

"CHINAWOOD" PILOT
EP 101 - In Search of the Dragon

By

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SUPER OVER BLACK: The Chinese Dragon -- A symbol of power, strength, and good luck for those worthy...

INT/EXT. MERCEDES SL550 - DAY (TRAVELING)

BRANDT THOMASON (50's) veers sharply across four lanes of heavy traffic -- races off the 101 Freeway. This is California, a normal occurrence.

The car is new, evident by the Dealer Placard in place of the license plate. Conversely, Brandt's receding, dyed coif and goatee don't hide his age. His angry, scrunched face adds another ten years.

BRANDT

Drive your fucking cars, people.

A DOG BARK alert signals a tweet. Brandt squints at his cellphone.

GPS WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

In 200 feet take a slight right to merge onto Highland Avenue.

Brandt bobs through traffic.

GPS WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

In one point four miles, take a right onto Sunset Boulevard.

BRANDT

I know where the fuck I'm going.

Another DOG BARK alert. Brandt fumbles a one-handed response. He swerves left, almost buys a BMW.

BRANDT

Mother fu...!

Brandt swerves right, leans on the horn. Another DOG BARK.

He swerves right, blows through the light as it turns red -- five seconds on the HORN as he passes a slow-mover.

BRANDT

Move your ass.

He swerves left into oncoming traffic. He swerves right -- the first scrape on the new car as he grazes a Corolla.

BRANDT

Shit.

INT. PACIFIC STUDIOS - STAGE #6 - DAY

A sit-com apartment set -- a Sci-Fi cliche of shiny spandex, glass, metal, and digitally projected lighting.

STEVEN PRICE, (41), the youngest studio head in Hollywood, stands in the wings of his newest TV darling as a MAN and WOMAN run their lines.

His cellphone illuminates, He checks it. He grins, walks across the set to the coffee bar.

ADDISON BANKS, late forties, a classy throwback with business savvy, stops at the coffee bar. Her cellphone BUZZES.

ADDISON
(to self)
Jesus Christ, Brandt.

STEVEN
Heard from Brandt?

Addison holds up her cellphone. CU ONSCREEN: "FUCK YOU SP."

ADDISON
Looks like everyone's hearing from him. You knew he'd blow up.

STEVEN
That's his constant state nowadays isn't it?

ADDISON
At least he's fighting for what he wants.

STEVEN
You knew it was coming. He was ticking time bomb and he's hit zero, zero. It's no secret, his past made it clear he'd be the next to fall.

ADDISON
You could have at least given him the news personally.

STEVEN
Had he had the decency to show up to a meeting. You act like I haven't tried to work with the guy.

ADDISON

If I recall, the last time you met face to face you showed up two weeks into his shoot with his script bloodier than a slasher pic.

STEVEN

Somebody needed to put him down. And, in today's world, why are you defending him? You should be reveling in his demise.

Addison takes in his words. Steven pours his coffee, crosses back to the set.

INT. MERCEDES - DAY (SAME)

Brandt pushes the accelerator as the light turns red.

GPS WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

In one-thousand feet take a right onto Santa Monica Boulevard.

Another DOG BARK. He attempts a response, his cellphone falls to the floor. Brandt's face goes red.

BRANDT

Goddammit!

He presses the Bluetooth on the steering wheel.

BRANDT

Steven fucking Price.

PHONE VOICE (V.O.)

I'm sorry. I didn't get that.

BRANDT

Fuck... Steven Price.

The phone RINGS through the car's sound system...

RECEPTIONIST'S VOICE (V.O.)

Hello, Mr. Price's office. Who may I say is calling?

BRANDT

You know who the hell this is, Barbara.

RECEPTIONIST'S VOICE (V.O.)

I'm sorry Mr. Thomason. Mr. Price is currently out of...

Brandt ends the call.

BRANDT
(to voice recognition)
Shit. Price Cell.

PHONE VOICE (V.O.)
I'm sorry, unable to find Shy
Princess.

BRANDT
Jesus fucking Christ...

PHONE VOICE (V.O.)
I'm sorry you're having trouble.

BRANDT
(over enunciates)
Price. Cell.

MAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
You've reached Steven
Price. Please leave a message at
--

BRANDT
-- FUUUCK!

Brandt's anger mounts, he pushes the gas.

GPS WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
In on-hundred feet take a right
onto Romaine Street...Take a right.

Brandt flies through another red light.

GPS WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
In six-hundred feet take a right
onto Willoughby Avenue...

Brandt swerves left. A car edges into his path from a side street. He leans on the HORN.

GPS WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
Rerouting. In eight-hundred feet
make a U-turn --

BRANDT
-- SHUT. THE FUCK. UP.

Brandt hammers the volume button silent. He takes a right. A SIREN grows louder -- emergency lights appear in his mirror, coming hard.

Brandt takes a left. The "PACIFIC STUDIOS" archway entrance appears up ahead. The gate rises as a car is let through.

Brandt tailgates his way in, as the GUARD pounds on his driver-side window.

EXT. "PACIFIC STUDIOS" LOT - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Brandt speeds around the car -- turns left down the narrow corridor.

Dent number two -- he bangs a prop cart.

Dent number three -- he cuts a tight right corner. Actors and extras hug the wall as Brandt speeds by.

Brandt targets an open overhead door on Stage #6 -- guns it.

INT. STAGE #6 - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Wheels SQUEAL on the smooth concrete floor as Brandt weaves through the building.

INT. SIT-COM SET (SAME)

The Man and Woman continue to rehearse. Steven sips his coffee, checks his phone. Comfortable.

Suddenly, a woman's SCREAM. The SQUEAL of rubber --

The set wall topples inward. Mayhem as actors and crew scurry. Headlights beam across the demolished set. Addison and Steven cautiously approach the wreckage.

