

TO BOLDLY GO (EXCERPT)

Rickey Ainsworth

XXXX XXXXXX XX XX
Grand Rapids, MI XXXXX
616-258-6277
rickeyainsworth@gmail.com

ACT I

SCENE 1

EXT. ANTARCTICA, 1915 CE

SFX: ANTARCTIC AMBIENT SOUNDS; WIND,
WAVES, ICE FLOWS GROANING

DAYTIME, OVERCAST SKIES

WRAP-AROUND PANORAMA OF ANTARCTIC ICE
FLOWS

SFX: THE ENDURANCE AMBIENT SOUNDS;
WOOD CREAKING, CREW SHOUTING, CANVAS
WHIPPING IN THE WIND

THE ENDURANCE APPEARS, TRAPPED IN ICE

TEXT: "ANTARCTICA, 1915 CE"

PORTRAIT OF ERNEST SHACKLETON

TEXT: "ERNEST SHACKLETON"

TEXT: "LEADER OF THE IMPERIAL TRANS-
ANTARCTIC EXPEDITION"

SHACKLETON: *[From journals]* After long months of ceaseless anxiety and strain, the end of the Endurance has come. It is hard to write what I feel. To a sailor, his ship is more than a floating home, and in the Endurance I had centered ambitions, hopes, and desires. Now, straining and groaning, her timbers cracking and her wounds gaping, she is slowly giving up her life at the very outset of her career. She is crushed and abandoned after becoming trapped in the ice 281 days ago. My crew and I are now 346 miles from Paulet Island, the nearest point where there is any possibility of finding food and shelter.

We set out to be the first people to cross the Antarctic continent, but that goal is now out of our reach. Our new mission: survival. We are currently at the mercy of mother nature. The ice that entraps the Endurance is now, ironically, our home; a very cold, wet, and lonely home.

LIGHTS AND ANTARCTIC PANORAMA SLOWLY
FADE DOWN, LEAVING ONLY THE ENDURANCE
BEHIND. PERSPECTIVE PULLS BACK; SHIP
LOOKS SMALL AND LONELY IN THE
DARKNESS.

NARRATOR: This was the fate of Ernest Shackleton's ship,
the Endurance. In its time, this vessel was one
of the sturdiest, most high-tech ships ever
built.

THE ENDURANCE CLOSE-UP; 3-D RENDER,
ROTATING, WITH TECHNOLOGY CROSS-
SECTION

NARRATOR: Yet during this ill-fated Antarctic voyage, even
a fortress of wood and iron could not withstand
the powerful forces of nature.

RENDER X-FADES TO PHOTO OF THE
ENDURANCE TRAPPED IN ICE, SURROUNDED
BY CREW

NARRATOR: The courageous men of the Endurance would not
accept defeat so easily. The story of Shackleton
and his crew's long struggle for survival would
be one of courage and determination.

MONTAGE, HISTORY OF EXPLORATION

MUSIC: MAIN THEME BEGINS

NARRATOR: Similar stories, filled with danger and
discovery, tragedy and triumph, fill the pages
of the history of human exploration. Since
ancient times, adventurous travelers have struck
out into the unknown. Whether they sought glory,
knowledge, wealth, conquest, or the exchange of
ideas between cultures, they've all played a
role in expanding the frontiers of human
understanding.

THE ENDURANCE CLOSE-UP RETURNS, X-
FADES INTO ROTATING PLANETARIUM MODEL

NARRATOR: Now, let's become explorers ourselves. Like
Shackleton's Endurance, this sky theater will

serve as our vessel. In our "floating home," let's blaze a trail through time and space, joining noteworthy explorers of the past, present... and future. As we hear their stories and see the impact of their discoveries, we can try to gain a better understanding of the fascinating worlds around us.

MUSIC: MAIN THEME CLIMAX

TITLE ANIMATION / OPENING CREDITS

FADE OUT

ACT I

SCENE 2

EXT. CHINA, C. 402-411 CE

MUSIC: 5TH CENTURY CHINESE TRADITIONALSFX: BUSTLING CITY; MARKET SOUNDS,
WAGONS, VOICESPANORAMA OF DADU, CHINA; BUSTLING 5TH
CENTURY CHINESE CITY

DAYTIME, MOSTLY SUNNY SKIES

TEXT: "DADU (BEIJING), CHINA, 402 CE"

NARRATOR: One of the first surviving accounts of a long distance expedition was written by Fa Hsien, a Buddhist monk who lived in 5th century China. As a young man, he decided to undertake an astoundingly long pilgrimage, setting out to travel thousands of miles, on foot, all the way to India.

FA HSIEN PORTRAIT

TEXT: "FA HSIEN (法顯)"

FA HSIEN: *Ni hao ma.* My name is Fa Hsien. From the capital city of Dadu, we begin our journey west.

ANIMATED MAP SEQUENCE BEGINS; DOTTED
LINE, PLACE NAMES, DATES

FA HSIEN: Our first obstacle is a vast sea of sand, which you might know as the Gobi Desert.

MUSIC: SIGNALS DANGERDADU CITY SCENE X-FADES TO GOBI DESERT
PANORAMAINTENSE SUN, REDDISH SKY, BONES IN
SAND, BUZZARDS OVERHEAD

FA HSIEN: This is a perilous place. Our route is marked with the bleached bones of travelers. Scorching desert winds called *sirocco*, drive men to

madness, and even death.

SFX: SIROCCO WINDS

SIROCCO SANDSTORM SEQUENCE

ANIMATED MAP SEQUENCE CONTINUES

PANORAMA X-FADES TO TREACHEROUS
MOUNTAINS; RED COLOR PALETTE SHIFTS TO
BLUE

FA HSIEN: Beyond the desert, we find mountains, cold and silent. Even in summer, snow covers their peaks. We must tread carefully, for at any moment, a loose rock could send us tumbling to our deaths.

SFX: ROCKSLIDE

FA HSIEN: Some say that these mountains also shelter dragons; monsters that spit venom into the eyes of their victims, before eating them whole.

SFX: SNAKE HISS

TRADITIONAL, ERA-APPROPRIATE DRAGON
DEPICTION; X-FADES TO PHOTO OF MASSIVE
KING COBRA, NATIVE TO REGION

FA HSIEN: Nobody has ever traveled this path, and survived to tell the tale... At least, not yet.

MOUNTAIN PANORAMA X-FADES TO GOBI
DESERT (NIGHT); BLUE COLOR PALETTE
REMAINS

SUN SETS, STARS APPEAR; LATITUDE
ADJUSTED TO FA HSIEN'S LOCATION

NARRATOR: Fa Hsien avoided the scorching sirocco by traveling mostly at night. But the comfort of cool sands beneath his feet came at a price. At night, the subtle landmarks of the desert fade into the darkness, making it easy to get lost.

He wasn't completely without guidance, however. The starry sky over Fa's head lent him more than just its beauty; it also provided him with a

natural map and compass to help him find his way.

When he looked up, he likely recognized some of his culture's traditional star pictures.

CONSTELLATION OUTLINES APPEAR AS
MENTIONED: SHEN, BI, MAO, ORION,
TAURUS

NARRATOR: Perhaps he found Shēn (參), the Three Stars mansion. In modern times, astronomers know the three stars in Shēn (參) as the belt of Orion, the Mighty Hunter.

Maybe he also saw Bì (畢), the Net. Or Mǎo (昴), the Tiger's Hairy Head. If you put those two star pictures together, you can imagine the head and horns of Taurus, the giant bull that chases Orion across the winter sky.

The stars also told Fa whether or not he was walking in the right direction. They can help you, too. In your sky tonight, finding the star Polaris--also called the North Star--can be a simple way to get your bearings. It's easy to find. Look over...

ANIMATED ARROW, POINTING THE WAY TO
POLARIS

POLARIS HIGHLIGHT; CARDINAL POINTS UP
ALONG HORIZON

NARRATOR: ...here. This is Polaris. We call it our North Star, because we always see it in the north. If you face that star, you'll know that north lies ahead, east is to your right, south is behind you, and west is to your left.

There's a little trick you can use to find Polaris. Look over here.

ARROW HIGHLIGHTS BIG DIPPER

NARRATOR: You're probably know this familiar shape as the Big Dipper. Connect the dots between these seven

fairly bright stars and try to imagine a cup with a long handle.

BIG DIPPER OUTLINE

ARROW CONTINUES; POINTER STARS, LINE TO POLARIS

NARRATOR: Once you've found this shape, it's easy to find the North Star. These two stars--at the end of the Dipper's bowl--are known as the "pointer stars," because they point... To Polaris.

It's time for a little practice.

MUSIC: QUIZ THEME

SKY SCRAMBLE, STARS AND GOBI PANORAMA SPIN LIKE A TOP, THEN STOP FACING A NEW DIRECTION

NARRATOR: Let's pretend that our traveling companion, Fa Hsien, got turned around, losing his way during one of his evening hikes through the desert. Could you help get him get back on track? Remember, try to spot the Big Dipper, and use its pointer stars to find the Polaris itself.

