

THE EMPEROR OF MALIBU

"Pilot"

written by

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CAST

AUGGIE..... ACTOR
KATE (AUGGIE'S FIANCEE)..... ACTOR
GERRY (AUGGIE'S DAD)..... ACTOR
SHIATZY (AUGGIE'S MOM)..... ACTOR
RUSSELL (AUGGIE'S LITTLE BROTHER)..... ACTOR

COLD OPENING

FADE IN:

INT. KATE AND AUGGIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

(Kate, Auggie)

THE APARTMENT IS CUTE, STRAIGHT OUT OF THE CB2 CATALOG WITH LIVING, DINING AND KITCHEN AREAS. A DOOR LEADS TO A BEDROOM. WE OPEN ON AUGGIE, 26, A HANDSOME FIT CHINESE GUY AND KATE, 26, A CLASSIC CALIFORNIA BLONDE. TOP OF THE CLASS LAW GRADS, KATE HAS A CHARMING EASE AND AUGGIE IS MORE TIGHTLY WOUND.

AUGGIE IS SITTING ON THEIR LIVING ROOM SOFA FULL OF ANXIETY.

AUGGIE

You know I love you right? I mean I
asked you to marry me.

KATE

And you know I love you, right? Cause
I said yes.

AUGGIE

Isn't that all that matters?

KATE

Auggie, call your parents and break
the news to them. It's time.

AUGGIE

I don't know, Kate. I've been thinking
and maybe today isn't the day we tell
them. Maybe tomorrow is the day, or (OFF
PHONE) next Tuesday is looking good
actually. Let's open up our calendars.

SHE KISSES HIM, AND WE SEE HOW MADLY IN LOVE THIS YOUNG
COUPLE IS.

KATE

We've been over this a thousand times.
We've been together two years, we've
been engaged for a week. This is
ridiculous that your parents don't know
about us!

AUGGIE

Kate, billionaires don't know a lot of
things. Like how to do laundry. Wash
their own hair. We'll just add this to
the list.

KATE

We need to be grown-ups about this and
just rip the Band-Aid off.

AUGGIE NODS ENTHUSIASTICALLY AND LOOKS AT KATE LOVINGLY.

AUGGIE

Yes, yes, grown-ups. I totally agree.
(BEAT) I've just been waiting for the
right moment, like when one of them's
in a coma and the other's distracted.
(BEAT) You don't know how Chinese
parents can be. And rich Chinese
parents are even worse-- they think
their money a license to interfere.
They don't have any boundaries.

KATE

All parents have boundary issues. My mom still thinks she can lick her finger and wipe off my face.

AUGGIE

I've seen that, it's weird. But this is different. Babe, you have to imagine my family is like a huge tidal wave. And you and I are the two dumb tourists on the beach wondering why all the villagers are running for the hills.

KATE KISSES HIM AND PUTS AUGGIE'S PHONE IN FRONT OF HIM.

AUGGIE (CONT'D)

What time is it in Shanghai?

KATE

It's morning.

AUGGIE

(STALLING) Yes, but there are a lot of factors involved whenever I call my parents. Is our company stock up or down? Has my dad had his morning shiatsu yet? Was my mom's weekly Chanel delivery delayed at Customs?

KATE GOES TO DIAL THE PHONE.

AUGGIE (CONT'D)

Kate, no!

KATE STOPS.

AUGGIE (CONT'D)

You have no idea how crazy they are.

KATE

If we're going to start a family together, we can't exclude yours.

AUGGIE

I'm warning you...if we let them in now, there's no going back.

KATE

They're parents, not vampires. (THEN) They aren't vampires, right? Babe, you know I love you. I love how funny you are, how deeply you care about the world...your abs. We have great careers, this apartment, MY parents who adore you--and think it's so noble that you don't live off your family. (BEAT) You can do this.

AUGGIE NODS AND PICKS UP THE PHONE.

AUGGIE

(ALMOST DIALING) There may be yelling.

KATE

Good to know.

AUGGIE

And crying.

KATE

I'll brace myself.

AUGGIE

And that's just on my end.

KATE

Auggie!

AUGGIE

(DIALING) Okay, okay.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. SHANGHAI APARTMENT/FACETIME - CONTINUOUS
(Kate, Auggie, Gerry, Shiatzy, Russell, Maids)

GERRY APPEARS, HE'S A LATE 40'S CHINESE TYCOON WITH
IMMACULATELY COMBED HAIR DRESSED IN A NAVY PINSTRIPE SUIT.
IT'S BREAKFAST TIME AND THE SHENS ARE GATHERED AROUND AN
ORNATE DINING TABLE COVERED IN ELABORATE DISHES.

GERRY

It's my phone, I get to answer it.

SHIATZY (O.S.)

But he's my son!

GERRY

Well, I'm pretty sure he's my son too.

Right? (THEN INTO SCREEN) Hello, son.

As they say in America (LIKE A JEWISH
PARENT) You never call!

AUGGIE

Hi, Da...

SHIATZY, 40'S, LONG VOLUMINOUS BLACK HAIR, TONS OF EYE SHADOW
AND DRESSED VERY RICH, FORCES HER WAY INTO THE FRAME.

SHIATZY

When are you coming home?

AUGGIE

Hi, Mo...

SHIATZY

(RE: SCREEN) I look terrible! Is it the lighting?

GERRY

I look fine. (THEN) I mean, yes, the lighting is very bad.

SHIATZY

Why am I forced to talk to my son under bad lighting? Auggie, I want you home this weekend for my opera ball. And your little brother needs you. (CALLING) Russell!

