

PUSHING DAISIES

"Dim Sum Lose Some"

Episode #3T7055

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ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. LONGBOROUGH SCHOOL FOR BOYS - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Snow falls on the darkened school...

NARRATOR

Long weekends at the Longborough School for Boys were a quiet time, as most children went home to their families.

We find the ONLY window with a LIGHT ON.

INT. LONGBOROUGH SCHOOL - DORM ROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Space has been made for a large card table in the center of the room. YOUNG NED sits with FOUR 10-year-old BOYS.

NARRATOR

There were those students, however, who gathered not out of friendship, but because they had nowhere else to go.

They look to the head of the table where--

INGMAR TODD

A severe-looking 10 year old, with the serious, professional manner of a Monte Carlo croupier, opens a slick case revealing a beautiful, tabletop-sized roulette wheel.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Ingmar Todd was the son of roving missionaries. He had arrived at boarding school with a professionally-certified and balanced roulette wheel.

The boys lean back as Ingmar sweeps out a rolled-up felt roulette number grid, carefully picks some lint from it.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

As there was very little else to do, Ingmar's room became a center of activity.

The boys excitedly place their bets on the grid. Some quarters, various odd trinkets and candies.

Young Ned places some individually-wrapped golden chocolates on the grid, a few on numbers, a bunch on Black and some on Red.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

All Young Ned had to wager was the box of chocolates he'd hastily snuck into his suitcase the day his father dropped him off at boarding school.

Ingmar sets the ball rolling around the edge...

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

It often occurred to Young Ned that had his mother lived, she would not have deserted him like his father.

On Young Ned as he watches the ball go in circles...

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

She would have known how to comfort him, and help him grieve for his loss. But as it was his mother who had died, this was a circular logic that got him nowhere.

Young Ned notices his EMPTY CHOCOLATE BOX has a small folded card tucked in the wrapping and ribbon. He opens it--

ANGLE - THE CARD

"To my little 'Big Daddy.' Just for being a great boy. [heart] Mom."

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

It was then he realized the individually-wrapped chocolates, currently in play, had been intended as a gift to him from his mother, for an occasion which had never arrived.

Ingmar lifts his hand, signaling--

INGMAR

(accent)

Bets are closed.

A distressed Young Ned studies the board.

WAY UP CLOSE TO THE SILVER BALL

We TRAVEL with it around the wheel until... BALL RESTS on "00."

INGMAR (CONT'D)

Double zed. House wins.

Young Ned looks confused as Ingmar uses his polished wooden stick to sweep the felt clean of all the booty.

CONTINUED: (2)

NARRATOR

Like many beginning players, Young Ned bet on both Red and Black, but failed to consider the double zero on the wheel. He lost everything.

As Young Ned watches the other players resume playing, and picks up his empty chocolate box...

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

The lesson was clear: in gambling, no matter how well you think you know the odds, there's always an outcome you can't see coming.

CLOSE ON THE ROULETTE WHEEL--

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

During the years that followed, the Pie-Maker avoided taking gambles, with a few, notable exceptions.

MATCH CUT TO:

A PIE

Sits baking in the oven.

NARRATOR

He invested his life savings in a bakery at a time when carbohydrates had fallen completely out of fashion, and more importantly...

The oven door opens to REVEAL CHUCK peering in. She pulls the pie from the oven, and we're--

INT. PIE HOLE - KITCHEN - DAY

As Chuck drops a slice of pie on a plate--

NARRATOR

...he had gambled on the love of his childhood sweetheart, the girl next door who had returned from the dead.

NED is startled as Chuck uses a LONG TOASTING FORK to thrust a forkful of pie under his nose.

CHUCK

Try this.

NED

Like the fork.

CHUCK

Like being alive.

CONTINUED:

He takes the bite.

CHUCK (CONT'D)

It's a new flavor we could serve, Spring passion fruit. And I know it's not Spring, but it is in New Zealand, which makes it exotic and upside-down which is how we could serve it.

NARRATOR

Betting on Chuck had made the Pie-Maker happier than he had ever been.

NED

We'll put it on the menu.

CHUCK

I like Daring Ned.

NED

It seems since you arrived, Cautious Ned has left the building.

OLIVE enters.

OLIVE

Who's the new guy at the counter? The handsome, brooding, older man with a sensual twinkle? Plus, he smells good.

Olive nods her head and they look out the circle to:

DWIGHT, 50, handsome, seated at the counter, wearing a suit.

NED

He mumbled something odd to me earlier.

NARRATOR

There was no word that completely described the feeling the square-shouldered older man had given the Pie-Maker.

NED

Do you ever shiver when you pee? Because that's how I felt when he spoke...

OMIT

INT. PIE HOLE - DINING AREA - FLASHBACK TO MOMENTS EARLIER

As Ned passes Dwight at the counter...

NED

More coffee?

CONTINUED:

DWIGHT

This pie is delicious. As good as your mother's.

Ned pauses, a little shiver. He moves on--

BACK TO SCENE

Chuck is instantly intrigued. As they continue to watch him eat from the circle...

CHUCK

He said that? Did he know your mother?

NED

I didn't ask. A stranger says a strange thing in passing, chances are I misheard him, or misunderstood. Maybe when he said my "mother's" pie, he didn't mean *my* mother, he meant everyone's mother -- the iconic, all-American mother created by advertisers and politicians as a shorthand for "family values" and a longing for baked goods.

OLIVE

Would that make you shiver?

CHUCK

If someone knew something about my family, that would give me the piss-jitters. But I'd ask them about it, not hide in the kitchen.

NED

I'm not hiding.

Dwight looks up at them and they pull back from the circle window, leaving Olive in view.

OLIVE

I think he's cute.

(waves, mouths)

Hi.

(to Ned)

If the nice-smelling man has something to share about your family, I want to know.

CHUCK

So do I.

OFF this...

DINING AREA - MOMENTS LATER

Ned approaches Dwight.

CONTINUED:

NED

I'm probably making a mountain out of a molehill over a random comment I probably misheard? And I'm hoping to offset any awkwardness you are or will be feeling by providing your slice of three-plum on the house.