Steam rises from the crumpled hood. Brandt pushes the door ajar. The police arrive.

BRANDT

You little fuck. You think you can
pull my funding?

Witnesses of Brandt's swath of destruction gather.

BRANDT (CONT'D)

You're the poorest sci-fi fucking
excuse for an executive I've ever
fucking met.

A POLICE OFFICER aids Brandt's extraction, then slams him against the car, cuffs him.

BRANDT (CONT'D)
I put this goddamn studio on the
fucking map.

Brandt contorts his body toward Steven as he's led away...

BRANDT (O.S.)
Your fucking 3-D glasses got you so
cross-eyed -- I wouldn't wipe my
ass with the shit-rolls you put
out, you mother fucking fuck. Fuck
you.

STEVEN
So outta touch. It's kinda sad to
see the son-of-a-bitch end like
this.

A BIRD CHIRP as a tweet comes in on Addison's cellphone.
CU SCREEN: a photo of Brandt being led away in cuffs.

Steven shows Addison his phone with the same tweet.

STEVEN
The wrath of social media.

Addison holds her indignation, walks away.

Steven surveys the damage. The DOG BARK alert in non-stop
inside Brandt's car. Steven reaches in, smiles as retrieves
Brandt's cellphone.

INT. LAMBORGHINI - DAY (TRAVELING)

Steven exits the Pacific Studios front gate, heads down
Sunset Blvd. He slows as he approaches "CAFE MED", a
paparazzi hot spot. Several PAPS loiter outside. Steven
tosses Brandt's cellphone within reach and speeds away.

INT. L.A. PRECINCT - DAY

The ATTENDANT empties Brandt's belongings on the counter as
he signs.

BRANDT
Where's my phone?

ATTENDANT
What you see is what you had.

Brandt glares at the pile: a wallet, Tag Heuer, two rings
and leather belt. He grabs his belt, sweeps the rest back
into the envelope.

EXT. L.A. PRECINCT (CONTINUOUS)

Brandt exits. Addison is behind the wheel of her Audi. She avoids eye contact, waits for him to enter.

INT. AUDI - DAY (TRAVELING)

They travel in silence. Brandt steals peeks. He can't wait any longer for his scolding.

BRANDT

Okay. What was I supposed to do.
Face the pillow and take it?

ADDISON

Maybe respond like a man, not a
five-year-old spoiled brat.

BRANDT

I'm the spoiled brat? That little fuck, comes in with other people's money, hits it big with a couple of comic book shit flicks and thinks he the new god of Hollywood. Give me a fucking break.

Addison blurts out a laugh.

ADDISON

Really? This town isn't what it used to be. And, if you haven't noticed, you're not the Brandt Thomason you used to be. The room is a lot smaller now. The rules have changed and you're not following them.

BRANDT

Yeah, and, who the fuck's making the rules in this fucking town... There was a time you'd have been sitting in that seat next to me.

Addison glares back -- *yeah right.*

BRANDT

You're E-P for a fucking Mork & Mindy reboot.

ADDISON

I made a choice.

BRANDT
You compromised.

ADDISON
Something you haven't a clue about.

BRANDT
Yeah? What about Price? He wouldn't know compromise if it dropped down on both knees and sucked him.

Addison settles her anger.

ADDISON
You made your decision. I made mine.

BRANDT
Is that what you did? Or did you just drop down on your knees...

Brandt instantly regrets going there. Addison screeches to a halt.

ADDISON
Get out...GET THE FUCK OUT. NOW.

BRANDT
I'm sorry. Look, can we...

She shoots a glare that could kill plants and small animals.

BRANDT
Okay, okay.

He hops out. Before the door closes, Addison speeds off.

Brandt scampers into the street, watches her Audi speed away. Cars SCREECH to a halt behind him, HORNS sound.

BRANDT
Ah, get the fuck over it.

Brandt waves the cars by.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Brandt looks both ways, gets his barrings, walks on.

He stops outside "WANG'S KITCHEN" -- a hole-in-the-wall on Sunset Blvd.

INT. "WANG'S KITCHEN" - DAY

Brandt enters the narrow dining area -- it's unoccupied. Four red vinyl booths line one wall. Autographed photos of film personalities past and present fill the walls. Movie posters conceal the cracked yellow ceiling.

TOMMY, a tall, thin Chinese man in his seventies, shuffles from the back. His inviting smile dials back Brandt's anger. He speaks in broken English with an accent...

TOMMY

Mister "T". How you today? Addy not here?

BRANDT

Not today.

TOMMY

I bring some tea.

Brandt sits in a booth. A photo of himself receiving his first Golden Globe stares back at him.

He pats his pockets for his cellphone, sparking new frustration.

Tommy re-emerges, pours him tea.

TOMMY

Something to eat?

BRANDT

Can I borrow your cellphone?

TOMMY

Bad day, yes?

Tommy brings a flask from his apron pocket. Starts to pour some into Brandt's tea. Brandt stops him, grabs the flask, takes a long swig.

TOMMY

Really bad day. I bring your usual.

Tommy places his cellphone on the table. The photo of BRANDT IN CUFFS is on the screen. Tommy pats Brandt's shoulder, returns to the back.

Brandt waves the flask.

BRANDT
And more of this.

Brandt dials.

ADDISON'S VOICEMAIL (V.O.)
Hi, you've reached Addison Banks.
Please leave a message and I'll get
back to you, thanks...

BRANDT
(into phone)
Addison ...um, this is Brandt. My
phone is AWOL, probably the same
place I left my brain. Surprise,
you're the only number I have
locked inside this hard head of
mine... Anyway, you're right,
you're right, you're right. I'm
sorry, okay. Just come back and
tell me how to fix this.