SHIATZY TURNS THE PHONE ON RUSSELL, A CUTE TEENAGER IN A SCHOOL BLAZER EATING NOODLES. ONE MAID LINT ROLLS HIS SHOULDERS, ONE HOLDS AN IPAD FOR HIM, ONE POLISHES HIS SHOES. RUSSELL GRINS AND WINKS, CLEARLY NOT NEEDING ANYTHING.

GERRY

Auggie, I meant to tell you...

AUGGIE

Dad, I need to...

SHIATZY RAISES THE PHONE TO A MORE FLATTERING ANGLE.

SHIATZY

Higher is better, Gerry. Higher!

AUGGIE

Quiet, everyone!

GERRY AND SHIATZY ARE SHOCKED INTO SILENCE.

AUGGIE (CONT'D)

You should all know...that I have a girlfriend.

KATE (O.S.)

Fiancée.

AUGGIE

...that I have a fiancée.

GERRY AND SHIATZY ARE SILENT AND FROZEN.

AUGGIE (CONT'D)

And she's right here.

AUGGIE MOVES THE PHONE SO KATE IS ONSCREEN WITH HIM.

SPLIT SCREEN: KATE AND AUGGIE ON ONE SIDE AND GERRY AND SHIATZY ON THE OTHER.

AUGGIE (CONT'D)

Everyone, this is Kate. My fiancée.

KATE

(DELIGHTED) *Ni hao ma?*

GERRY AND SHIATZY ARE FROZEN.

AUGGIE

We've been together for two years.

GERRY AND SHIATZY REMAIN FROZEN.

KATE

(THROUGH HER SMILE) Is the screen frozen?

AUGGIE

No. Wait for it.

SHIATZY STANDS UP AND LEAVES THE FRAME.

SHIATZY (O.S.)

It's all your fault! My son has been
seduced by the decadence of the West!

GERRY

(CALLING) Call the pilot. I want wheels up
in an hour. We're going to California.

RUSSELL ENTERS THE FRAME OF THE SCREEN.

RUSSELL

(PISSSED OFF) Thanks a lot, Auggie. I
was supposed to have the jet tonight!

THE PHONE HANGS UP. OFF KATE AND AUGGIE'S SHOCKED LOOKS.

KATE

(TRYING TO BE POSITIVE) Band aid off.

CUT TO:

MAIN TITLES

ACT ONE

SCENE A

FADE IN:

INT. KATE AND AUGGIE'S APARTMENT - DAY

(Kate, Auggie, Gerry, Shiatzy, Russell, Guard, Servants)

KATE ENTERS IN RUNNING CLOTHES TO FIND AUGGIE MANIACALLY STRESS CLEANING. HE'S GOT ON LONG LATEX GLOVES AND A DISPOSABLE WHITE DUST MASK.

KATE

Oh, wow! Are you cleaning or are you swabbing for DNA? (THEN) I told you I'd help as soon as I got back from my run.

AUGGIE, STILL CLEANING, DOESN'T RESPOND. KATE STARTS HELPING. HE TAKES OFF THE GLOVES AND MASK AND STARTS KARATE CHOPPING PILLOWS.

KATE (CONT'D)

I've always wondered why people do that. Do the pillows look better? Or do they just look pregnant now?

NO REACTION FROM AUGGIE. KATE SEES A PITCHER OF WATER WITH CUCUMBERS IN IT.

KATE (CONT'D)

Ooooh, cucumber water. How fancy!

AUGGIE

Not for you! For my parents.

KATE

I know! Auggie, you need to take a breath and relax a little.

AUGGIE

(NOT RELAXED) Haha, I'm totally relaxed. See?

AUGGIE DOES A BREAKDANCE ARM WAVE AS IF THAT PROVES HE'S CHILL.

KATE

That's more like it.

SHE GIVES HIM A LITTLE KISS. HE LOOKS AT HER.

KATE (CONT'D)

What?

AUGGIE

We need to talk about what you're gonna wear. I personally love your style. It's edgy yet sexy but... what do you have that's not from H&M? (OFF HER LOOK) It's just that my mom worked at Vogue Paris.

KATE

H&M is fashion forward and I'm going to wear that little black dress you said makes me look like Audrey Hepburn.

AUGGIE

Black?! That's for funerals. She'll think you're saying you wish she was dead. Everything means something.

KATE

Am I meeting your parents or entering the Matrix?

AUGGIE

Oh, they are far more confusing than the Matrix.

(MORE)

AUGGIE (CONT'D)

(THEN) Okay, I was thinking, the powder blue dress that you wore the night we got engaged.

KATE

Aww, the good old days...last week.

AUGGIE

(SUDDENLY) And this necklace?

AUGGIE PULLS A PEARL NECKLACE OUT OF NOWHERE.

KATE

Did you have that this whole time?!
Auggie, calm down. We'll get through this together.

KATE CROSSES TO AUGGIE AND GIVES HIM A KISS. HE RELAXES A LITTLE.

AUGGIE

Babe, I'm sorry I'm stressing. You are beautiful and you're gonna look great no matter what.

THEY KISS AGAIN.

KATE

I'm just gonna hop in the shower and blow my hair out.

AUGGIE

(SWEET AND PLAYFUL) Oh, they've got no chance now.

KATE

(PLAYFULLY TOSSING HAIR) Yes, tonight I'll be serving the full fantasy.

(MORE)

KATE (CONT'D)

(THEN GENUINE) It's all gonna be fine.

I promise. No tidal wave.

THE DOORBELL RINGS. THEY BOTH LOOK AT EACH OTHER IN HORROR.

