

LEGENDS OF WINGCHUN

EMBERS OF THE SHAOLIN

A MARTIAL ARTS NOVEL BY

RENÉ RITCHIE



REMNANT-HUNTER MEDIA

Montréal

This book is a work of fiction and is intended for entertainment purposes only. The author and publisher are NOT RESPONSIBLE in any manner whatsoever for any injury, loss, or damage caused, or alleged to have been caused, directly or indirectly, to any person or entity, by the information contained herein.

Copyright ©2006 René Ritchie.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without prior written permission of the publisher.

First published in Canada in 2006

Remnant-Hunter Media
POB 46511 Blvd. St. Jean, Pierrefonds,
QC, H9H-5G9
www.remnant-hunter.com

ISBN 0-9738804-0-6

Cover and interior design
and typesetting by René Ritchie

10 09 08 07 06 1 2 3 4 5

Printed in the United States
and the United Kingdom

Contents

Prologue.....	11
The Crane & the Tiger.....	15
Brawl at the Bridge.....	25
Hints of Existence.....	34
The Fist & the Heart.....	45
Of Lanterns & Light.....	55
The Lesson.....	63
Small Enlightenment.....	74
The Shaolin Temple.....	80
The Buddha's Skull.....	89
The Sixty-Fourth Trigram.....	102
Heaven & Earth.....	110
In Panther's Eye.....	119
House of the Green Snake.....	131
Origins & Initiations.....	139
Thirty Spokes.....	147
Little First Training.....	157
The Mind Ground.....	165
The Rebels Strike Back.....	173
Nature of the Weapon.....	182
The Sea of Clouds.....	190
Fragments of River & Lake.....	200
Second Sons.....	212
The Dragon & the Phoenix.....	222
The Inner Gate.....	235
Return of the Ch'ing.....	245
The Plum for the Peach.....	259
The Tenth Palace.....	273

Prologue

The boy stumbled through oily black smoke and crackling white flame. The square was just ahead... And his father—he had to reach his father!

“The Ch’ing have scattered the feeble remnants of your Ming Dynasty to the four winds, driven your pathetic Southern rebellion all but into the sea.” The words emanated from the chaos ahead, the voice a sizzle beyond the inferno. “They have annihilated everything—everyone—that has dared stand against them. Everyone but the Shaolin...”

Constables of the Army of the Green Standard stamped around the square. Uniformed black as coal and armed with spears that glinted like polished silver, they cowered the villagers into the ground.

“The Ch’ing have razed the temples, slaughtered the monks, and yet still the Shaolin refuse to lie down, refuse to yield...”

Forbidden Bannermen tore up the road. Armored in steel plates and mounted on ebon horses, body after body tumbled in their wake—all the boy’s friends, everyone he’d ever known...

“The Shaolin scurry like insects. They crawl into all the foul nooks and rotten crannies and they fester... They fester until the fire comes at last and forces them out.”

The boy tripped and fell and strained through the tears and devastation for any hint of his father. But all he saw was a defiant man crouched beneath faded rags, ready to rise up even as the arms of his closest friend—of his sworn brother—stopped him.

“Only then, in death, when all that remains is char and offal, when all that remains is a stinking pile of blackened bone, are the Shaolin laid down, are they yielded...”

The Lama turned, his bone-white robes flared and, from the depths of his ashen face, his burning eyes blazed.

“Yield them.”

Spears lashed out, the villagers erupted, the boy screamed...

“NO!”

And the defiant man rose, unstoppable even by the arms of a hundred friends or a thousand brothers.

“I am Leung Hong,” he said, “twenty-fourth generation disciple of Shaolin!” The faded rags slipped away and his muscles flexed dark. The parallel rows of dots burned into his scalp were faint now beneath black hair grown long and full, but the dragon and tiger brands still coiled and snarled bright across his arms. “I am a patriot of the Ming Dynasty that governed the Han nation through a thousand years of peace and prosperity!”

The constables crashed into Leung but he settled still as a mountain. Spears splintered against his iron skin and constables rent beneath his clawed hands.

But they had the weight of numbers behind them. They hammered and they piled until Leung was forced back.

Then his friend, his brother, rose at his side.

“I am Fong Dak!” His dark shroud fell and though no dots marked his balding pate, his tiger and dragon brands coiled and snarled every inch as bright. “I am the enemy of the Ch’ing usurpers who have corrupted our land, of the Manchu invaders who have brought only misery and despair to our people!”

The constables split their attack but Fong flowed supple as the river. Spears slipped from his turning body and constables snapped between his twisting arms.

“We are sons of Heaven & Earth,” they said together. “We are brothers of the rebellion that will overthrow the Ch’ing and restore the Ming to the Dragon-Throne of China!”

The constables faltered and their lines collapsed. But then the earth trembled and the bannermen bore down, their thick-bladed, two-handed choppers assailing the night.

Leung roared and met their charge, exploded up into them with all his weight and rage.

Fong hissed. “Iron Tiger Cracks the Mountain!”

Two bannerman were shorn from their saddles and three more were sent reeling. Leung slammed back into the ground, his head down and his eyes fierce. “We are the karma that returns to you every ounce of pain,” he said, “every measure of death, ten-thousand fold!”

Then a horse reared up, the long, sharp shadow of a banner captain fell over him, and steel fell with it.

Fong was too far away, he couldn’t reach Leung, not in time...! But Fong scanned the wreckage, saw the broken tip of a spear lying in the dirt and flames at his feet, and he spun around and kicked it with all his speed and fury.

The smoldering blade hurtled past Leung and struck full in the face of the Banner Captain. It cut him down and sent his chopper twirling up through the smoke.

Leung claimed it.

“Come on,” Fong said. “This is our chance, let’s go!”

“You go,” Leung said. “There’s nothing left for me.”

“I’m not going without you!”

“You have to.” Leung tilted his gaze up the mountain. “You have no choice.”

“What are you—” Fong’s eyes crinkled and then his face drained white. “Buddha’s name...”

“Go.” Leung shoved him away and turned on the Lama—the ancient enemy that stood at the edge of the square. “Go now!”

And Leung charged.

The Lama remained still.

Leung’s nostrils flared, his eyes set. The chopper leapt up.

The Lama remained still.

Leung closed until nothing but an exhalation separated the tip of the chopper from the Lama’s throat.

Then the Lama's bone robes parted and his falchion split the heavens.

Leung finished his charge—his body first, his head a moment later. It bounced several times before rolling to a stop.

The banner captain staggered to his feet, his hand clutched to the ruin of his face. "Fetch the Emperor his trophy and then take this village apart—slaughter your way to the sea if you have to but find me that other monk!"

For ordering information and extended and enhanced
Legends of Wingchun content, please visit:
www.legendsofwingchun.com

For more information on the history, training, and application
of Wing Chun Kung Fu, please visit:
www.wingchunken.com