INT. "WANG'S KITCHEN" (LATER)

Tommy moves Brandt's half-eaten plate and sits.

TOMMY
She not call? She really punish
you this time.

BRANDT
I messed up, big.

TOMMY
I've always wondered, why you two
not married. You act married.

BRANDT
Fortunately, it's probably the only
mistake in my fucked up life I
didn't make... for her sake.

TOMMY
I see why she not come. You feeling
sorry for yourself.

BRANDT
If you weren't... I'd kick your
skinny Chinese ass.

TOMMY
Your stubbornness only exceeded by
your humor.

Tommy points to the Golden Globe photo.

TOMMY

You two were a good team back then,
Yes? I remember how happy you were
just to be nominated. You and Addy
wouldn't leave, stay all night.
That's the first time I thought you
two were together. I try to sleep.
You two make very noisy...

Tommy flashes a smile.

BRANDT

You were pretending? You...

Brandt takes a mocking backhanded swipe.

Tommy stands, grabs another photo off the wall: BRANDT'S ACADEMY AWARD WIN. He returns to the table.

TOMMY

This, my favorite movie. Why you
not do movies like this anymore?

BRANDT

Studios don't make movies like that
anymore. It's all Sci-Fi and C-G-I,
served with a big fat fucking heap
of social media hype.

TOMMY

You're a big man in town, yes?

BRANDT

(sarcastic chuckle)

Man is the key word. There's a lot
more to making movies nowadays. And
by more, I mean, 'show me the
millions, or billions...'

Tommy swats away his words, waves the photo at him.

TOMMY

You were happy. You need to find
what makes you happy again. Been a
long time I see you truly happy.

Brandt reclines in the booth with the bottle of scotch,
stares into the photo.

(FLASHBACK) INT. THE BEVERLY HILTON - NIGHT

Brandt, a svelte forty-six, sits with Addison (37), both frozen with anticipation. At the podium, MARSH ANDERS (30), a clean-cut Adonis of a man. He opens the envelope...

MARSH

And, the award for Best Film
Director goes to... Hell Yeah,
Brandt Thomason.

Marsh pumps a fist in the air.

Addison leans into Brandt, kisses him. He stands, dazed by the announcement.

He makes his way between the tables as congratulatory hugs and respectful handshakes are exchanged. Marsh gives Brandt a bear hug.

MARSH

Congrats, buddy. I expect you to
get me one of these someday.

AT THE PODIUM

Brandt gazed around the crowd.

BRANDT

Wow. Anyone who says it's hard to get up here is lying. And, I'm proof.

(laughter)

I've been fortunate to surround myself with great people with great passion, who truly love what we do. To honor me is to honor them as well. Thank you.

Brandt cradles the statuette to his chest.

BACK TO PRESENT

Brandt is slouched in the booth cradling the bottle of scotch. The dangling door bell JINGLES as the last CUSTOMER exits with their take-out. Tommy flips the sign to "CLOSED".

Tommy retrieves his cellphone, nudges Brandt from his slumber as a taxi stops outside.

BRANDT

Well friend, happiness will have to wait.

TOMMY
Tomorrow's another day.

Tommy helps Brandt from the booth. He spots Brandt's fortune cookie, hands it to him.

INT. TAXI - NIGHT - TRAVELING

Brandt gazes out the window -- images pass: the Chinese Theater, the next Mega-Sci-Fi feature beams from a billboard, the "HOLLYWOOD" sign dances in the distance.

Brandt's fortune cookie CRUNCHES in his hand. Brandt pulls out the fortune, reads it.

BRANDT
"Your future success is the fruit of your present self." ...Yeah, shit.

INT. BRANDT'S HOUSE - DAY

Alternating sounds of KNOCKING and doorbell RINGING are heard as Brandt's stumbles to the door still wearing yesterday's disheveled clothes.

Brandt's publicist, BOBBI DANIELS (20's), a five-foot, ball of fire glares in at him.

BRANDT
What the fu...?

BOBBI
...Read 'em.

Bobbi thrusts a stack of papers at Brandt. They scatter to the floor as she storms to the living room.

BRANDT
What is this?

She picks up the TV remote -- speaks in rapid-fire fury...

BOBBI
You were fucking thorough I'll give you that. Amazingly, you called out, insulted or shit on just about everyone you ever worked with. And, I mean EVER. Really?

Brandt skates across the marble floor over the strewn papers. He stares at the TV. A montage of photos flips by.

FEMALE TV VOICE (V.O.)
...Brandt Thomason continued his free fall, the latest to be swept out as Hollywood continues to clean house.

MALE TV VOICE (V.O.)
After three box office bombs yesterday Pacific Studios yanked the funding and his cast scattered after his demolition derby destruction of a set, culminated in his arrest. We talked with Pacific Studios CEO Steven Price --

BOBBI
Really? Really? ...REALLY?

Brandt stares, still not processing.

BRANDT
I don't... How the hell?

BOBBIE
I don't know, maybe...looking for this?

Bobbi shoves a new cellphone into Brandt's gut.

BOBBIE (CONT'D)
I would have changed your number, but... I said, screw it. Not my problem.

Bobbi's eyes well with tears.

BOBBIE
Everyone said, 'don't do it. Thomason is a time bomb.' Did I listen? -- 'But, I love his movies,' I said.-- 'He's a bitter, out-of-touch has-been,' they said. 'One success and he'll be right back on top,' I said. 'All he needs is for someone to show him a little faith,' I said...

She heads out the door.

BOBBI (O.S.)
I'm sorry. I'm done. I can't watch you do this anymore. I can't...

