHERLOO
(muttering)
I wonder.

NANSEN
Did it ever occur to you that the
story is merely illustrative?

JACOB
Of what?

Nansen starts to laugh, then becomes serious.

NANSEN
Of what you can know.

JACOB
(resigned)
Ontology!

CHARLIE
(whispering to Jonathan,
excited)
Kant.

Nansen and Joshu shriek with laughter and exit.

MARY LOU
Did that really happen?

CHARLIE
What's the difference?

The Sifu continually bows in the direction of the spirits'
exit.

MCTAVISH
May I interject?

FADE TO BLACK.

Snow, lit red, falls onto a bloody black stage.

MCTAVISH

(in Mifune-esque JAPANESE,
with ENGLISH SUBTITLES)

On February 28th, 1936, after two
days of confrontation, a lone
officer, sheathed sword at his hip,
steps through the door of his small
home, to find his wife waiting for
him.

FADE OUT.

The End

Addendum

A Bedtime Story - Rewrite

Charlie's Memories

David Sporn

BLACK

CHARLIE

I was strolling through Barnes & Noble down on Warren Street, with Jonathan, the other day. We were walking past the children's section. And there was this mother and daughter sitting together reading *A Bear Called Paddington*. Suddenly I was frozen - watching.

1

CHARLIE

Its been years since I've picked up *Paddington*. I guess its not the same without Mom reading it. And with Jacob it was always a losing battle. I still remember one night very clearly. I was sitting up in Jacob's bed waiting for the nightly story ritual. I couldn't have been more than seven. Jacob was glued to the N64. Perched on a beanbag chair, still wearing his karate gi and greenbelt.

2

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Mom entered. She always use to hover in the doorway, waiting for one of us to make the first move.

3

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

And it was always me. Sitting up in bed. Expectant. The good little girl.

4

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

I wondered if Jacob even noticed her. His eyes were locked on the little Sony TV. All that mattered was Fox McCloud.

5

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Mom stepped forward. Her arms
crossed in front of her.
(imitating her mother)
"Charlie, Jacob! Time for bed, you
two!"

6

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
I guess it was a game. Neither of
us would answer first.

7

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
My brother finally noticed her,
gave her a grudging look, and
turned back to the game. Same as
any other night.

8

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
She just kept staring at him. He
had to do something before she
decided to just hit the power
button. It was time to beg.
(imitating Jacob)
"Come on, let me finish this level,
there are no mid-level saves."

9

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Sensing that Jacob was about to be
put straight to bed, I chimed in:
"Come on, tell us a story!"

10

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Jacob looked up at Mom, then at me,
made a face, crashed Fox's ship,
and tossed the controller.

11

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
He jumped into his bed, nearly
landing on me. The fireworks were
about to begin.

12

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Mom stood in front us. Her hand on the bookshelf. She smiled slightly, and asked who's turn was it to pick a story. In unison, we both blurted out 'Mine!' I think I was louder.

13

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
I knew he was going to complain about Paddington, so I tried to preempt him by pushing him off his bed. Almost instinctually he screamed,
(imitating Jacob)
"Get off my bed, you little creep!"

14

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
If he kept this up, there wasn't going to be a story.

15

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
I didn't care about Paddington anymore. All I wanted to do was annoy Jacob. And there was one thing I loved, that I knew would do it.
(loud)
More Kant!

16

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
(imitating Jacob)
No more Ontology!

17

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Mom decided she was going to settle this. So...
(upbeat)
She picked Paddington!
(beat)
In a flash, I was up on my knees.
(MORE)

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
(excited)
"Please! Please! Please!"

18

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Without a word Jacob dove behind
the bed. Little boys are so weird.

19

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
And before I knew it, he was back
up. And he had this odd little
book in his hand. I'd never seen
it before. He handed it to Mom,
asked her to read it.

20

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
And with a sly smile, she nodded
and said "*hai*," which even back
then I knew was Japanese for yes.

21

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
She said that she was going to read
us a story that she used to read
back in college. A story about a
cat. That perked me up.

22

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
With that, she began,
(telling a story)
*"Once upon a time, Nansen (a great
Zen Master) saw the monks (his
students) fighting over a cat. He
seized the cat and told the Monks:
"If any of you say a good word, you
can save the cat."*

23

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Naturally, worried about the cat, I
asked Mom, "What's a good word?"

24

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
She smiled warmly, then replied,
"Something smart." Without even a
beat she began reading again. *"No
one answered. So, Nansen boldly
cut the cat in two pieces."*

25

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
In pieces?

26

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Jacob looked over at me and feigned
cutting a cat in half.

27

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Noticing my concern, Mom explained
the story was merely illustrative.
Soon she began again. I still
wonder if she was a little unsure
of the fate of the cat. *"That
evening Joshu (another student)
returned and Nansen told him about
this. Joshu removed his sandals
and, placing them on his head,
walked out. Nansen said: "If only
you had been there, you could have
saved the cat."*

28

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Mom closed the book. Both Jacob
and I were silent.

29

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
I looked up at Jacob. He was very
still. A moment passed, then he
asked what should have been a
simple question, "Why?"

30

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
I don't remember if Mom really
answered him.

(MORE)

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Suddenly she had me by the arm, and was saying, "Come on Charlie, bedtime, love you both."

31

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

I paused in the doorway and looked back at Jacob, thinking about the cat, I said, "If I was Joshu, I would have have taken the sword and cut Nansen in half."

32

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Jacob wasn't quite smiling when he looked back at me, swallowed, and agreed.

Black

For a moment or two Charlie is silent.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Hey Jonathan, have you ever read *A Bear Called Paddington*?

Call Sheet

Production: McTavish Shooting Day 1
 Producer/PM: David Sporn Date: 2/27/12
 Director: David Sporn Crew Call: 6PM
 Director of Photography: Chris Mills

SET	SCENES	PAGES	CAST NOS.	LOCATION
2722 Whispering Pines Drive	14	4/8ths	1	EXT.
817 Rock Springs CT	15	2/8ths	1	EXT.

NO.	CAST MEMBER	PART OF	MAKE-UP	SET CALL	REMARKS
1	Paul Westby			6PM	Bring costume choices

ATMOSPHERE & STANDINS	PROPS	SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS
	Beer Bottle	

OTHER CALL TIMES:	VEHICLES & OTHER:
Director _____	Camera _____
First A.D. _____	Sound _____
Second A.D. _____	Grips _____
Prod. Asst. _____	Electric _____
Craft Services _____	Art Dept. _____
Script Supr. _____	Make-up _____
Dir. of Photo _____	Wardrobe _____
	Grip Van _____

CHANGES AND OTHER INFO: