

Lauren McConnell

EXT. CHINESE GARDEN OF FRIENDSHIP - MOMENTS LATER

The garden is quiet, still and peaceful. There are the sounds of rustling leaves and the gentle distant thrumming cascade of a waterfall. It is as if we have stepped into a world miles away from the hustle and bustle of Haymarket. Claire and Lin follow winding stone paths, passing weeping willows, jagged rocks and rich bamboo forests. Ahead on the footpath, we notice a faint blue and purple light glowing from behind a tree trunk. We focus on this spot as the source of this light steps out into Claire's line of sight.

It is a Huli Jing Spirit, closely resembling the one depicted in Mrs Wilkinson's Jade Fox Statuette. Its body shimmers with a look akin to that of iridescent glass and it sports a complete set of nine tails.

After considering Claire for a moment, the Huli Jing Spirit takes a purposeful stride along the path. Claire follows the spirit at a distance, picking up her pace as it scampers ahead. Lin stays farther back.

Eventually, Claire and the Huli Jing Spirit approach the Dragon Wall. It looks exactly the same as its picture from the title page of Claire's pamphlet.

The Huli Jing Spirit pauses briefly at the edge of the shallow pool beneath the Dragon Wall. It looks back at Claire, a silent invitation to follow, then dives into the water and disappears, sending ripples of glowing light across the pool's surface.

Claire warily approaches the Dragon Wall. She looks down into the pool and sees herself within a perfect reflection. Lin remains a few paces away.

LIN

(calling)

They were a gift from Guangdong,
New South Wales' sister province in
China. Those are two Imperial
Dragons.

(she indicates to the respective dragon)

The blue represents our state, New
South Wales, and the brown is for
Guangdong. Supposedly, it resembles
the friendship between the two.

After a moment, Claire takes a breath, then leans towards the pool, falling. We move with her, tilting forwards at Claire's side as we stay fixed upon her body's axis. Around her, the world blurs and begins to rotate like a spinning wheel. Then, we CRASH through the surface water of the pool. But, instead of being soaked head to toe, Claire emerges completely dry into what at first appears to be exactly where she was only moments ago.

However, the sky is dark and covered in a blanket of moonlit clouds, pleasantly gloomy yet ethereal. We are reminded of Claire's first experience with the Chinese Garden of Friendship.

Claire sees the Huli Jing Spirit again, now sitting patiently before the Dragon Wall. Its nose turns upward, directing Claire's gaze to the artwork.

For a moment, all is still.

Then, the Imperial Dragons start to move. Slowly at first, then gaining momentum. They begin to swirl and we follow Claire's eyes as the Imperial Dragons leap upwards, long snake-like forms twisting and grappling with each other in the air. Their bodies are borderline transparent, like liquid glass, one blue, the other brown.

Claire tilts her head back, grinning widely. She lets go of a joyous laugh and spreads her hands wide in the air. Above her, the Imperial Dragons continue to twirl and collide, passing alongside the other with rhythmic grace, spinning themselves together so tightly that they begin to merge into a singular being.

We stay focused on Claire's upturned face as she closes her eyes, still smiling. She appears to have reached a state of serenity, relaxing completely into the experience, sewing it into her memory.

A single rain drop falls onto her skin.

LIN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Marvellous, aren't they?