BRANDT

Bobbi. Bobbi. Come on. I need you.

Brandt stands lost in the middle of the room.

FEMALE TV VOICE (O.S.)

*...'Unfortunately, he's burned his
last bridge in this town. His past
is finally catching up with him...*

He picks up a page. Reads it. Wads it. Drops it. Brandt moves toward the patio, opens the sliding glass --

FEMALE TV VOICE (O.S.)

*...Price was quoted, 'the decision
to end our relationship with Brandt
was, in truth, honoring the request
of others.'*

The rhythmic waves drown out the TV rhetoric as Brandt staggers across the deck, down the stairs toward the surf.

INT. BRANDT'S HOUSE - DAY (LATER)

Marsh Anders enters -- now forty, a grubby t-shirt and a hint of grey stubble -- but ever the male eye-candy material.

MARSH

Brandt? Hey buddy, where're you at?

Marsh goes room to room -- heads out to the deck.

He spots Brandt fully clothed on his back at surf's edge. A wave washes around his body. Marsh runs. Brandt swats away a seagull hovering over his head, erasing concern.

Marsh moves close, sits unseen behind Brandt.

A wave hits Brandt in the face -- he holds fast. The next wave completely engulfs him. Brandt sits up, gasping.

Marsh hoots, claps. Brandt rolls to all fours.

MARSH

I hope cameras are rolling
somewhere.

BRANDT

(gagging)

You little ...how fucking long were
you gonna let me lie there?

MARSH

Been there. Done that. Doesn't work, man.

A wave knocks Brandt prone.

EXT. DECK - NIGHT

Brandt and Marsh are planted in over-sized armchairs. A liquor cabinet of empties litter the table and deck.

Brandt passes a bottle to Marsh as his cellphone CHIMES.

MARSH

Another one? Shit, enough already.
Who is it this time?

BRANDT tosses him the cellphone.

MARSH (CONT'D)

J-Law, again? She's been blowing up
your phone for the last hour.
(female voice imitation)
*'Dinosaurs are dinosaurs and you
Thomason are a fucking petrified
bag o' bones.'*

BRANDT

That's it? She's running out of
good stuff, I guess.

Marsh shuffles through the papers, reads...

MARSH (CONT'D)

There's plenty of ammo here --
*'Bullock couldn't act her way
through a fucking Nickelodeon
movie...'*

(another page)

Or, how about... *'Gyllenhaal is the
softest pantie waste of an actor
I've ever worked with...'*

(another page)

Whoa. You didn't... *'if not for the
actors who kiss up to him, Scorsese
would be flipping dough in some
dive pizzeria...and 'Nolan's schizo
films play like an iPhone mash-up.'*
Shit. I wanted to work with these
guys.

A long pause. Only the sound of the SURF...

BRANDT

Right now, today...what would make you happy.

MARSH

Ah... if an amazing redhead walked through the door right now?

BRANDT

Like I'd get a serious fucking response from you.

(then)

You take a wrong turn and you get flushed. Not even a '*thanks for playing.*' There are no second chances.

MARSH

What? You keep talking like that, I'll throw you back into the surf myself.

(then)

If you're worried about what's next...dude, in two days, tomorrow will be yesterday.

BRANDT

Aren't you a fucking fount of wisdom. There was a time that would be true, but today only leads to tomorrow, and follows to the next day, and the next year, and...Fuck.

Marsh closes his eyes.

MARSH (CONT'D)

Hey, you could do Reality. With this new persona, you'd fit right in. You'd be a god.

Brandt's cellphone continues to CHIME.

BRANDT

How do you shut off this goddamn alert?

Brandt sees Marsh is out. Another CHIME. He closes his eyes, joins him. The cellphone falls the deck, continues to CHIME.

EXT. DECK - DAY

Brandt awakens, shades his eyes from bright morning glare. His cellphone RINGS -- it's piercingly loud.

Marsh is gone. Brandt wobbles into the house.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Brandt pops open a hand-labeled pill bottle: "ADDERALL." He washes down two pills and sits at the table. His cellphone RINGS again. Brandt scrolls. The list is long.

CU ONSCREEN: "405-335-7867" appears numerous times. He stares as the screen flashes: "VOICEMAIL".

Brandt ignores it, dials.

ADDISON'S VOICEMAIL (V.O.)
Hi, you've reached Addison Banks.
Please leave a message and I'll --

A call comes in. Brandt answers.

BRANDT
(into phone)
Don't say shit, unless it's good
shit.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

JONATHAN MAYES, Brandt's toupeed, middle-aged accountant, sits at his office desk.

INTERCUT PHONE CONVERSATION:

JONATHAN
(into phone)
Well, the clock struck midnight,
ol' buddy, ol' pal. You do know,
now that the studio pulled your
financing, the twenty-mill you
fronted is your responsibility?

BRANDT
(grimaces)
You're the financial guy. Can't you
do one of those restructure
bullshit things. I'll scale back
production.

JONATHAN

You can't scale back what you've
already spent.

BRANDT

I'll sic Otis on them. Sue all
their asses.

JONATHAN

You owe him half a mill. You
haven't made a dime in over two
years. 'Resids' barely cover the
day to day.

BRANDT

What then, I've got nothing?

JONATHAN

You stopped being liquid two movies
ago. I'm afraid your only option
now is to sell the houses. You'll
take a bath but a quick sale will
net close to what you owe.

BRANDT

The houses are worth at least
thirty.

JONATHAN

You need the money now. If the
investors come calling they'll
freeze all your assets. You'll be
lucky to get half what they're
worth if that happens.

The words are sobering to Brandt.

JONATHAN

You still there?... Brandt?

BRANDT

Yeah, yeah, I heard you. And, where
the fuck am I supposed to live?