DWIGHT

You're a nervous talker. Like your dad.

Dwight smiles, Ned freezes.

NED

This complicates things. You may have to pay for the pie.

DWIGHT

(shakes Ned's hand)

Dwight Dixon. I was best friends with your father 25 years ago. You are Ned, am I right?

NARRATOR

The Pie-Maker considered the strange stranger, and his estranged father. And lied.

NED

Nope.

Chuck and Olive step up, preventing Ned's exit.

OLIVE

Yes you are, silly. And I'm Olive.

CHUCK

And I'm--

(off their look)

Kitty. Kitty Pimms. You knew Ned's parents?

DWIGHT

Back when they were dating. Was the peak of peach season when they met. She baked a brown sugar crust, your dad didn't have a chance.

NED

Don't remember them mentioning you.

DWIGHT

I was in the service with your dad, back before you were born. Your pops didn't like to reminisce. Probably a lot he didn't talk about.

CHUCK

Sounds familiar.

CONTINUED: (2)

DWIGHT

Thing is, I'm trying to find him and I thought maybe you could help? Love to see him again.

(then)

You got his face, you know. 'Specially around the eyes.

NARRATOR

The Pie-Maker had hoped never to be likened to his father, whether it be around the eyes...

NED

I'm afraid we lost touch.

NARRATOR

...or the heart.

NED

About 20 years ago.

DWIGHT

Shame. Any thoughts on where I might look--

NED

No and while you're obviously speaking from a good and helpful place, it's not good and helpful. To me.

DWIGHT

Didn't mean to stir anything up. I'll be in town for a few days, you change your mind...

But Ned's moved on. On Chuck, watching him go:

NARRATOR

As Chuck marveled at the Pie-Maker's refusal to help search for his only parent...

INT. EMERSON'S OFFICE - DAY

Emerson has his feet up on his desk, happily eating Chinese food from a take-out container.

NARRATOR

...Emerson Cod marveled at the digestive coma produced by beef balls and curried cuttlefish from the dim sum restaurant downstairs.

He packs up the food containers, throws them away, grabs the fortune cookie and happily moves to plop on his couch...

CONTINUED:

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

His phone silenced, Emerson knew the world of clients and murders would soon be lost in the cloud of a power nap.

Emerson breaks open his fortune cookie and reads the fortune. He immediately sits back up, annoyed.

EMERSON

What the hell?

INSERT - THE FORTUNE

Scrawled by hand, it reads: "**HELP ME EMERSON COD.**" Emerson SIGHS and stands back up.

EXT. EMERSON'S OFFICE / DIM SUM BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

SINK DOWNWARD from Emerson's office window to find the restaurant downstairs--

NARRATOR

Arriving downstairs in search of a new case...

INT. DIM SUM RESTAURANT - LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER

Red velvet walls with murals of dragons and cranes. WAITRESSES and BUSBOYS in traditional uniforms. As Emerson enters, looking around...

NARRATOR

...the P.I. stumbled on one from his past.

A CLICKING sound causes Emerson to jump involuntarily to attention. He turns, startles at the sight of:

SIMONE HUNDIN, carrying a doggie bag, and with a DOG (BUBBLEGUM, from "BITCHES") at her heels as she heads out of the restaurant. She uses her CLICKER to issue the dog commands.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

This was the gist:

VERY QUICK POPS FROM EXISTING FOOTAGE OF EP. 105, "BITCHES":

Showing Emerson meeting Simone Hundin, wrestling with Simone Hundin and walking off with Simone Hundin.

NARRATOR

Simone Hundin, obedience expert and widow of deceased, polygamous dog breeder, Harold Hundin. While investigating her husband's murder, Emerson and Simone had forged a close bond.

BACK TO SCENE

She sees him.

SIMONE

Emerson Cod.

EMERSON

Simone. What have you been up to?

NARRATOR

It was a friendship that had very nearly, but not quite, become something more.

SIMONE

Breeding. My Bubblegum's in heat, it was a long night. But what a *treat* bumping into you. Didn't know you were a dim sum connoisseur.

EMERSON

Best pork buns in town. My office is upstairs. It's a dangerous combination.

Simone takes a pork bun from the bag, holds it out.

SIMONE

Bun?

EMERSON

Really shouldn't, I just--

CLICK. Emerson snaps to attention, takes the bun.

NARRATOR

The Private Investigator considered how his inescapable desire to be obedient to this obedience trainer was at once thrilling and terrifying. Then he remembered his case.

EMERSON

Did you send me a message in a cookie?

SIMONE

Wasn't me. I find there are more reliable ways to send a message.

She stares steadily at him, a note of seduction. Emerson reaches for another pork bun, CLICK--

SIMONE (CONT'D)

Leave it.

(he pulls back)

It's been a pleasure, Mr. Cod. Perhaps we'll cross paths again.

CONTINUED:

As she walks off, we HEAR a (different) woman WEEPING.

NARRATOR

Fortunately, Emerson had a distraction from his conflicting impulses:

INT. DIM SUM RESTAURANT - DINING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

NARRATOR

A client.

Find LAI DI TING, the source of the weeping, seated at a corner booth with a CARDBOARD BOX at her feet. Lai Di pulls herself together as Emerson approaches.

EMERSON

Excuse me, ma'am? I'm Emerson Cod, the private investigator from upstairs. Did you by any chance contact me?

LAI DI

I've seen your billboards. My name is Lai Di.

EMERSON

"Lady"...

LAI DI

Lai Di. I don't work here. I'm married to Bao, the chef.

(off the box)

Picking up some things of his.

EMERSON

If you're married to the chef, can I say your husband's pork buns make me glad to be alive. Man's a true artist.

LAI DI

Not anymore. But I'll hire you to find who killed him.

OFF Emerson...

NARRATOR

The facts were these:

EXT. CHINATOWN - LATE '70S - M.O.S.

A KODACHROME SUPER-8 HOME MOVIE of Lai Di and her husband, BAO, recent arrivals from China, eagerly smiling and waving at the camera, ecstatic to be there.

CONTINUED:

NARRATOR

Lai Di and her husband, Bao, immigrated from Beijing with the hope of opening their own restaurant.

INT. DIM SUM - BAO'S PREP ROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Bao, now dressed as a chef, stands in his well-organized private PREP ROOM, surrounded by shelves of ingredients. He closes the door of a washing machine-sized COMMERCIAL BUN STEAMER, clicks on a stopwatch to time the buns. Two young DISHWASHERS stand in the doorway, watching. Behind them, we see a sliver of a BUSY KITCHEN.

NARRATOR

Bao quickly established himself as the premier authority on the delicate art of bun steaming.

Bao senses he is being watched and shoots a look at the boys, who run. Bao pulls a Chinese curtain across the door, and goes back to work. We SEE him prepare a new round of buns--

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

He demanded privacy while he worked, both to eliminate distractions and protect his unique recipes.

CURTAIN is pulled aside as Bao's daughter, MEI (beautiful, 20s), in her dim sum uniform, transfers buns to her serving cart.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

But even with his daughter working as a waitress, Bao could never save enough money for his own restaurant.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK (OVERHEAD SHOT)

Lai Di lies in bed with Bao, who looks worried.

NARRATOR

It was after a 16-hour shift that Lai Di had noticed Bao could not sleep. Something had him terrified.

Lai Di asks a question in Mandarin: "What's the matter?"

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Bao chose to reply in English:

BAO

Pressure.

He rolls over, away from her...

INT. DIM SUM - BAO'S PREP ROOM - DAY - FLASHBACK

On a GAUGE labeled "PRESSURE" as it pegs into the red.

NARRATOR

*Lai Di would remember Bao's misgiving
as ironic.*

Bao has his back to the bun steamer, which starts to SHAKE and leak STEAM. As Bao looks up, an EXPLOSION. STEAMED BUNS and a SECTION OF PIPE fly toward us (VERISPEED: SLOWING to SLOW MOTION and then SPEEDING UP as they whip out of frame) -- STEAM fills the air as Bao drops.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

*Police were satisfied Bao's death had been an
accident, but Lai Di was convinced there had
been foul play.*

INT. MORGUE - LAB - NIGHT

Find Bao, lying on a gurney with a WIDE LENGTH OF PIPE IMPALED THROUGH HIS HEAD. Emerson, Ned and Chuck gaze at Bao's corpse.

NED

Let's be delicate. He may not speak English.
And with the pipe the way it is, I don't know
if he'll speak at all.

A quiet moment as Ned TOUCHES Bao. His eyes open. SUBTITLE
Chuck's line.

CHUCK

(gently, *in Mandarin*)
Hello, Bao. We have a few questions.

NED

(whisper)
You speak Chinese?

CHUCK

A little Cantonese and some Mandarin.

Bao blinks, YELLS, PANICKED, startling the Mod Squad.

BAO

AHHHHHHHHH!

CHUCK / EMERSON / NED

AHHHHHHHHH!

Bao sits up and turns to look at them, forcing them to stumble backward, barely avoiding the swinging pipe.

CONTINUED:

EMERSON
Heads up!

NED
Whoa--

BAO
(in English)
Please don't hurt me. I'm sorry I lost the bet.

CHUCK
We don't want to hurt you.

NED
What bet?

BAO
Gambling at the dim sum. Now someone's going to kill me...

A moment. They look at him, then:

NED
"Going" to kill you?

More ducking as he looks around the room, hops off the gurney.

BAO
I don't know how they'll do it, but they'll do it for sure.

EMERSON
Who wants to kill you?

NED
And who were you gambling with?

BAO
I tell you and I'm a dead man!

EMERSON
(re: the pipe)
What we need is a mirror.

BAO
I gotta get outta here--

Bao makes a break for the exam room door.

CHUCK
Bao, no! Wait!

Bao runs, but the pipe is too wide for the doorway. They grimace as it CLANGS on the doorframe and Bao staggers backward. Ned touches Bao and he collapses.

NED
Ouch?

CONTINUED: (2)

OFF them--

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

EXT. DIM SUM RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Emerson walks up to the restaurant on the busy Chinatown street.

NARRATOR

As it appeared the bun steamer's buns were steamed over a bet at the dim sum, Emerson Cod returned to the restaurant for a chat with Bao's daughter.

INT. DIM SUM RESTAURANT - A LITTLE LATER

Emerson trails MEI TING (little or no accent), who's in her dim sum waitress outfit and hair as she pushes her serving cart through the restaurant, handing dishes to patrons.

MEI

I don't understand why my mother hired you.
My father's death was an accident.

EMERSON

Your mother had a hunch. I could gold-leaf my bathroom with what I make off mother-hunches.
And what I need to know is--
(distracted by her cart)
Are those chiu-chao dumplings? May I?
(savoring a dumpling)
Pork, dried shrimp, peanuts, chives and mushrooms in glutinous rice flour. Your father could make a grown man cry.

RUBBIE arrives, 30, overweight and awkward, clearly dotes on Mei. They make a strange couple.

MEI

This is Rubbie Wu, my fiancé. Also manager of the dim sum.

EMERSON

You got a hell of a restaurant here.

Rubbie smiles at Mei--

RUBBIE

I'm a lucky man in many ways.
(then)
Mr. Cod, right? You work upstairs.
Cuttlefish, beef balls and taro dumplings every Sunday at noon.

CONTINUED:

EMERSON

I'm sorry for your loss, both in the human and gastronomic sense. Speaking of the talented chef that was your father-- is it possible he was also a degenerate gambler? I'm hearing he was killed over a bet.

MEI

He didn't have time for anything but work. Least, as far as I know. My father and I weren't very close.

EMERSON

What about betting on the premises, between employees maybe, or customers?

RUBBIE

We're just a dim sum restaurant. If Bao was in trouble 'cause of gambling? It didn't happen here.

OFF this...

INT. PIE HOLE - BOOTH - NIGHT

Ned and Chuck with Emerson.

CHUCK

Doesn't sound like Mei's too broken up over dear old, dead Dad.

EMERSON

Didn't waste a lotta tears. That said, I poked around the restaurant and there's no basement, secret card rooms or the like.

NED

Maybe Bao meant something else when he said he lost a bet.

EMERSON

Maybe Bao had a pipe through his head and we're chasing smoke. Call you when I get a lead.

Emerson exits. Olive passes Ned and Chuck with a tray.

OLIVE

Dwight stopped by again. Didn't say much. Just the kind, warmhearted smile with the crinkly eyes that say, "I wish I could find my old friend, Ned's dad, before I die alone."

Olive moves on. Ned, off Chuck--

CONTINUED:

NED

I know that face. It's an "I'm still waiting to hear why you won't help your father's friend" face.

CHUCK

It's a "you don't read my face as well as you think" face.

NED

I keep my feelings about Dad behind a door that's been closed so long, it's wallpapered over and you can't see the seams, which is how I like it. Dwight showing up is like a corner that's peeling.

CHUCK

I see a peeling corner, I want to rip it off.

NED

You wouldn't if you knew what was underneath. In my case, it's a colorful mix of anger, chronic distrust and misplaced guilt...

CHUCK

My mom's been lying to me for three decades about who she is. Me and her have a whole heap of stink to work out, and I would if I could, but I can't. But you *can*, if you could, and you should.

Ned takes out a small flip-pad and pen, writes--

CHUCK (CONT'D)

What is that?

NED

My clue pad for writing down clues.

CHUCK

I love that you have a clue pad.

He hands her the paper--

NED

It's my father's address. You can give it to Dwight. That's as much as I can do.

CHUCK

How long have you had this?

NED

A while.

CONTINUED: (2)

NARRATOR

By "a while," the Pie-Maker meant 20 years, 11 months, 3 weeks, 5 days and 6 hours...

INT. LONGBOROUGH SCHOOL - DAY - FLASHBACK (RE-USE FROM "GIRTH")

Young Ned steps up to a POST MISTRESS at the Longborough School, who hands Young Ned a "WE'VE MOVED" postcard.

NARRATOR

...since he had gotten word, whilst away at boarding school, that his father had moved on and started a new family. Without him.

As Young Ned flips it over to a picture of a COZY HOUSE...

BACK TO SCENE

ANGLE - THE FRONT DOOR where an OLD CHINESE MAN has entered, now looks around. Chuck approaches.

CHUCK

Can I help you?

HUA JIANG

(in Mandarin, with subtitles)

I'm Bao's oldest friend, and I'll tell you what you need to know. Also I need change for a dollar, I'm parked at a meter.

INT. PIE HOLE - BOOTH - MOMENTS LATER

Chuck sits next to HUA JIANG and translates.

CHUCK

This is Hua Jiang, he overheard us at the restaurant. He says there's been illegal gambling at the dim sum since they opened back in Prohibition days.

As Hua Jiang continues talking...

INT. DIM SUM RESTAURANT - DINING ROOM - SEPIA FLASHBACK (1920S)

Several tables of gambling CHINESE MEN hold cigars and play poker, dressed in period clothing. Women watch by their sides.

CHUCK (V.O.)

He says they would pull the shades and play cards for money all night long. When your luck was running, you'd have a woman on each arm and all the milk you could drink.

As the men robustly toast with GLASSES OF MILK, one drinking out of a booze-bottle full--

RETURN TO SCENE

NED

"Milk"?

CHUCK

Might not be the right word. My Mandarin's a little rusty.

Hua Jiang continues...

BACK TO FLASHBACK

Chaos as 5 POLICE and a G-MAN (Fed) burst in waving GUNS. The gamblers sweep their cards from the table, rush to hide milk or flee--

CHUCK (V.O.)

This went on till the police finally caught on and shut them down. But he says they always found a way to keep the card game going.

BACK TO SCENE

CHUCK

He's sure there's still gambling there.

INT. DIM SUM RESTAURANT - LOBBY - NIGHT

Emerson, Chuck and Ned peer into the dining room.

EMERSON

Already searched the whole damn place.

CHUCK

There were gin joints in the '20s that used underground passageways, or secret panels. You had to know the password--

(off Ned)

What?

NED

I was expecting Emerson to say something snarky.

Emerson has disappeared. As they stop to look:

NED (CONT'D)

Emerson?

Chuck notices TWO BLACK SHOES behind long drapes on the wall.

ANGLE - BEHIND THE DRAPES (OR VASE, AQUARIUM FISHTANK, ETC.)

Chuck and Ned join Emerson, who's spying on a table.

CHUCK
Are we spying? I love spying.

EMERSON
Shh.

They all look at a LARGE, ROUND TABLE across the room. Simone sits, dog beside her, alongside five HARD-LOOKING CHINESE MEN, many of them sporting TATTOOS.

CHUCK
(spotting Simone)
Hey, isn't that...?

NED
Simone. The dog lady you dated. Is that why we're hiding?

EMERSON
We ain't hiding and we didn't date.

CHUCK
You wanted to.

EMERSON
And then I didn't.

NED
Why you didn't?

CHUCK
No kidding, she is gorgeous.

EMERSON
There's complicated issues in this situation which you need to know nothing about 'cept that their complexity makes this shallow conversation absurd.

NED
Strange.

EMERSON
You calling *my* romantic life "strange"?

NED
No. It's strange that none of the people at that table are eating.

ANGLE - THE TABLE

On the SIX DINERS, each with an array of small plates.

CONTINUED: (2)

NARRATOR

As they continued to observe the diners who were not dining, several unusual details became apparent: all plates at the table were covered with a bamboo lid.

On a WAITRESS, spinning a big LAZY SUSAN on the table.

ANGLE - POV FROM LAZY SUSAN AS IT SPINS

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Before serving, the waitress would spin the food on a lazy Susan.

A BUSBOY passes, taking away the unused plates.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Each diner took five plates, then placed a number of soybeans in the center of the table.

All at once, the diners uncover their dishes and size up each other's food, then REACT: Only Simone seems pleased.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

While this behavior did not seem consistent with diners enjoying a dim sum dinner...

AERIAL VIEW OF THE TABLE AND ITS DINERS, with five small plates arranged before each of them.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

...when the scene was reimagined in a different way, it began to make sense.

