Fen Tian
"Love On A Leash"

Sixty-four year old Fen Tian compares herself to an infertile woman who, in her attempt to get pregnant, has tried everything from western medicine, herbal remedies-- even surgery, "finally knowing the joy of hearing her first baby's cry."

In China, first time director Fen Tian is a well-known multi-award winning writer who has been produced on stage and film. But she wanted to direct her own "baby". Taking a big risk she gave up her comfortable situation in China at the age of forty-five. With fifty dollars in her pocket, and not one word of English in her possession, she crossed the world to pursue her American dream.

She spent four years working as a housekeeper for twenty-four families. Because she was a lousy one (she once put the couch slipcovers in the washer and dryer), she was fired. A lot. Her tears drained out with the wash water, but her drive to reach her goal as a film director never wavered. With steady dedication, Fen Tian was the first student from China accepted into the Directing Program at AFI.

For sixteen years she's tried to finance her own project, with many ups and downs. At one point, Fen went to Cambodia to write a film for Academy Award winning Haing S. Ngor. They worked for over three years developing this project. Just as they were nearing the finish line, Fen received a tragic phone call. Haing Ngor had been murdered on the streets of Los Angeles.

Nearly a decade ago, the promise of success teased her again. The script for Love On A Leash won an award from the Taiwan Government for best script and received production money (which is how *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* Director Ang Lee got his first film made.) That was the only time in history that a foreigner received funding from the Taiwan Government. But for political reasons at the time, Fen Tian could not accept the honor.

Four years ago, Fen brought an American cast and crew to China, but the funding fell through before they could shoot a single frame. Fen lost all her savings…

Finally, a group of investors saw Fen Tian's vision. Actually, to hear Fen explain "I think they really just took pity on me." With barely enough money to cover craft services, Love On A Leash went into HD production. During the production she slept in the Motor Home. During postproduction she slept on the couches of her editors, dragging around her blanket, toothbrush, pillow and thirty-nine DV cam reels. Fen spoiled her post team shamelessly. When not cracking the whip over the editing board, she was busy cooking up huge feasts of homemade Chinese food, and fixing her crew's love lives with a motherly heart and some Chinese wisdom.

And today, finally, she is able to hear her first baby cry!

She can never thank her cast and crew enough, (nor her credit card company…!).
But she is most grateful to her seven investors, who risked their personal savings to make her dream come true.

She also owes a lifetime of gratitude to Academy Award winner Barry Morrow, who encouraged and supported her all these years, and new friends, comedy writer Bruce Kirshbaum, award winning writer Chantal Boccaccio and IFP project supervisor Edward Stencel, who all brilliantly helped her fix the story in the edit. Also from deep in her heart, Fen thanks her life partner, Merle Thygersen, who suffered all these years to support her.

During the project, Fen Tian found miracles around every corner. Without them, the film could never have been done.

Time permitting, Fen hopes to do an online High Def cut of the project. Frankly, her post team couldn't be happier. They know there will be a lot more of those yummy homemade dumplings!

With great passion and courage, this stubborn director has crafted a unique fairy tale, which breaks new cinematic ground, beautifully conjoining Eastern and Western cultures and filmmaking sensibilities. Fen Tian hopes you enjoy the journey that was two decades in the making.

"The new baby is in front of you, yes, not perfect and maybe even less than average, but is your baby and it depends on you for life."