END INTERCUT

Brandt hangs up. Another call comes in. CU ONSCREEN:
"405-335-7867" -- Brandt stares at the phone -- curiosity
prevails, he answers.

BRANDT

(into phone)

Who the hell is this?

MAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
(Asian accent)

Hello, Mr. Thomason? I hope this
is a good time, sir. My name is
Dong TiJang and --

BRANDT
(into phone)

Dong? What kind of fucking
name...?

Brandt hangs up. A beat, the phone RINGS again. CU
ONSCREEN: "405-335-7867"...

BRANDT
(into phone)

How the hell did you get this
number?

DONG (V.O.)

Sorry, sir. I lost connection. As I
was about to say, I would like to
meet with you to discuss a business
opportunity.

Brandt's set to hang up until his last words trickle out.

DONG (V.O.)

Hello? ...Sir? Mr. Thomason, are
you still there?

BRANDT

Yeah. Who'd you say you were with?

DONG (V.O.)

I prefer to talk in person. I will
send a driver. Okay?

BRANDT

Yeah, sure ...Wait. What?

DONG (V.O.)

One hour, sir.

INT. TOWN CAR - DAY

Brandt sits in back, dials his cellphone.

ADDISON'S VOICEMAIL (V.O.)

Hi, you've reached Addison Banks.
Please leave a message and I'll get
back to you, thanks...

Brandt starts to speak, hangs up.

EXT. RESTAURANT - DAY

The town car stops at the entrance. The DRIVER opens the door and Brandt goes in.

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

The HOSTESS seats Brandt at a street-side window.

HOSTESS
Coffee, sir?

BRANDT
Do you have something stronger?
(off her look)
Never mind...

The glass walled fusion bistro anchors the first floor of a hotel. A few staff recognize Brandt. They sneak peeks from inside the kitchen.

Brandt watches as a sedan make several bad attempts to parallel park -- nudging cars front and rear.

DONG TIJANG (40's) emerges from the sedan -- short and stout, black suit business formal. He checks his handiwork - still three feet off the curb.

JIAO (20's), a petite Asian woman, conservatively dressed in a navy, below the knee dress suit, exits the passenger side, shakes her head. Dong hands her the keys.

Dong enters, greets the Hostess with a respectful head nod. She directs him to Brandt's table.

He head nods to Brandt.

DONG
Mr. Thomason. I much appreciate you meeting with me. I hope you have not been waiting long.

Dong maintains his awkward smile. Brandt studies him.

BRANDT
So?... You didn't bring me down here just to stare at my ugly ass... Sit.

Brandt's bluntness puts Dong on notice.

DONG

Right. Yes. Again, thank you. My colleagues are big fans.

BRANDT

Colleagues? Really. Given my current status, that's not the endorsement I'd lead with.

Brandt spies the kitchen staff gawking, cellphones pointed, raising his suspicion.

BRANDT

What the hell is this? Some kind of media game?

DONG

I'm sorry?

Brandt slides out. The WAITRESS arrives with a tray. Unloads an array of breakfast items and a teapot for Dong.

Dong stays calm, prepares his tea.

DONG

I took the liberty. I did not know what you like so I had them prepare a variety. I know how Americans deem breakfast as the most important meal of the day.

Brandt slides back in. Dong smiles, nods again.

DONG (CONT'D)

So, given recent events, my colleagues and I believe this would be the right time to approach you.

BRANDT

Unless you're holding a check for twenty mill, this is going to be a short conversation.

DONG

We are creating an film entity here in the United States.

Brandt halts mid-chew, a quip of a grin.

BRANDT

What are you talking about? A room with a receptionist?

Dong skirts Brandt's insolence.

DONG

We would like you to take a closer look, see for yourself. We will fly you out tonight.

BRANDT

Hold on. You'll have to lube me up better than that if you want me to cum. How about giving me the what, where and why to start.

DONG

You are aware that China is the second largest film market to that of the United States, yes?

BRANDT

Yeah, I call it the Walmart trade-off, you send us your shit and we send you ours.

Dong's contempt grows.

DONG

Nevertheless, many in your country and ours have become wary of our investments in existing U.S. film entities. And, your president has made threats against our involvement as well.

Brandt gobbles his food...

BRANDT

Yeah, well he's pissed in everybody's Wheaties.

(then)

What makes you think you can come here and open up shop like some corner convenience store? It takes years of establishing yourself in this business.

DONG

My colleagues believe, bringing in a person with high stature such as yourself will give us instant name recognition.

Brandt cracks an ironic smile.

BRANDT

There it is again. You, and your colleagues should read the paper once in a while. I'm on the short list of the last people you'd want to nuzzle up to.

Brandt glares in for an answer.

DONG

Yes, your recent indiscretions are a concern, however --

BRANDT

-- Sounds like I'm just a label on a pair of fucking jeans?

(then)

These colleagues, whoever they are, need to know my indiscretions, as you put it, are spurred by the lack of respect and creativity I've been given. It's sucked the life out of this whole goddamn town, if you ask me. If they want to walk around with me stuck to their ass, they better be willing to give me that?

Brandt hand-stuffs his mouth.

DONG

All questions will be answered when you accept the next meeting.

Brandt stares hard into Dong's eyes.

BRANDT

So, what the hell kind of name is 'Dung'?

DONG

It's Dong. Like... Kong.

Dong grits, redirects toward Jiao sitting in the car. He slowly shakes his head in disdain.

INT. LOCATION SET - DAY

It's a reality show: "WORKMATES" -- centered on a big-box home improvement store. Marsh sits off-camera as characters interact.

DENISE, a sultry, unabashed twenty-something, eyes Marsh as she finishes her on-camera stint. She strolls seductively past Marsh and he follows her into a dressing room.