The plates on the table FADE and become PLAYING CARDS, the steamed soybeans become CASINO CHIPS.

Chuck, Ned and Emerson take this in...

NED

Those folks are playing poker with food.

OFF them--

OMIT

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

OMIT

EXT. EMERSON'S OFFICE - DAY - ESTABLISHING

NARRATOR

Faced with a table full of unsavory poker players...

INT. EMERSON'S OFFICE - DAY

On Emerson.

NARRATOR

...Emerson Cod summoned a steely bravery acquired from years of P.I. work, as he questioned what was, for him, the group's most intimidating player.

Emerson sits across from Simone and her dog.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Simone.

EMERSON

Given the cash you left with in your doggie bag last night, I'd say it wasn't your first time gambling at the dim sum.

SIMONE

Aggression is a sign of fear, Mr. Cod.

EMERSON

Sometimes aggression is a sign of being aggressive. Which I will be until I catch whoever killed Bao Ting. Now tell me about dim sum-style poker.

SIMONE

It's quite simple. You give the password to the hostess, which is "hao shou yun" and means "fortune" in Mandarin. You buy in at the table. Each plate is a card, and the meats are the four suits: shrimp, pork, chicken and beef. The appetizers represent different numbers. Other than that, it's traditional five-card draw.

EMERSON

Except you can eat your cards.

SIMONE

Which is what you do when the police arrive.

CONTINUED:

EMERSON

Did you know Bao Ting?

Emerson produces a PHOTO OF BAO, sets it in front of Simone.

SIMONE

His steamed buns blurred the line between eating and sex, but we were not acquainted.

Emerson pauses in her gaze, then produces more PHOTOS: long-lens shots of the other tough POKER PLAYERS from the table.

EMERSON

Any of these regulars strike you as the type who might put a pipe through your skull if you owed 'em money?

As Simone describes the gamblers, we:

POP TO - quick ("SNATCH"-like, swinging to a FREEZE-FRAME) SHOTS of SHRIMPBOY, CHEN, LU and JIM at the dim sum gambling table.

SIMONE

Shrimpboy's a gangster in charge of running the table and paying off the manager. Anson Chen did eight years in the state pen for armed robbery. Louie Lu strangled his mother-in-law, got off on a technicality. Jim is a plumber.

(then)

They all take gambling seriously, and they're all dangerous. Any of them could have done it.

EMERSON

What about you?

She levels him in her gaze.

EMERSON (CONT'D)

Please.

SIMONE

I was at a dog show that night. That would be eight hundred alibis -- twelve hundred, if you include canines.

(to him)

Are we *finis*?

They both get up... then Simone hesitates, turns. She's standing very close, looking into his eyes.

SIMONE (CONT'D)

I've made a career out of training animals to overcome and subdue their instincts. That said, without raw instinct, life is nothing more than a series of empty tricks.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

SIMONE (CONT'D)

You pretending this is all business between us? Seems like an empty trick.

EMERSON

Something I learned the hard way? When I'm with someone, the more I feel...

SIMONE

Inadequate?

EMERSON

Never.

SIMONE

Tongue-tied?

EMERSON

Nope.

SIMONE

Aroused?

EMERSON

I'm saying, the more I'm into somebody, the greater the odds it's gonna end badly.

SIMONE

And based on that, how would we end?

EMERSON

Extremely badly.

Simone abruptly kisses him. Emerson pulls back.

EMERSON (CONT'D)

You hear what I said?

Simone CLICKS her clicker.

NARRATOR

This was the first time the Private Investigator had ever been ordered to:

SIMONE

Come.

Emerson gazes at Simone, then leans in and kisses her. Simone's dog HOWLS -- still kissing, Simone CLICKS and the dog is silent.

NARRATOR

As Emerson went against what he was sure was his better judgment...

EXT. COZY HOUSE - PORCH - DAY

Chuck and Olive, holding the written address Ned gave her, and a boxed pie, stand in front of the house. Chuck RINGS the doorbell.

NARRATOR

...Chuck and Olive did the same.

CHUCK

Pie delivery.

OLIVE

Surprise random pie delivery.

Chuck to Olive, brightly--

CHUCK

This was a good idea.
(then, less sure)
Right?

OLIVE

Sounded good when you described it.

CHUCK

If we drag Ned here and find out his dad's still an emotional deadbeat...

OLIVE

Only now he's older and crankier and drinks six-dollar bottles of sour mash? Ned would have a trump card of an I-told-ya-so.

CHUCK

This way, if Dad's a slobbering nightmare, Ned won't have to know. Nothing gambled, nothing lost.

OLIVE

Exactly.

CHUCK

This was a bad idea.

OLIVE

Yep.

A MAN'S VOICE calls from inside:

MAN'S VOICE (MAURICE, O.S.)

Come in!

Chuck and Olive glance nervously at each other...

INT. COZY HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Chuck and Olive step inside to find MAURICE, late 20s, sporting IDENTICAL EYEBROWS to Ned's. Maurice has one foot inside a STEAMER TRUNK as he addresses Chuck and Olive.

MAURICE

Hey, be right with you. Do you mind being a test audience? It'll only take a minute.

OLIVE

Great!
(a little worried)
What are you testing?

CHUCK

Not that we're being picky. It's just we're looking for--

Maurice steps into the trunk and closes the lid.

OLIVE

O-kay...

There's another TRUNK across the room. The lid swings open and Maurice steps out.

MAURICE

Voilà!

Olive and Chuck stare. Maurice claps to cue them, and they dutifully applaud. FIND a FRAMED POSTER, which reads: "TWO FOR THE SHOW - TWIN MAGICIANS AT THE PALACE OF MYSTERIES."

MAURICE (CONT'D)

Thank you...

An URGENT BANGING from inside the first trunk. "Maurice" looks concerned, runs over and opens it to REVEAL his TWIN BROTHER inside. (To clarify: The man who sprang from the *second* trunk is, in fact, Maurice's twin, RALSTON.)

MAURICE (CONT'D)

It's not my fault! The stupid false-bottom keeps jamming.

RALSTON

It works when I do it...

OLIVE

Twins! I love twins.