SFX: CHIME AS QUIZ TIME EXPIRES

NARRATOR: Did you find it, over... here?

ARROW RETRACES PATH FROM BIG DIPPER'S POINTER STARS TO POLARIS; CARDINAL POINTS REAPPEAR

NARRATOR: We know that when we're facing Polaris, we're facing north. To reach India, Fa spent his nights walking westward. With the Pole Star perched over our right shoulder, we can be sure that we're heading west.

FA HSIEN MONTAGE

NARRATOR: Fa set out with a clear purpose. For him, this journey was a pilgrimage to collect rare religious texts from India, so he could translate and bring them home to his people.

After walking for ten years, he finally arrived.

MUSIC: CELEBRATORY

INDIAN CITY SCENE; PORT VISIBLE WITH
SHIP IN HARBOR

SFX: CITY AMBIENT; CHEERING CROWD

NARRATOR: The people there welcomed him warmly. Fa visited numerous cities and religious sites, and gathered enough literature for a lifetime of study. Eventually, ready to return home--but perhaps finally tired of walking--he boarded a ship, bound for the Chinese capital. Then...

SHIP SAILS OUT OF PORT; CITY SCENE X-
FADES TO OCEAN PANORAMA

SFX: SUDDEN THUNDERCRACK

SUDDEN THUNDERSTORM, MENACING CLOUDS,
POUNDING RAIN, LIGHTNING

NARRATOR: ...During a thunderstorm, his ship sank near the island of Java.

SHIP DISAPPEARS, REPLACED BY TROPICAL
ISLAND

NARRATOR: Having come so far, Fa Hsien wasn't about to let nature get the better of him. He survived the wreck, and even managed to save his cargo from the sinking ship. Stranded on the island for nearly a year, he finished translating several important works from Indian to Chinese. Finally, after nearly 20 years of travel, Fa's second--and last--boat ride delivered him safely home.

MUSIC: CELEBRATORY REPRISE

FISHING BOAT SAILS AWAY FROM JAVA

FA HSIEN MAP ANIMATION CONCLUDES;
ARRIVAL HOME, FUTURE CONNECTIONS

DADU PANORAMA RETURNS

NARRATOR: Through his travels, Fa Hsien build a connection between two distant cultures. Other travelers would follow in his footsteps, including traders and merchants. Their paths eventually became part of the "Great Silk Road," an important trade route that would influence human exploration, around the world, for centuries to come.

FADE OUT

ACT I

SCENE 3

INT. VENICE, ITALY, C. 1315 CE

TEXT: "VENICE, ITALY, 1315 CE."

MUSIC: FESTIVE; PERIOD ITALIANINTERIOR OF WINDOWED ROOM (WORKSHOP/
INN); WINDOW LOOKING OUT ONTO VENICE
SCENERYMARCO POLO STANDING; SEATED AUDIENCE
GATHERED AROUND HIM.

MARCO POLO: *[With the air of a Professor Marvel, or a carnival barker]* Ah, come in, come in! Surely you too want to hear about the incredible travels of old Marco Polo! Please, have a seat and be prepare to suspend your disbelief, for in the East, I have seen amazing wonders beyond imagining.

Now where was I...? Oh yes... For 24 years, I journeyed far and wide to exotic lands with my father and uncle. I was a young man, and my father wanted me to learn the family business. They were traders, you see--dealers in silks and spices--who built a small fortune running trading posts in the Far East.

Back in 1271, we set out on the long road toward Catai.

CATAI / CHINA MAP, WITH LABELS; SILK
ROAD INFO CAPTIONMAP ANIMATION CONTINUES THROUGHOUT
SEQUENCE; INC. VARIOUS SEMI-HISTORICAL
AND FANTASTICAL VISUALIZATIONS

MARCO POLO: Along the way, in a city called Bukhara, we received a letter that would change more than just our travel plans. It was an invitation from the Great Khan of the Golden Horde! Having heard of the Polo family's fame, fortune, and (no doubt) good looks, the warlord Kublai wished to

meet us.

KUBLAI KHAN PORTRAIT

TEXT: "KUBLAI KHAN (GRANDSON OF
GENGHIS KHAN)"

MARCO POLO: We were the first Westerners ever invited to a Khan's court; we would strike deeper into the heart of the Orient than any before us. I can scarcely describe all the exotic wonders we saw along the way to the heart of Catai, the land that Kublai's people--the Mongols--had recently conquered.