Brandt arrives on set, approaches several crew gathered around the sound board.

BRANDT
Where's Marsh?

A CREW MEMBER offers Brandt headphones. Denise, her wireless mic still live, is heard engaging in boisterous sex with Marsh.

INT. DRESSING ROOM (CONTINUOUS)

Brandt enters. The sex continues. Denise hops off naked from the waist down.

DENISE
Mr. Thomason. I'm such a huge, huge admirer. If you're ever in need of a new face, or whatever...

Denise brushes provocatively close, pulls on her skin-tight Khaki shorts and exits.

Marsh covers up, lights a joint. Brandt declines a hit.

BRANDT
In case you haven't gotten the memo, playing with the help is taboo nowadays.

MARSH
What happens in reality, stays in reality, dude.

BRANDT
You do know she was still wired?

MARSH
What? Shit.

Marsh pops open the door still pant-less. APPLAUSE rains in from the crew. Marsh slams the door, takes a final hit. Brandt grimaces at Marsh's nakedness.

BRANDT
I just had a meeting with a guy...
Dong was his name.
(points)
About as big as yours truly.

Marsh gives him the finger, pulls on his pants. They exit the room to...

INT. LOCATION SET (CONTINUOUS)

BRANDT (CONT'D)

I thought it was a joke too. But,
what the fuck. Like I got options.

MARSH

He said a studio start-up, really?

BRANDT

He didn't elaborate but if it's
full control.

MARSH

Yeah, well. If it sounds too
good...

BRANDT

They're flying me out tonight for a
formal meet. I need you to do
something. Track down Addison.
She'd know if it's legit.

Before he can finish, Marsh is dialing.

MARSH

Addy, Hi.

(eyes on Brandt)

No, I called you for myself? The
last time I saw Brandt he was
drowning his sorrows surf side.

(grins)

Yes, he did totally fuck himself,
but that's Brandt. Hey, the reason
I called, I have this contract, and
my manager's out of town. Could you
take a quick peek so I can...Aldo's
at six, great. Love you, babe.

Marsh hangs up.

MARSH (CONT'D)

She's gonna be pissed.

Brandt walks away.

MARSH (O.S.)

I'll be at Roxy's. You're buying.

INT. "ALDO'S RESTAURANT" - NIGHT

Brandt enters, spots Addison at a table with WES MYLES (40's) -- *a mutual friend whose eyed Addison for years.*

ADDISON'S TABLE

Addison's anger ignites.

ADDISON

Excuse me. I forgot, I need to make
a quick call.

Addison leaves the table. She grabs Brandt's arm and pulls him out the door.

INT/EXT. "ALDO'S RESTAURANT" - NIGHT

Addison continues to pull until Brandt stops her.

ADDISON

Goddammit. I knew the
son-of-a-bitch was lying.

BRANDT

Wes?

Addison slaps him, turns back toward the entrance.

BRANDT (CONT'D)

Okay, okay. Addison, wait.
(she stops)

I just want to say, I'm sorry.

Addison stops, checks his sincerity.

BRANDT (CONT'D)

And, I need your help... just some
advice.

ADDISON

Really? Now you want my advice. I
gave you advice for a million
fucking years and you wouldn't take
it. So, no. And, for the record,
when you truly understand what
you're sorry for, I'll accept your
apology.

Addison continues on.

BRANDT

Why didn't we get married?

Addison spins back.

ADDISON

WHAT? Get the hell out of here
before I do more than slap you.

BRANDT

Listen. I know I fucked up. I know
I'm a son-of-a-bitch to be around.
But, you've known that about me
longer than either of us want to
admit... Yet, you put up with it
all those years. Why?

Addison won't succumb to his heartfelt admission.

ADDISON

I can't help you any more, Brandt.
You stepped on a lot of egos in a
town built on them. I'm sorry.

Brandt stands demoralized as she re-enters the restaurant.

INT. "ROXY'S" - NIGHT

A strip club. The dim blue light silhouettes the sparse crowd. Marsh is trashed. MISTY is giving him a lap dance in a back room. Her TRAMP STAMP in full view: YOLO ~ IN 2 DAYS, TOMORROW WILL BE YESTERDAY.

Brandt appears in front of Marsh.

MARSH

Brandt, baby.

BRANDT

Come on.

EXT. "ROXY'S STRIP CLUB" - NIGHT

Brandt prods Marsh as he staggers through the parking lot looking for his car.

MARSH

And I'm going, why?

BRANDT

Because we're two idiots who've
blown up our lives.

MARSH
I like my life.

Marsh makes an EXPLOSION sound. Brandt thrusts Marsh against the car, frisks him for his keys. Marsh moves his crotch toward Brandt's hand.

MARSH
To the left. Oh yeah, right there.

Brandt opens the door, shoves Marsh in.

MARSH (CONT'D)
Where's Misty? She's got great tits, don't you think? Fake, but great.

INT. AIRPORT/SECURITY GATE - NIGHT

Brandt pulls Marsh aside, does his best to puff him up. He hands off their I.D.s to the TSA AGENT. She eyes Marsh's drunken state.

TSA AGENT
Sir, I can't let your friend pass in his condition.

BRANDT
What? He'll be fine...probably pass out as soon as he hits the seat.

MARSH
She's got nice tits, too.

TSA AGENT
Alright, sir I'm going ask you to step...

Marsh stumbles forward. The Attendant steps in front of him.

MARSH
Do you know who we are?

BRANDT
Shut up.
(to Agent)
Okay, you're right. My friend's a little intoxicated but we really need to make our plane. So if --

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
-- Hey, why don't you step aside, let her do her job. You can see he's in no shape to fly.