RALSTON

Can we help you? I'm Ralston, this is Maurice.

CONTINUED:

CHUCK

We're looking for an older man who lives here? He won this pie in a raffle, our weekly pie raffle. Very exciting.

RALSTON

The only older man was our dad. And he hasn't lived here for a while.

OLIVE

Did you say -- "Dad"?

MAURICE

Yeah, he was here till a few years ago, when he kinda... disappeared. Then our mom shackled up with someone else, so we kept the house--

NARRATOR

It was then that Chuck realized:

CHUCK

You have the same eyebrows as him!

OLIVE

They do. They do. I said that twice, once for each of you.

MAURICE

You have seen twins before, right?

OLIVE

She doesn't mean the same as each other, she means...

Chuck and Olive exchange a look--

NARRATOR

A pause as they considered what the Pie-Maker's feelings might be on the subject of this excursion.

CHUCK

I mean, your father must have been very handsome.

OLIVE

Enjoy the pie.

RALSTON

Thanks...

MAURICE

Thank you!

As Chuck and Olive head out...

INT. EMERSON'S OFFICE - NIGHT

CLOSE ON Emerson, shirt unbuttoned, looking dazed and happy.

NARRATOR

Simone come and gone, Emerson felt like a man returned from a mountaintop. Flushed with a post-coital sense of achievement and renewed powers of mental clarity...

Emerson holds a cigar as he flips through the PHOTOS of the regular GAMBLERS on his desk.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

...he spotted something:

INSERT - PHOTOS OF GAMBLERS

The same BUSBOY is in every picture.

EMERSON

Who are you, busboy in every picture?

CLOSE ON THE BUSBOY'S WRISTWATCH IN A PHOTO.

NARRATOR

And, looking more closely...

EMERSON

(grabs the phone, dials)
Meet me at the dim sum.

INT. DIM SUM RESTAURANT - LOBBY - NIGHT

Chuck enters, crosses to join Ned and Emerson by the entrance, as Emerson surveys the dining room, watching the suspicious BUSBOY bus a table.

NED

Here she is.

EMERSON

Three reasons I want to speak with that busboy. One, he makes 5 bucks an hour and wears a 23-hundred-dollar Omega Deville prestige quartz wristwatch. Two, he's always hanging around the poker table. And three, he's been watching us since we came in...

NED

(to Chuck)
Since we came in. Where were you?

CONTINUED:

CHUCK

Gambling.

(off his puzzle)

For you. And I hit a jackpot, but maybe not the kind you'll like?

NED

What other kind is there?

The busboy heads quickly in back.

EMERSON

Busboy's making a run for it. Let's go.

INT. DIM SUM RESTAURANT - BACK HALL - NIGHT

Ned and Chuck follow Emerson down the hall as RESTAURANT STAFF bustle by.

NED

I can't believe you did that. How could you go to my dad's house and not tell me?

CHUCK

How could you not tell me you have brothers?

NED

Half-brothers.

CHUCK

Two half-brothers, which is like one whole one, and anyway they're *family*. Your dad left them, too. They have your eyebrows and they do parlor magic. Maurice gets into a trunk and Ralston jumps out, or the other way around--

NED

"Maurice and Ralston"?

CHUCK

You didn't know their names?

NED

I'm glad my dad got so fun and creative with the naming after he left. Goodbye, "Ned" -- hello, "Mercutio" and "Ribald."

CHUCK

Maurice and Ralston.

EMERSON

That happens in a second marriage. People learn to let go of their baggage and live a little.

CONTINUED:

NED

I was the baggage.

Emerson peers into the kitchen.

EMERSON

Busboy's not in the kitchen.

(then)

Wait a minute...

They spot the CLOSED CURTAIN of Bao's workspace.

CHUCK

In there.

ANGLE - PEERING INTO BAO'S CURTAINED PREP ROOM

The Mod Squad steps inside, looking around.

EMERSON

This is where Bao worked his magic.

CHUCK

(to Ned)

It's terrible your dad left you, but it wasn't your brothers' fault. Not even half their fault. Why not get to know them?

NED

I know other nice people my father *didn't* abandon me for. If it's all right, I'd rather spend my time with them.

EMERSON

Too much pressure...

NED

(to Emerson)

I meant it more as a compliment than a commitment.

(notices)

What is that?

EMERSON

It's a recently-repaired bun steamer. And I meant *too much pressure!*

THE BUN STEAMER is SHAKING, STEAM pouring from all sides... Everyone dives for cover as it EXPLODES, sending a PIPE whistling over their heads and THROUGH A GIANT BAG OF RICE on the rack behind them.

EMERSON (CONT'D)

Everyone okay?

CONTINUED: (2)

CHUCK

Think so.

EMERSON

Who shrieked?

NED

I might have shrieked.

EMERSON

Sounded like it came from over there.

The pipe juts from the rice bag. Chuck looks behind the bag.

CHUCK (O.S.)

Oh, no. I found him.

ANGLE - THE OTHER SIDE OF SOME BOXES

The pipe has impaled the suspicious busboy through the chest.
As Emerson and Ned peer around the bag...

EMERSON

You think 'cause you're dead, you won't tell
us what you were up to. But you're wrong
about that.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

OMIT

INT. DIM SUM RESTAURANT - BAO'S PREP ROOM - NIGHT

Emerson, Ned and Chuck stand over the corpse (PERRY), who's got the pipe jutting from his torso. Ned touches the body, a BLUE SPARK -- Perry sits up.

PERRY

What the hell's that?

NED

I believe that's a three-foot length of galvanized copper pipe.

PERRY

I wonder if that's excluded as a "special circumstance"?

CHUCK

"Special circumstance"?

PERRY

In my life insurance policy. That's what I do, investigate policy claims. I'm Perry Long, with Dawson & Stubbs. Previously.

EMERSON

(examining the pipe)

Perry, I believe the small, man-made crimp in this pipe would suggest that this was a garden-variety pre-meditated murder.

PERRY

Nice! That's a solid payout.

EMERSON

If you're an insurance investigator, what the hell are you doing posing as a busboy?

PERRY

Working undercover, checking out a suspicious policy claim by a chef named Bao Ting.