MONGOL EMPIRE MAP, INCLUDING DADU;
LINK TO PREVIOUS FA HSIEN STORY

MARCO POLO: It was a dangerous journey. There were bandits; gangs of robbers so large that--when they charged down the hillside--you couldn't see the ground beneath their feet. We were attacked by one of these bands in the deserts of Persia... hundreds, no... [*clearly exaggerating*] THOUSANDS of ruffians all around us. But we three Polos, with our silver tongues and our strong sword arms... We scared them off.

Many years and many adventures later, when we finally reached the court of the Golden Horde, it was the most amazing sight I'd ever seen.

EXAGGERATED IMAGES APPEARING ONE BY
ONE, EVENTUALLY FILLING THE DOME

MUSIC: PICKS UP PACE, GROWING MORE
FRENETIC AS EXAGGERATIONS GROW

MARCO POLO: [*Increasingly animated*] We Venetians, in our city of canals, boast about our fine bridges. But in the capital city of Catai, I counted TWELVE THOUSAND bridges, crossing a spiderweb of waterways.

The Great Khan's palace alone stretched out for two... no... err... THIRTY-TWO MILES from one end to the other.

The surrounding pastures were home to A HUNDRED THOUSAND horses and five hundred--no, FIVE THOUSAND giant elephants, each adorned in the finest silks.

When we went hunting, our trained dogs, leopards, and lions covered the hills before us, and our hunting hawks blotted out the Sun. I don't like to brag, but the Khan complimented me more than once on my birding skills. "As good a falconer as the finest Mongol hunter," he said.

When the time came for the Polos return to Venice, Kublai presented us with the finest ship in his fleet. Instead of sailing straight home, however, we made a short voyage even further into the East, beyond the lands of the Khans.

We traveled to the great island of Cipangu, where we visited a palace made of pure gold, and saw fishermen pulling bright red pearls the size of your fist from the water.

CIPANGU / JAPAN MAP, WITH LABELS

MARCO POLO: On other islands, we saw even stranger sights, such as men with the heads of dogs, and herds of giant unicorns!

MORE FANTASTICAL ILLUSTRATIONS OF MARCO'S WILD STORIES

MARCO POLO: They say old Marco is getting forgetful in his old age. Some say I exaggerate; that my tales are "fabulous," or "mere dreams". Bah! I remember every moment of my journey like it was yesterday. I've nearly finished a book about it, you know... Shall I reserve you a copy? Several copies? (No, wait, come back...)

NARRATOR: Marco Polo was a master storyteller, but many of his accounts are clearly exaggerated.

EXAGGERATED IMAGES, STILL ON-SCREEN, TRANSFORM TO REALISTIC VERSIONS

MUSIC: SLOWS DOWN; BACK TO ORIGINAL

THEME

MARCO POLO: A few elephants, or bandits, or bridges probably became dozens in Marco's earliest attempts to impress audiences, and after decades of retelling, dozens had grown into thousands.

Like Fa Hsien's dragons, Polo's dog-headed men and unicorns probably came from the fanciful rumors of locals and other travelers, exaggerated in their telling and retelling, although perhaps with some small kernel of truth.

Marco Polo almost certainly did not visit Japan, but he did hear tales from those who had. A palace of pure gold did not exist at the time, but a palace decorated from top to bottom with gold leaf would be built there within the next century; perhaps plans were already in the works during Polo's time? Perhaps he heard a vague rumor and build his story around it?

"*IL MILLIONE*" GRAPHIC; SHORT DESC. OF NICKNAME ("THE MILLION"; I.E., FATHER OF A MILLION STORIES)

NARRATOR: Despite all his embellishments and fabrications, Marco Polo did bring back many amazing, accurate accounts of what he saw and learned from others.

CONTINUED MARCO POLO MONTAGE, NOW FOCUSING ON CREDIBLE DISCOVERIES; CHARCOAL, PAPER MONEY, ETC.

NARRATOR: Polo told his people about marvelous Chinese inventions: black stones that burned better than wood. Money made of not gold or silver, but... paper. Porcelain and asbestos. Giant catapult-like war machines, and huge ocean-going ships like the one that carried him home.

His reports about China's wealth of resources were extremely valuable to a trading city-state like 14th century Venice. And he brought back new knowledge of goods that would help tantalize future traders: exciting new spices, coconuts,

ivory, and gemstones.

More than a hundred years later, Marco Polo's book, *The Description of the World*, would inspire another famous explorer to undertake a dangerous journey to China, India, and Japan... sailing from the opposite direction.

FADE OUT

END OF EXCERPT | FULL SCRIPT LENGTH: 42 PGS. | RUNTIME: 50 MINS.