KATE (CONT'D)

It can't be? Please say it's not!

AUGGIE

I forgot...this is the dark side of them having that jet. They're always so friggin' early!

KATE

Oh my god! Oh my god!

THEY BOTH FREAK OUT. AUGGIE STARTS TO HYPERVENTILATE.

AUGGIE

Here put this on!

HE TOSSES THE NECKLACE TO HER. SHE PUTS IT ON IN A BLIND PANIC, SO NOW SHE'S WEARING RUNNING CLOTHES AND A NECKLACE. AUGGIE SMOOTHS HIS HAIR AND OPENS THE DOOR TO FIND A HUGE CHINESE SECURITY GUARD WEARING SUNGLASSES AND AN EAR PIECE.

KATE

Hi, I'm Kate.

AUGGIE

That's my dad's security guy. (TO

SECURITY GUARD) Hi, Joseph.

THE GUARD WORDLESSLY SCANS THE ROOM AND NODS. HE NODS TO THE DOOR. FIVE SERVANTS POUR IN CARRYING LOUIS VUITTON TRUNKS AND TONS OF LUGGAGE.

KATE

Hi, I'm Kate.

AUGGIE

They're my parents' staff. (TO STAFF)

Hi guys.

KATE

(RE: LUGGAGE) Wait, why is there so much stuff?

AUGGIE

They're staying with us.

KATE

Wait you didn't mention that! And wouldn't they be more comfortable in, I don't know, the penthouse at a five star hotel?

AUGGIE

Of course they'd be more comfortable in a hotel! But no Chinese parent is going to waste money on a hotel if their kid has an apartment within a hundred mile radius. Even a billionaire.

KATE

I'm so lost. (THEN) And where are your parents and brother?

GERRY, SHIATZY (IN BLACK) AND RUSSELL ENTER. THEY ALL SLOWLY TAKE OFF THEIR SUNGLASSES.

KATE (CONT'D)

(SOTTO TO AUGGIE) She's wearing black.

AUGGIE

I'm sure it's just a coincidence.

GERRY

(LOOKING AROUND) You live here?

CUT TO:

SCENE B

INT. KATE AND AUGGIE'S APARTMENT - MINUTES LATER

GERRY, SHIATZY AND RUSSELL ALL STAND FROZEN LOOKING AT KATE. AUGGIE IS NERVOUSLY SMILING AND HOLDING KATE'S HAND.

KATE

It's so nice to finally meet you.

Emphasis on finally.

KATE LAUGHS. NO ONE ELSE DOES. AUGGIE TRIES TO BUT IT ISN'T GREAT.

AUGGIE

(SOTTO TO KATE) I say we make a run for it.

GERRY

(TO KATE, POLITE) It's a pleasure to meet you. (THEN TO AUGGIE, UPSET IN MANDARIN) How do you wait two years to tell us about her?!

SHIATZY

(IN MANDARIN) How do you get engaged without my permission?!

RUSSELL

(IN MANDARIN) How do you call the maid around here?! (THEN, IN ENGLISH, LOOKING FOR MAID) I need a drink after that awful car ride.

AUGGIE

Here.

AUGGIE HANDS HIS BROTHER A GLASS OF CUCUMBER WATER. RUSSELL SIPS, REFLEXIVELY SPITS IT OUT AND GASPS LIKE HE'S POISONED.

RUSSELL

Taaaaaap!

AUGGIE

I'm sorry, Russell. I forgot about
your tap water allergy.

KATE

Why don't we sit? (SOTTO TO AUGGIE)
Cause my legs are kinda buckling.

EVERYONE MOVES TO TAKE A SEAT IN THE LIVING ROOM.

GERRY

So...Kate...tell us about yourself.

AUGGIE DOWNS THE REST OF RUSSELL'S WATER.

KATE

Well, I grew up in California. My
parents are amazing. My dad sells cars
and my mom --

SHIATZY LETS OUT A PAINED SQUEAK.

GERRY

(OFF SHIATZY) Maybe skip to the part
where you met our son.

KATE

Right. Well, I do intellectual
property law. I went to Stanford,
that's where Auggie and I first met...

(OFF AUGGIE) But someone was too shy
to ask me out at the time.

AUGGIE

But then two years later we met again
at a yoga retreat in Joshua Tree.

SHIAZTY SQUEAKS.

KATE

Auggie passed out in the sweat lodge,
and when I revived him with a cold
kombucha, our eyes met...and the rest
is history.

RUSSELL

From Downward Dog to Ring on Finger!

SHIATZY SQUEAKS AGAIN.

AUGGIE

Mom, are you okay?

GERRY

If only we had some water.

SHIATZY

I just have a couple of questions.

(RAPID FIRE) Where's your family from?

Is there a history of madness? How

poor are they? Why in god's name are

you wearing pearls with that outfit?!

CUT TO:

SCENE CINT. LIVING ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

KATE AND AUGGIE ARE MAKING UP THE SOFA BED FOR THEMSELVES. THEY SPEAK IN HUSHED TONES.

KATE

Auggie, this is bad. What are we gonna do?

AUGGIE

Don't worry. My mother's migraine will go away as long as everyone is completely silent and does exactly as she asks.

KATE

I mean about them hating me! I always thought you were paranoid or exaggerating about your parents, but this is Level Five crazy. Your mom won't even look at me...and she keeps referring to me as "that one."

AUGGIE

They're just in shock right now. My mom can't believe I proposed to you-- to ANYONE--without consulting her first. She expects to manage my love life. She fantasized about me marrying one of the Monaco princesses and has a list of eligible women around the world updated daily based on their royal titles, net worth and social media following.