Brandt faces the man.

BRANDT

And, why don't you mind your own
fucking business.

MAN

Fuck you, ol' man.

TSA AGENT

(into walkie)

I need backup to station three.

Marsh throws a right at the Man, misses. Before the Man can react, they're running down...

INT. TERMINAL (CONTINUOUS)

Brandt and Marsh scramble through the terminal. A rush of adrenalin pushes Marsh ahead of Brandt. Two TSA AGENTS give chase.

Brandt and Marsh turn a corner and stop, out of breath. They stare down the terminal. Their only out is the "WOMEN'S RESTROOM" -- They enter.

The TSA Agents reach the corner. They scan the crowded terminal, split up.

INT. WOMEN'S RESTROOM - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

A WOMAN exits a stall. Brandt pushes Marsh into a stall. They flounder in the cramped space.

BRANDT (V.O.)

Get up, get up. Ouch, not there.
Move to the left.

The sound of the two men GASPING for breath and GRAPPLING inside the stall hastens the Woman's exit.

SECURITY OFFICER (V.O.)

Hello, security. I'm coming in.

Brandt sits on the stool, legs elevated. Marsh stands atop the stool, leans against the back wall, balanced on one leg. His crotch pressed into Brandt's face.

The TSA Agent enters.

SECURITY OFFICER (CONT'D)

(to Woman)

Did you see two men enter?

She responds in a FOREIGN DIALECT he doesn't understand. She hurries out. The TSA Agent peers under each stall as he walks the line. Brandt SHUSHES Marsh.

Brandt strains to hold his legs off the ground, his arms wrapped around Marsh's waist. Marsh mashes harder into Brandt's face for balance. They struggle to remain silent.

WALKIE VOICE TRANSMISSION (V.O.)
Suspects spotted in A Concourse.

The TSA Agent rushes out. Brandt's MUFLLED VOICE is heard.

MARSH
What?

Brandt pushes Marsh off. He tumbles to the floor.

BRANDT
I said, GET THE FUCK OFF.

MARSH
(smiles)
Was it good for you?

EXT. AIRPORT - NIGHT

Brandt wanders the parking garage ahead of Marsh. He presses the Key Fob, follows the HONK, it grows louder. They stop Brandt spins a three-sixty. Another HONK, he looks up...

BRANDT
Shit. It's on the next level.

Marsh droops against a car.

MARSH
Come get me.

A limo approaches, stops in front of them. Two Sumo-size ASIAN MEN get out, strong-arm them into the limo.

INT. LIMO - NIGHT (TRAVELING)

The Asian Men stare stoically ahead.

BRANDT
(toward the limo partition)
Okay, whoever I pissed off, I'm
sorry. So, if you can just take us
up to our car...

Marsh waves a hand in the Asian Men's faces. No reaction.

MARSH

They're probably pissed you didn't
cast more of them in your stuff.
Wasn't it you who said, audiences
don't see movies with nobodies.

The Asian Men break rank, stare directly. Brandt glares at Marsh -- *shut your goddamn mouth.*

They ride on in silence. The lights fade as the limo moves out of the city.

MARSH (CONT'D)

How long do you think before
somebody realizes we're missing?
(then)
I wouldn't be here today if it
wasn't for you.

BRANDT

Well, what do you want me to say,
I'm sorry for --

MARSH

-- No, no, man. I mean you gave me
my start. Put up with my shit. So,
no matter what everyone else says,
you're my man to the end.

Marsh nuzzles in child-like his head on Brandt's chest, passes out. The Asian Men stare as Brandt tries to hold his embarrassment.

INT. LIMO - DAWN

Brandt awakens to The Asian Men unwavering stare as the limo rambles down a gravel road. The desolate desert streams by outside. Marsh is asleep on Brant's lap, he thrusts him off.

The limo pulls up to a large corrugated metal warehouse. The morning sun breaks the horizon. The Asian Men gesture Brandt and Marsh out.

A second limo and Dong's sedan pull alongside. Brandt's anger flares as Dong and Jiao exit the sedan.

BRANDT

(to Dong)

This is you? You gave us a fucking
heart attack.

Dong eyes Marsh who mockingly waves into the blacked-out windows of the second limo.

DONG
Your problem at the airport
facilitated a change.

The second limo backs away and moves off.

MARSH
Your friends aren't coming?

DONG
Shall we?

Everyone enters the --

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

The warehouse is empty except for a large conference table in the middle. Dong leads the group closer and stops, waits.

A door opens at the far end of the warehouse. Dong watches as TWO ASIAN BUSINESS MEN ascend the stairs to a second story observation booth. A light illuminates the booth and the men take a position at the window.

Dong moves ahead to the table, flicks on an overhead lamp. He waves Brandt and Marsh forward. An elaborate scale master-plan model spans the entire table.

DONG
Impressive, isn't it?

Brandt stares wide-eyed.

DONG (CONT'D)
We're calling it Yǎnjiè" --
"HORIZON".

Dong gestures to Jiao. She brings forth a folder. In the light, she catches Marsh's eye. She shies away.

DONG
It will rival any studio in
Hollywood ...State-of-the-art.

BRANDT
And where is this planned, Horizon?

DONG
Currently, you're standing right
about here.

Dong indicates an area left of center on the model.

BRANDT

You're building this here?

MARSH

Whoa. Holy fuck, man.

DONG

Language, please Mr. Anders. There
are ladies present.

MARSH

(toward Jiao)

Yes, there are.

Jiao smiles, spurring Marsh's flirtation. Dong notices the exchange. He holds his displeasure.

BRANDT

And where exactly is here? I mean,
where the hell are we?

DONG

Kingman, Arizona.

Marsh snickers. Dong is visibly annoyed, continues.

