

# INK MONKEY

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**INT. TERRACOTTA ARMY TOMB - DAY**

The red clay figures stretch as far as the eye can see. They are fresh, recently sculpted and ready to march to war.

The room is vast yet silent, walls hidden by shadows, ceiling invisible in the darkness.

A sound. The PAD, PAD of tiny feet.

A diminutive ink monkey, ZHU XI, darts between the feet of a nearby horse statue, jet black fur iridescent in the dimly lit space.

Zhu drags a bundle of parchment behind him and holds a small brush in one paw.

He darts through the spokes of a chariots wheel to deliver his supplies to...

WING TA-HAI, 60s, ink spattered cream robes and unkempt grey hair, looks up as Zhu scrabbles up onto his writing desk.

Wing ruffles Zhu's fur.

WING

Why thank you.

He takes the parchment and other supplies and adds them to the tidy piles already on his desk.

WING

Nearly finished these.

He points to a column of warriors.

Zhu lets out a SQUEAL which turns into a SQUEAK.

WING

Please.

Zhu takes an ink stick and grinds it slowly in a hand carved and perfectly smooth inkstone. He adds water and mixes until he's happy.

Zhu looks up at Wing, a question in his eyes.

WING

Perfect.

Wing dips his brush into the ink and writes on a small piece of parchment.

He blows on the finished piece, stands and attaches it to the chest of the nearest figure.

He turns to his desk, pulls it back a few feet so that it is aligned with the next soldier, sits and repeats the process.

Wing stands to attach the parchment but stops and peers into the distance.

A chink of light appears in a far wall.

FOOTSTEPS echo as a figure approaches quickly.

Wing attaches the parchment, moves his desk back and starts on the next label.

GENERAL XIE JUN, 30s, in full ceremonial dress, stalks between the rows of warrior figures and stops in front of Wing.

XIE

Stop.

Wing places the brush down.

Zhu shrinks behind the inkstone.

XIE

Are you finished?

Wing shakes his head.

XIE

How many left to document?

Wing sweeps his arm round.

WING

Half of them at least.

Xie frowns.

XIE

But they all need to be ready for their glorious journey.

Wing holds his hands palms up in supplication.

WING

But they are thousands and I am just one.

Xie waves the protest away.

XIE  
 Unnamed they cannot ascend with the  
 Emperor.

Wing nods.

XIE  
 Everything else is complete, you must  
 finish this as designed.

WING  
 But --

XIE  
 The sacrifice has been made by so  
 many already. Are you unwilling?

Wing bows his head.

WING  
 I am ready, just...

Xie nods 'go on'.

WING  
 Could you take this to my wife.

Xie takes the proffered note.

XIE  
 I thought she was already dead?

WING  
 Yes, but I'd honour her memory.

Xie opens the note, sneers and crumples the parchment and  
 throws it to the floor.

XIE  
 Haiku? No wonder you are not finished.

WING  
 But --

XIE  
 Concentrate on the task in hand.

WING  
 Yes, General.

Xie turns and retraces his steps, stops after a few feet to  
 scratch something near his shoulder and then continues.

Wing watches him leave.

In the distance stone GRINDS against stone as the Tomb of the Warriors is closed for the final time.

WING

You can come out now, he's gone.

Wing moves the inkstone but Zhu is not there.

He scans around the desk for his companion.

Nothing.

No ink monkey, no sign of him.

Wing scans the area.

Stops.

The haiku that Xie had thrown to the floor is no longer there either.

Wind smiles as his eyes shift to the where Zhu left with the General.

WING

Thank you.

FADE OUT

THE END