KATE

That's crazy! (BEAT) I knew I should have been posting more on Instagram.

AUGGIE

We're gonna have to give it a little time.

KATE

How much time?

AUGGIE

Well, my cousin Andrew married a woman from Beijing, and at first she wasn't accepted by the family, but she is now.

KATE

(RELIEVED) So they love her now? How long did it take?

AUGGIE

They don't love her. They accept her. But it only took twelve years!

KATE STANDS THERE FOR BEAT.

KATE

Can you catch migraines? Cause I have one now.

AUGGIE

Don't freak out. If I had told them from the start, we wouldn't have had these two amazing blissful years together.

KATE

Yeah, but...if you'd told them two years ago, then we'd only have ten years left till my acceptance date.

AUGGIE

It won't take that long. My parents are much more easy-going. Six years tops! (RE: PILLOWS) I'll take these to my dad.

AUGGIE EXITS. KATE STARTS INFLATING AN AIR MATTRESS. RUSSELL ENTERS IN SILK PAJAMAS AND A MONOGRAMMED ROBE WATCHES WITH CURIOSITY, NOT HELPING.

RUSSELL

I appreciate your efforts at hospitality...and I do admire your practical side...but I don't understand why you're blowing up a life raft.

KATE

You've really never seen an air mattress before? This is where you're going to sleep. Try it out. It's so comfy.

RUSSELL PRODS THE BED WITH HIS TOE LIKE IT'S A DEAD BODY.

RUSSELL

So this is how I die.

RESET TO:

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS
(Auggie, Gerry, Shiatzy)

AUGGIE ENTERS WITH THE PILLOWS. GERRY IS CHANGING THE SHEETS
AND AUGGIE IS TAKEN ABACK BY HIS DAD BEING SO DOMESTIC.

AUGGIE

Whoa. Is that Gerry Shen making a bed?

GERRY

The servants didn't have anywhere to
sleep so I sent them to a Four Seasons.

AUGGIE

Lucky them.

GERRY

And I know how to make a bed. When I
went to boarding school in Australia
as a teenager, I had to make my bed
every morning. Hospital corners!

AUGGIE

You don't have the change the sheets,
we just made the bed. But I am
enjoying this.

GERRY

You know we bring our own sheets
everywhere. Doesn't everybody?

AUGGIE

(FEELING SHEETS) Wow. It's like the
belly of a newborn lamb.

GERRY

No, they outlawed those newborn lamb
sheets we liked.

(MORE)

GERRY (CONT'D)

These are Bhutanese lotus silk woven
with 24-karat gold thread.

(INTIMATELY) The gold keeps you cool
at night.

AUGGIE PUTS THE SHEET UP TO HIS FACE, CARESSING IT.

GERRY (CONT'D)

Auggie, plenty of that back in
Shanghai. Where you belong.

AUGGIE

I belong here now, dad.

SHIATZY ENTERS IN AN EXTREMELY OPULENT NIGHTGOWN.

SHIATZY

You don't want to be a billionaire?!
Put that sheet down! Ungrateful
children don't get to touch nice
sheets!

AUGGIE THROWS DOWN THE SHEET, SCARED.

AUGGIE

This is my life now. And I want to be
with Kate.

SHIATZY

There are two point five billion single
girls in the world and at least eight on
my list I'd maybe consider eligible.

GERRY GIVES HER A DUBIOUS LOOK.

SHIATZY (CONT'D)

I said "maybe." And definitely more
than that one out there.

KATE CALLS OUT FROM THE LIVING ROOM.

KATE (O.S.)

Um, I can totally hear you.

AUGGIE

I love Kate.

KATE (O.S.)

I love you too.

AUGGIE

She's going to be my wife, whether you approve or not.

AUGGIE EXITS. SHIATZY LOOKS AT GERRY.

SHIATZY

I've lost my son, thanks to you. If we had sent him to school in England like I wanted, he'd still be a mama's boy.

GERRY

(QUIETLY) Listen, I have a plan.

Auggie has a weakness.

SHIATZY

Yes, yes, his ankles. Everyone in my family has them.

GERRY

No, not his ankles. I call it the "Shen Sense of Duty!" All the Shen Men have it. My father had it. I have it. And Auggie has it. Russell not so much.

SHIATZY

His ankles are very slim though.

(THEN, SINCERE) Gerry, I want my first
born back.

GERRY

I know what to do. If we can't bring him
back to Shanghai yet, we will bring
Shanghai to him. (RE: SHEETS) Not as good
as the newborn lamb ones but still very
nice.

GERRY STROKES THE SHEETS MEANINGFULLY.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWOSCENE D

EXT. MALIBU MANSION DOORSTEP - TWO DAYS LATER
(Auggie, Kate, Gerry, Shiatzy, Servants)

WE ARE IN FRONT OF A STUNNING MODERN CLIFF-TOP MANSION WITH AN ORNATE BLACK MAHOGANY DOOR. IN THE BACKGROUND SERVANTS SCULPT TOPIARY HEDGES INTO ANIMALS. KATE AND AUGGIE STAND THERE CONFUSED.

KATE

Aren't we meeting your parents for
lunch? Whose house is this?

AUGGIE

Kim and Kanye? Who knows? My dad just
said to meet him here. (THEN:
NOTICING) That's weird. This door is
exactly like the one at our penthouse
in Shanghai.

THE FRONT DOOR OPENS AND GERRY STANDS THERE EXCITED AS A KID ON CHRISTMAS, WITH SHIATZY NEXT TO HIM LESS EXCITED.