DONG (CONT'D)

Based on the proximity,
accessibility and the
affordability, it was the correct
choice.

MARSH

Hollywood, I mean Chinawood, in
fucking Arizona? Soon to be
Dead-fucking-wood.

Marsh's snickers grow louder.

BRANDT

Shut up. Let the man speak.

Marsh redirects, coaxes Jiao away from the table. Brandt is fixated on the model.

BRANDT (CONT'D)

Okay, you've impressed me. But,
it'll take years to complete.

DONG

Fortunately, money is a great
accelerant. We expect functional
operation in eighteen months, full
build-out in two years.

BRANDT
Eighteen months?

Marsh's advancements increase, not rejected by Jiao.

DONG
It's all in the file. We will be relying on your vast experience to help us move forward. You will have the majority of control of operations and production.
However...

Dong attention is divided. Dong glares at Jiao, glances toward the booth above.

DONG (CONT'D)
...You will need to adhere to a few stipulations.

The words stunt Brandt's enthusiasm.

BRANDT
I don't know what that means in Chinese but in Hollywood, that means final say isn't mine. And, eighteen fucking months?

A GIGGLE from Jiao hits a cord with Dong.

DONG
(in Chinese)
Enough. Show respect.
(to Brandt)
Is this the type of people you plan to surround yourself with?

MARSH
Hey, calm down little man.

DONG
You, do not speak to me sir.

Dong gestures to Jiao. She drops her head as he berates her.

DONG
(in Chinese: subtitled)
With me now. Your behavior is a disgrace. To think you were ready for such responsibility was a mistake.

Marsh moves in as Jiao begins to cry.

MARSH

Hey, man. I think you need to back off.

DONG

Do not interfere in matters that do not concern you, sir.

(to Jiao)

You will return home immediately.

JIAO

But...

DONG

(in Chinese, subtitled)

Do what I say.

Jiao heads toward the exit. Dong glares at Brandt for an apology.

DONG (CONT'D)

Mr. Thomason?

Brandt's mind is swirling with the possibilities. His disregard for Marsh's behavior tips Dong's to his limit.

DONG (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I'm afraid we cannot do business. This meeting is over.

Dong firmly waves off the men in the booth, heads toward the exit. Brandt snaps back.

BRANDT

What? Wait, you can't be serious?

(to Marsh)

What the hell just happened?

MARSH

Oh, man ...I could be wrong but, I think Dong has a thing for Jiao.

BRANDT

What the fu...? Are you kidding me?

Shit!

The Business Men descend from the booth and exit. Brandt goes after Dong.

EXT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Dong enters the limo. Brandt storms out behind him.

BRANDT

Dong, Hold on. You can't bring me all the way out here then dump me because your little Geisha girl batted her eyes.

Dong's face could explode -- he slams the door. The limo backs away. The second limo drives past and they disappear in a dust cloud.

Marsh exits the warehouse. Brandt grabs a fistful of shirt with both hands.

BRANDT

You couldn't keep it in your pants for five minutes? This might be just another pussy conquest for you but this is my life.

MARSH

You're not really taking this shit seriously?

Brandt goes to the sedan, opens the driver's door, the keys are on the seat.

MARSH (CONT'D)

Hell, even if they build it, who the fuck will come?

Brandt gets in and speeds off -- leaves Marsh scrambling behind.

INT. SEDAN - DAY (TRAVELING)

Brandt barrels ahead. The gravel road crests, turning to pavement. A small municipal airport appears.

The road parallels the airport. Brandt spots the two limos as they pull up to a private jet on the tarmac.

Brandt's car drifts toward an oncoming car. A horn swerves him back. He screeches to a stop. He watches Dong and Jiao trail the Business Men as they board the jet.

Brandt's head is spinning. He guns it toward the airfield -- rams through the chain-link fence.

The private jet taxis out. Brandt barrels toward the runway. An Airport Security SUV pursues.

INT. PRIVATE JET - DAY

Dong and Jiao sit solemnly. The Business Men glance toward Dong, they exchange terse words, clearly angered by the outcome.

Jiao turns toward the window. She is startled to see Brandt's car barreling toward the jet. The jet lurches as it brakes. Dong and the others scramble to the windows.

EXT. TARMAC - DAY

Brandt exits the sedan and runs toward the jet waving frantically.

The Security SUV cuts him off. Two SECURITY OFFICERS rush Brandt, tackle him to the ground.

INT. PRIVATE JET - DAY (SAME)

They watch as Brandt's arrest plays out, debate in Chinese. Dong turns toward them, shocked by what he is hearing. They look toward Dong, nod in agreement.

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

An OFFICER leads Marsh down the hallway to the holding cell.

Brandt looks up from the bench seat. Marsh grins, makes an EXPLODING sound.

EXT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Brandt sulks out behind Marsh. Both are surprised to find Jaio beside a waiting limo.

JIAO

Mister Thomason. My father, would like to speak with you.

She opens the door for Brandt, he peers in. Dong remains fixed ahead. Marsh and Jaio exchange a look.

MARSH

Father? That's nice.

DONG

I do not or approve. However, my colleagues believe...just as a diamond is transformed from a dull translucent stone...you will become the dragon we are looking for.

INT. PRIVATE JET - NIGHT

Brandt stares at his phone as the jet taxis. Addison's number is ready to dial -- Instead he texts: "ARE YOU HAPPY?"

Brandt waits for a response. Several beats, his screen lights up: "ARE YOU?"

Brandt glances toward Marsh, cuddled with a pillow, sleeping like a baby. Brandt exchanges a look with Dong.

He turns toward the window -- an emotionless look as the jet lifts off.

FADE OUT.

END OF PILOT