CHUCK

We know Bao.

PERRY

Bao took out a \$200,000 life insurance policy one day before he died. What are we, idiots?

EMERSON
Who's the beneficiary?

PERRY
His daughter. Her name's Mei, she works here--

NED
(checking his watch)
Thanks, Perry.

Ned touches Perry and ZAP, he's dead again.

OFF this...

INT. DIM SUM RESTAURANT - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Ned, Chuck and Emerson have stopped Mei as she makes her rounds as a waitress. She appears genuinely shocked.

MEI
You say he left me money? I'll believe it when I see it.

EMERSON
200 grand's a lotta dough. Maybe enough for someone who felt ignored and neglected to cash in.

Mei's expression hardens. Abruptly--

MEI
Will you excuse me? I have a table waiting.

EMERSON
Hold on...

The Mod Squad starts after Mei -- and finds their way blocked by SHRIMPBOY. He's big, covered with tattoos. A pair of THUGS back him up.

SHRIMPBOY
Since I'm waitin' on an order? Maybe you oughta let her do her job.

NED
Yes. Good idea.

As Shrimpboy heads back to the table...

EMERSON
That was Shrimpboy, runs the poker table.

NED
Definitely didn't want us talking to Mei.

CONTINUED:

CHUCK

Maybe they're in on this together?

A BUSBOY appears, holds out a TO-GO BAG.

BUSBOY

Mr. Cod? Food to-go.

EMERSON

I didn't order that.

On a hunch, Emerson takes the bag and checks inside.

EMERSON (CONT'D)

Fortune cookie.

He cracks the cookie open, reads the fortune--

INSERT - THE FORTUNE

Scrawled by hand, it reads: "MEET ME ACROSS THE STREET - ALONE!"

NARRATOR

Although the handwriting was familiar to Emerson, as it turned out...

OMIT

EXT. CHINATOWN BUTCHER SHOP - NIGHT

Emerson with Mei, a ways from the dim sum so as not to be spotted. As Mei glances around nervously, afraid of being seen:

NARRATOR

...the author was a surprise.

MEI

You think I killed my father? Then why would I send you a fortune cookie the first time asking for help?

EMERSON

Your mother sent me that cookie.

MEI

No. I sent you the cookie knowing she was at the dim sum getting my father's belongings. I wanted her to run into you. I knew she was suspicious of how Dad died...

EMERSON

Why couldn't you hire me?

CONTINUED:

MEI

Because Shrimpboy watches me. I know all his secrets, and Mom doesn't know anything, not even about the gambling.

(glances around)

If Shrimpboy knew I was talking to you...

EMERSON

Yeah? What's he afraid you're gonna say?

MEI

(quietly, fearful)

That I'll tell you about the bet my father lost.

The phrase Emerson has been waiting for--

EMERSON

Did you say "bet"?

NARRATOR

The facts were these:

INT. DIM SUM RESTAURANT - DINING ROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Bao is slumped at the poker table, miserable.

NARRATOR

Chasing money for his own restaurant at the dim sum poker table, Bao had gambled away his life savings. He then begged the other gamblers to let him play on credit.

CAMERA SWINGS TO FIND SHRIMPBOY, grinning, with the hapless Bao REFLECTED in his sunglasses.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Shrimpboy agreed, on one condition:

Bao gestures to Mei as she waits on a table nearby, unaware of the wager.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

If Bao lost the next hand, his daughter would be forced to marry Shrimpboy's unattractive and socially-handicapped cousin...

Rubbie stands nervously watching.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

...Rubbie, manager of the dim sum.

INT. DIM SUM RESTAURANT - SIDE ROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Racked with guilt, Bao delivers the bad news to Mei. As Mei reacts, horrified--

NARRATOR
20 minutes later, Mei was engaged.

TIME CUT:

INT. DIM SUM RESTAURANT - LOBBY (SCENE 20, FROM A NEW ANGLE)

Mei speaks for the first time with the Mod Squad.

NARRATOR
And since Shrimpboy believed the terms of a bet should be followed to the letter...

ANGLE CHANGES TO INCLUDE SHRIMPBOY nearby, watching.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
...he kept a close watch on Mei.

INT. PIE HOLE - BOOTH - NIGHT

Ned, Emerson and Chuck.

EMERSON
It's the wrong bet. Bao gambled away his daughter's hand in marriage, but so far, Mei's keeping her end of the bargain. There's no motive.

CHUCK
No way she's going to stay in some kind of arranged marriage.

NED
In fact, the whole idea of people being forced into a familial relationship for arbitrary reasons is absurd. She should definitely run away.
(off Chuck)
What? I'm agreeing with you.

EMERSON
She ain't going anywhere, long as Shrimpboy's got her under his thumb. We gotta prove Shrimpboy killed Bao, and to do that, we gotta question Shrimpboy.

NED
There are bodyguards involved. Very large ones.

CHUCK
Maybe Simone can help?

EMERSON
Simone can't help.

CONTINUED:

NED

I thought you talked to her. Or did you more than talk? You *did* more than talk.

EMERSON

We've decided to let things cool off. As a mutual agreement amicably reached by two, highly-mature adults. Excuse me.

Emerson exits. Chuck turns to Ned.

CHUCK

I owe you an apology.

Eavesdropping while waiting a table nearby, Olive jumps in--

OLIVE

Is this an apology for going to Ned's dad's house? And if it is, can I get in on this?

(to Ned)

'Cause I'm also really sorry.

NED

I was thrown that you went behind my back to look for a man who made my tender, formative years pure misery. That said, I appreciate the apology.

OLIVE

We weren't gonna tell you unless we had good news. Your brothers are friendly and really cute, not that you care about that, but I thought it qualified as good news. The "brothers" part and the "friendly" part.

CHUCK

It was wrong to be sneaky about it. I was trying not to be pushy and replacing "pushy" with "sneaky" was a mistake, but...

NED

But?

CHUCK

...I *know* you. You tell yourself you don't need to feel connected, only I don't believe that. Everyone needs family.

NED

You're my family.

(to Olive)

And you, to a slightly-lesser degree.