GERRY

Come in! Come in! Welcome to your home
away from home. Emphasis on home.

RESET TO:

INT. MALIBU MANSION - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS
(Auggie, Kate, Gerry, Shiatzy, Russell, Servants)

AUGGIE AND KATE ENTER. AUGGIE LOOKS AROUND. HE CAN'T BELIEVE HIS EYES. IT'S EXACTLY LIKE THE SHEN SHANGHAI PENTHOUSE. THERE ARE FLOOR-TO-CEILING BRONZE-CLAD WINDOWS INSPIRED BY PHILIP JOHNSON'S DESIGN. THE WHOLE HOUSE LOOKS LIKE IT COULD HAVE BEEN DECORATED BY TOM FORD -- IT IS UTTERLY CONTEMPORARY AND OF THE MOMENT: AT THE ENTRY FOYER, THERE ARE FOUR BRONZE ANIMAL HEADS ON TOTEMS (TIGER/SNAKE/ROOSTER/HORSE) BY CHINA'S HOTTEST CONTEMPORARY ARTIST, AI WEI WEI, LEADING YOU INTO THE CAPACIOUS LIVING ROOM WHERE SLEEK WHITE CALACUTTA MARBLE FLOORS GIVING WAY TO BLACK LACQUERED WALLS. A PAIR OF CLAUDE LALANNE BRONZE AND GLASS COFFEE TABLES SIT IN FRONT OF THE CHRISTIAN LIAGRE SOFAS, WHERE A COLLECTION OF VENINI GLASS VASES ARE FILLED WITH BLOOMING PINK AND WHITE PEONIES.

AUGGIE

This looks exactly like our penthouse
in Shanghai.

GERRY

(MOTIONING TO ANIMAL TOTEMS) Right
down to the Ai Wei Wei. They were not
easy to crane in.

SHIATZY

That poor man's hand.

AUGGIE

I can't believe you did this so fast.
(THEN SOTTO TO KATE) We might actually
be in the Matrix.

KATE IS IN AWE. SHE LOOKS AT THE ENORMOUS WHITE FRANZ KLINE
ABSTRACT PAINTING ABOVE THE PATINATED BRONZE FIREPLACE. SHE
CAN'T BELIEVE HER EYES.

KATE

I saw that painting in a book once.
The book was too expensive to buy. (TO
GERRY) How did you rent this house so
fast?

SHIATZY

Rent? The Shens don't rent.

GERRY

We bought it. We figured it was too
cramped at your place.

SHIATZY

And there was no running water.

AUGGIE

My folks buy houses like you buy discount
scented candles. Mom and Russell once
bought a condo in Milan because they wanted
someplace to put down their shopping bags.

AUGGIE GOES OVER AND SITS ON THE SOFA.

AUGGIE (CONT'D)

This velvet just melts into your body.
This brings me back.

AUGGIE LEANS BACK IN HEAVEN.

SHIATZY

(SOTTO TO GERRY) Hopefully to Shanghai.

HE TOUCHES AN HERMES CASHMERE THROW.

AUGGIE

Is this my favorite cashmere throw?
(TO THROW) I've missed you.

KATE

Our Target ones are pretty soft, too.

AUGGIE

Not like this. Wow, I forgot how much
I love our place in Shanghai.

GERRY LOOKS AT SHIATZY LIKE "SEE, IT'S WORKING." A FEMALE
SERVANT ENTERS WITH A TRAY. SHE OFFERS AUGGIE SOME.

AUGGIE (CONT'D)

(RE: TRAY) Foie gras dumplings? These
are my favorite. You can't get them
here.

SHIATZY

(PROUDLY) I know.

GERRY

We flew them in today. I had to get a faster plane. It's red. David Geffen has one too.

KATE LOOKS AT AUGGIE. HE'S IN HEAVEN.

KATE

(CONCERNED) You could not look happier right now.

AUGGIE COMES OUT OF HIS REVERIE.

AUGGIE

I'm sorry, babe. I'd be happier if you were sitting next to me.

KATE GOES OVER AND SITS ON THE COUCH.

AUGGIE (CONT'D)

Try one of these.

AUGGIE FEEDS HER A FOIE GRAS DUMPLING.

KATE

(TASTING IT) Shut up!

AUGGIE

I know!

SHIATZY LOOKS AT GERRY. NOT HAPPY.

CUT TO:

SCENE E

INT. MALIBU MANSION - LIVING ROOM - LATER
(Auggie, Kate, Gerry, Shiatzy, Russell, Maids)

KATE AND AUGGIE ARE ON THE COUCH LAUGHING AND EATING FOIE GRAS DUMPLINGS AND A CORNUCOPIA OF OTHER SUMPTUOUS FOODS. GERRY AND SHIATZY WATCH. RUSSELL ENTERS WITH A SURF BOARD AND DRESSED IN A RIP CURL FLASHBOMB+ WETSUIT.

RUSSELL

When in Malibu. (THEN RE: AUGGIE AND
KATE) How's that plan going?

HE GOES OFF COCKILY.

GERRY

I'm sending him to boarding school as soon as we get back. In North Korea.

SHIATZY

He's right. Look at them. This isn't luring him home. It's date night for him and Malibu Barbie.

GERRY

Now I start applying the pressure, the guilt, and we will wake up his "Shen Sense of Duty" and bring him back to Shanghai with us.

SHIATZY

How long will this take? People will say I left town to get a face lift in secret. Again.

GERRY

It's gonna work. Just have a little patience, okay? Wait till he sees what's next...

GERRY TURNS TO AUGGIE.

GERRY (CONT'D)

Come on, Auggie, I've got something to
show you.

AUGGIE

Can Kate come?

GERRY/SHIATZY

No!

SHIATZY LOOKS AT GERRY UNHAPPILY, THEN SQUEAKS AND GOES OFF.

CUT TO:

SCENE H

EXT. BOCCE COURT - LATER
(Auggie, Gerry)

AUGGIE AND GERRY ENTER A PRISTINE BOCCE COURT. IT LOOKS LIKE TOM FORD DESIGNED IT. IT'S SUPER SLEEK.

AUGGIE

A bocce court?! Come on!

GERRY

Just like the one we used to play at
the club. Set 'em up.

AUGGIE PICKS UP A CLUB AND SETS UP THE BALLS.

AUGGIE

I haven't played in like forever.

GERRY

Me either. But I am still gonna crush
you.

AUGGIE HITS HIS FIRST BALL. IT GOES CLOSE TO THE PALLINO.
THEY CONTINUE TO PLAY AS THEY TALK.

GERRY (CONT'D)

Nice! (THEN) You were supposed to come
back to Shanghai the moment you
graduated. That was always the agreement.

HE SHOOTS. IT'S NOT GREAT.

AUGGIE

(RE: SHOT) Wow, you really haven't
played. (THEN) I know, Dad. I'm sorry.

GERRY

Why do you think we sent you to
Stanford?

(MORE)

GERRY (CONT'D)

So you could become an environmental lawyer and help save the ducks? Or the wetlands? Is it the ducks or the wetlands?

AUGGIE

It's both. This whole planet needs our help!

GERRY

Nonsense! This planet's gonna be fine without you. But you know what's not going to be fine? Our family business.

AUGGIE

Let Russell take over.

GERRY

Oh. Russell, who's currently obsessed with the history of truffle pigs in Provence? I don't think so.

AUGGIE

I swear to god he was Louis XIV in a previous life.

GERRY

He's Louis XIV in this life. (THEN)
You are my firstborn son, and you were meant to take your place in the family business. I did it for my parents.

(MORE)

GERRY (CONT'D)

After I graduated from UT Austin, I was a good son and went straight back to China like your Gong-Gong wanted.

AUGGIE

Dad, you turned Gong-Gong's little factory into ShenTech International. You make the screens on half the world's smart phones. You don't need me.

GERRY

I do need you. I need you to help me transform ShenTech into the biggest tech company in the world.

AUGGIE

But that's not what I want. Can we not talk about anything and just play bocce. Please.

AUGGIE SHOOT. IT'S GOOD.

GERRY

(RE: SHOT) Nice! (THEN, LOOKING AT HIS SON) It's been a long time since we hung out like this.

AUGGIE

We never hung out like this. You were always working. I haven't liked bocce since I was seven.

GERRY

Okay, what sport do you like now? I can buy a soccer team in Shanghai if you like that.

AUGGIE

Dad, I see what you're trying to do with all this and the house and the foie gras. But I love America. And I love Kate. You have to accept that.

GERRY LOOKS AT HIM. THERE IS SO MUCH HE WANTS TO SAY. BUT HE JUST LETS OUT A SQUEAK.

CUT TO:

SCENE J

EXT. ROSE GARDEN - SAME TIME
(Shiatzy, Neighbor O/S)

IT'S A GORGEOUS ROSE GARDEN. ALL THE ROSES ARE IN BLOOM.
SHIATZY ENTERS TALKING TO HERSELF.

SHIATZY

(IN MANDARIN) This is a terrible dream.

A WOMAN'S VOICE COMES FROM BEHIND THE BUSHES.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Is that Mandarin or Cantonese?

SHIATZY

(GASPS) Who's there?

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

I believe I'm your neighbor. Are you ok? You
sound like you're having a nervous breakdown.

SHIATZY

I don't have breakdowns. Anymore. I
just get migraines.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

CBD oil is really good on your temples.

I do that and smoke some pot.

SHIATZY

I'm in a terrible situation, I'm losing
my son. And to a girl that comes from no
lineage whatsoever. But my hands are tied
and I'm being told to have patience.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

If you want anything done right, you have
to do it yourself. Just ask me.

(MORE)

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Have a cup of tea with Manuka honey--it'll
calm you down, honey.

SHIATZY

Hmmmm, tea...

CUT TO:

SCENE KINT. DINING ROOM - LATER

(Shiatzy, Russell, Kate, Servants)

THE DINING ROOM HAS BEEN TRANSFORMED INTO AN ORNATE IMPERIAL CHAMBER. A THRONE-LIKE ROSEWOOD ARMCHAIR SITS UNDERNEATH A CANOPY OF PEACOCK FEATHERS, WITH A VELVET BROCADE CHAIR TO ITS SIDE. SHIATZY USHERS KATE IN.

SHIATZY

Come in, dear.

RUSSELL STARTS TO SIT IN THE THRONE CHAIR, BUT SHIATZY SHOOS HIM OFF AND SHE SITS. RUSSELL STANDS TO HER SIDE.

KATE

(SENSES DANGER) What is all this?

Where's Auggie?

SHIATZY

He'll be here shortly. (THEN) Russell?

RUSSELL

Since ancient times, the Chinese wedding tea ceremony has been a ritual where the bridal couple serves tea as a mark of respect to the elders.

SHIATZY

But there's a strict protocol. If any mistakes are made, it's very inauspicious for the marriage. (THEN) So I thought, why not practice now...just us?

KATE

Uhhh, well... (OFF SHIATZY'S GLARE) Okay.

KATE CROSSES TO A LOW ALTAR TABLE HOLDING AN ENORMOUS BRONZE TEAPOT AND DELICATE PORCELAIN TEA CUPS.

KATE (CONT'D)

So what do I do?

SHIATZY

First, the bride serves her new family.

SHIATZY DEMONSTRATES FLAWLESSLY BY POURING TEA INTO THE CUPS.

SHIATZY (CONT'D)

(TO KATE) Your turn.

SHIATZY FLINGS THE TEA OUT OF THE CUPS ONTO THE FLOOR. SERVANTS SCURRY OUT, MOP UP THE TEA AND LEAVE IN UNDER THREE SECONDS. SHIATZY SITS. KATE PICKS UP THE POT, SURPRISED IT'S SO HEAVY.

KATE

Oh my god, is this made of lead?

RUSSELL

It's bronze from the Zhou period.

KATE'S HANDS SHAKE WILDLY AS SHE STRUGGLES TO LIFT THE POT. THE LID RATTLES AND TEA SPILLS EVERYWHERE FROM HER SHAKES.

KATE

(SPILLING CRAZILY) Whoa!

SHIATZY

My mother would say, "Any drop spilled is like a baby lost down the river."

RUSSELL

So no pressure.

THROUGH ALL HER SPILLS, KATE MANAGES TO FILL A CUP.

SHIATZY

Finally! Now, serve with both hands.

KATE GOES TO HAND THE CUP TO RUSSELL, NEAREST HER.

SHIATZY (CONT'D)

No, no, you must serve the eldest first, starting with your new in-laws.

KATE

Oh, sorry!

KATE TRIES TO HAND THE TEACUP TO SHIATZY WITH A SMILE.

SHIATZY

You need to be more reverent, dear. Remember, this is your new family. Lower yourself.

KATE

Like...kneel?

SHIATZY

No, just hover. Reverently. And offer the cup with both hands.

KATE IS BETWEEN A BOW AND A SQUAT, SPILLING TEA EVERYWHERE.

SHIATZY (CONT'D)

Lower!

KATE

I don't think I can...

RUSSELL

(ENCOURAGING) Imagine you're a little frog.

KATE

Should I ribbit? Or just act like a frog?

RUSSELL

I wouldn't hate hearing a ribbit. But your eyes could use more reverence.

SHIATZY

Yes! Lower your eyes while looking at us respectfully! Head bowed!

KATE HOVERS AND CONTORTS HER FACE TILL SHE'S CROSSEYED. HER LEGS GIVE OUT AND SHE COLLAPSES, BREAKING THE PORCELAIN CUPS.

SHIATZY (CONT'D)

(GRITTING HER TEETH) Those were Ming
Dynasty heirlooms.

JUST THEN AUGGIE ENTERS WITH GERRY.

AUGGIE

(CONCERNED) What's going on in here?

KATE STANDS UP AND LOOKS AT SHIATZY AND THEN AUGGIE.

KATE

I'm sorry, I'm so sorry.

KATE RUNS OUT OF THE ROOM. AUGGIE GIVES HIS MOM A FURIOUS
LOOK AND FOLLOWS KATE OUT. GERRY LOOKS CONFUSED. RUSSELL
LOOKS AT SHIATZY.

RUSSELL

That was harsh...even for me.

SHIATZY LOOKS AT RUSSELL AS HE GOES OFF. GERRY LOOKS AT
SHIATZY.

SHIATZY

I just thought we'd have some tea.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

SCENE L

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER
(Kate, Auggie, Maid)

A MAID SCULPTS AN ICE SWAN AS KATE CRIES. AUGGIE RUSHES IN.

AUGGIE

Can you give us some privacy, please?

THE MAID SCURRIES OFF WITH THE ICE SWAN.

AUGGIE (CONT'D)

I'm so sorry, babe. This is exactly what I didn't want to happen.

KATE

I feel so humiliated. I wish I could have taken a crash course on Chinese etiquette. (THEN) I wish I hadn't made you call them.

AUGGIE

Babe, I'm sure you were fine. In Asia, women practice the tea ceremony for weeks before they have to do it.

KATE

Even so, I didn't realize how really different we are. I knew there'd be cultural differences for sure, but it's so much more than that. Look where we are. Look at this house.

AUGGIE

This house is a trap. A beautiful, amazing trap.

KATE

Auggie, it's not just about the house. I don't care if you can see all the way to Hawaii from the infinity pool. Or that the master closet is bigger than Oprah's. I don't want to spend our entire marriage fighting to be accepted by your parents.

AUGGIE

You're right. I don't want you to ever feel like you're less than enough for my parents. Especially when you mean more than the whole world to me.

AUGGIE ENVELOPS HER IN A HUG, AND THEY KISS.

AUGGIE (CONT'D)

Let's get out of here. No matter what they say--you are going to be my wife. Maybe grab some of those caviar oysters on the way out.

AUGGIE STORMS OFF. KATE SMILES LOVINGLY.

CUT TO:

SCENE M

INT. SCREENING ROOM - MINUTES LATER
(Gerry, Auggie)

AUGGIE ENTERS WITH GERRY FOLLOWING AFTER HIM.

GERRY

Auggie, slow down. What do you mean
"you're leaving?"

AUGGIE

We're leaving. No. I see what you're
doing. You and mom can be mad at me,
but I'm still getting married to Kate.

GERRY

Wait. You think I'm mad at you? I'm
not mad. I'm hurt. You didn't tell me
you had a girlfriend for two years!

AUGGIE

I don't feel like I can tell you
things. You and Mom disapprove of
everything I do.

GERRY

Not everything!

AUGGIE

Oh yeah? You don't approve of my
apartment. My job. My fiancée. You
need to accept that you sent me to
America, and it changed me.

GERRY

You think I don't get it? You think I
didn't want to stay in Texas after
college?

(MORE)

GERRY (CONT'D)

Get a pickup truck and a house with a big yard? Learn how to smoke baby back ribs that are a tiny bit blackened but so moist and tender on the inside they melt in your mouth?

AUGGIE

I had no idea you had such feelings about barbecue.

SHIATZY ENTERS BEHIND THEM QUIETLY, AND OVERHEARS.

GERRY

I had other dreams, but I buried them for my parents' sake. You and your brother don't know how lucky you are. By the time you were born we were already wealthy, but I was dirt poor as a kid, and I saw my father break his back to build our business from zero. It's something I'll never forget, and something I never wanted you to experience.

AUGGIE

(TRULY MOVED) Why haven't you ever told me how you felt before? (BEAT) Dad, you're forty-eight, and you've given your life to the company since the day I was born. It's not too late to go after those dreams. Play bocce. Take a day off. I don't know...do something you've always wanted to do.

GERRY

You mean like ride a Harley?

AUGGIE

(THROWN) Sure? Yeah, when are you going to start living life for you?

GERRY

I don't know, I'd have to ask your mother. I'm sorry Kate's upset. It reminds me how your mom's family treated me at first. I wasn't good enough for their daughter. Your mom's hard on Kate because she's afraid of losing you. We just want to be part of your life.

AUGGIE

If you want to be part of my life, you have to make things right with Kate.

AUGGIE EXITS LEAVING GERRY THERE. SHIATZY STEPS FORWARD.

GERRY

How much did you hear?

SHIATZY

Enough.

CUT TO:

SCENE P

INT. DINING ROOM - MINUTES LATER
(Gerry, Shiatzy, Auggie, Kate, Russell)

GERRY, SHIATZY AND RUSSELL STAND WAITING AS AUGGIE AND KATE ENTER.

GERRY

Kate, Auggie, come sit here.

GERRY GESTURES TO THE TWO THRONE CHAIRS.

SHIATZY

What are you doing?

GERRY

Kate, you honored my wife at the tea ceremony. So now WE want to honor you. We will serve you tea.

SHIATZY

(SOTTO TO GERRY) Do I really have to do this?

GERRY

Do you want your son back? (BEAT) And the emerald necklace waiting on your pillow?

SHIATZY

(A LITTLE SMILE) Bolivian emeralds?

GERRY

Sí, señora.

SHIATZY GRABS THE TEAPOT AND POURS. GERRY PRESENTS A CUP WITH BOTH HANDS TO KATE. KATE CONSIDERS FOR A MOMENT...AND THEN ACCEPTS THE CUP. KATE AND GERRY SHARE A SMILE.

AUGGIE

Kate, I'm sorry. I was afraid to tell my parents anything they didn't want to hear.

(MORE)

AUGGIE (CONT'D)

But you were right, you can't go your entire life without your family. And I can't go for a second of life without you.

THEY KISS.

GERRY

I'm so happy my son has charted his own course and found someone so wise...(TO SHIATZY) and forgiving...to love, and today I shall follow in his footsteps. Auggie, you told me to go after what I want in life. And what I want is to be with my family, to get back the years I lost with you boys. So, Auggie, I accept your offer.

AUGGIE

...what offer?

GERRY

We Shens will stay in America and live here with you!

AUGGIE

No, I didn't mean...

KATE

(TO AUGGIE, WIDE-EYED) They're staying?

RUSSELL

But, Dad, what about the business?
What about Shanghai?

GERRY

I can work from anywhere! Hello, the Internet!

GERRY HUGS THEM AS AUGGIE AND KATE SHARE A SHOCKED LOOK.
SHIATZY AND RUSSELL ARE HORRIFIED.

GERRY (CONT'D)

(GUSHING) We can ride motorcycles
together. And have barbecues. Do what
fathers and sons do.

RUSSELL

I'm not doing any of that!

GERRY

Shens do what they're told!

RUSSELL RUNS OVER TO SHIATZY LIKE A LITTLE BOY.

AUGGIE

(THROUGH GERRY'S HUG, TO KATE)

Remember the tidal wave?

KATE

Oh, yeah, and we're those dumb
tourists on the beach...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

TAG

FADE IN:

INT. MANSION BEDROOM - EARLY THE NEXT MORNING
(Auggie, Kate)

BAGPIPES BLAST AND AUGGIE AND KATE SIT BOLT UPRIGHT IN BED.

KATE

What in the world!

AUGGIE

(GROANING) Oh, God. The bagpipers!

KATE

Why are they playing at six in the morning?

AUGGIE

They're like my Dad's alarm clock...it's a habit he picked up at Balmoral from the Prince of Wales.

THEY BOTH GRUMPILY LIE BACK DOWN AND BURY THEIR HEADS IN PILLOWS.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROSE GARDEN - CONTINUOUS
(Shiatzy, Neighbor O/S)

THE FAINT SOUND OF BAGPIPES AS SHIATZY ENTERS.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

(THROUGH THE HEDGES) How'd your plan go?

SHIATZY

Not great. I live here now.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Oh, you'll get used to it. I didn't but you might.

SHIATZY

Well I guess we're neighbors. I'm
Shiatzy Shen.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Hi, Shiatzy Shen, you can call me
Cher.

SHIATZY

Cher...are you French?

CHER

(LAUGHS) I think this is the beginning
of a beautiful friendship. (BEAT)
Who's playing the bagpipes? I love it.

FADE OUT.

END OF SHOW