OLIVE

Thanks, to a slightly-lesser degree.

CONTINUED: (2)

NED

I've spent my life not having things in common with my father, which is a good thing. But if I reached out to my brothers, I'm betting it would make my dad feel good, wherever he is. I don't want to do that. If that seems petty and vindictive and small, then think of it as an homage to my father and the tiny part of us that is the same.

NARRATOR

As Chuck and Olive pondered the distance Ned put between himself and his past...

OFF them...

INT. EMERSON'S CAR - PARKED OUTSIDE THE DIM SUM - NIGHT

Emerson staking out the dim sum.

NARRATOR

...Emerson pondered ways of getting closer to Shrimpboy. And while tracking the potentially-murderous gangster...

Outside, Shrimpboy and his POSSE are entering the dim sum. Emerson starts to get out of the car to follow them--

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

...the P.I. came up against something far more frightening.

Emerson sees Simone exiting the restaurant with her dog, and lunges back into his car.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

The mutual decision to let things "cool off" between Emerson and Simone had not, in fact, been mutual.

Emerson, on his back, sprawled across the convertible's front seats as he looks up at the STARS.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

But as he gazed up at the stars, the P.I. had an idea.

EMERSON'S POV - THE STARS

...as specific stars GROW BRIGHTER, forming outlines of SHRIMP DUMPLINGS--

MATCH CUT TO:

SHRIMP DUMPLINGS ON A SERVING CART, and we're in--

OMIT

INT. DIM SUM RESTAURANT - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Rubbie stops Mei as she rolls her serving cart past. WITH
ENGLISH SUBTITLES:

RUBBIE
(*in Mandarin*)
Menus for Table 12.

MEI
(*in Mandarin*)
Not my section.

RUBBIE
(*in Mandarin*)
Would it kill you to bring over a few menus?

MEI
(*in Mandarin*)
I said, it's not my section. Ask one of the
new girls.

FIND AND PUSH IN ON--

CHUCK and OLIVE, (tastefully) DISGUISED AS DIM SUM WAITRESSES.

CHUCK
(*in Mandarin*)
Hi.

OLIVE
(*in Mandarin*)
Hi.

And OFF this...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

FADE IN:

EXT. DIM SUM RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Establishing.

OMIT

INT. DIM SUM RESTAURANT - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Chuck (in disguise) stands over a POT OF TEA, and checks to make sure no one's watching.

NARRATOR

Emerson's plan involved a pot of green tea...

Chuck takes a small BAG OF HERBS from her pocket, and empties it into the tea.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

...and Chinese herbs which Mei had supplied.

FIND SHRIMPBOY playing dim sum poker with the usual suspects and his cousin, Rubbie. Chuck fills teacups, hands them to the bodyguards who flank Shrimpboy's chair.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

When ingested, the herbs were known to cause an uncomfortable fullness of the bladder.

The gamblers uncover their plates, showing their "cards." Disappointed reactions, except for Rubbie who looks sheepish. Shrimpboy grins, musses Rubbie's hair.

SHRIMPBOY

Little cousin wins again. How 'bout that.

BODYGUARD 1

(to Shrimpboy)

Boss? I got an uncomfortable fullness of the bladder.

BODYGUARD 2

Me, too.

Shrimpboy nods absentmindedly, and the bodyguards excuse themselves.

INT. DIM SUM RESTAURANT - LOBBY - NIGHT

A HOSTESS [also our WAITRESS-DEALER] at the front desk, as PATRONS drift out of the dining room in the moments before closing--

EMERSON (O.S.)

'Scuse me.

She glances up at EMERSON, who is disguised as a serious poker-rat with a WIG, sunglasses, etc.

WAITRESS-DEALER

I'm sorry, we're closing.

EMERSON

What if I said we were here for...
(the password)
...the "hao shou yun" special?

REVEAL Ned, disguised as a wealthy Texan sucker.

NED

Same for me, darlin'. Thanks.

INT. DIM SUM RESTAURANT - DINING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The hostess escorts Emerson and Ned to the poker table.

EMERSON

You Shrimpboy?

SHRIMPBOY

Who's asking?

EMERSON

Who's askin' is Jimmy the Ace. Ricky the Hammer will vouch, we did time in the joint together. Where is Ricky, that lovable cutthroat?

SHRIMPBOY

Never heard of him. And this game is full.

EMERSON

(off Ned)
Too bad, 'cause the sucker behind me has pockets so deep they echo. He's a grade-A fish, thought I'd bring him here so we could pick him clean.

Shrimpboy sizes Ned up, smiles. Turns back to the table--

SHRIMPBOY

Rubbie, you and Louie sit this one out.

As Rubbie and the other player free up a pair of seats...

SHRIMPBOY (CONT'D)

Have a seat. It's a grand to buy in, hope that's not a problem.

CONTINUED:

NED

I always carry loose change.

Ned and Emerson produce the CASH as if it were nothing. A busboy takes money from Ned; a brief tug-of-war as Emerson can't bring himself to let go of his cash, but finally does. As the WAITRESS-DEALER SPINS THE LAZY SUSAN--

INT. DIM SUM RESTAURANT - BACK HALL - CONTINUOUS

The bodyguards rush into the restroom...

FIND MEI as she hands Olive a KEY and keeps walking. Olive (in disguise) locks the restroom door, then sets a FOLDUP SIGN in front of the door reading: "RESTROOM CLOSED FOR CLEANING."

INT. DIM SUM RESTAURANT - DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A DEALER deals COVERED PLATES as a BUSBOY sets up Ned and Emerson with steamed soybeans (poker chips).

NED

You the Shrimpboy won himself a bride in a poker game? Heard about that. I thought, that fella needs to get out more. There's better ways to meet girls.

LAUGHTER from the other players. Shrimpboy bristles.

SHRIMPBOY

I was playing her dad, he didn't have any cash. And the girl wasn't for me. My cousin ain't so hot with the ladies, I was doing him a favor. Not to mention, providing entertainment for the lowlifes at this table.

The gamblers MUMBLE their agreement, recalling that night.

EMERSON

Her daddy musta' been pretty angry when he lost that bet.

SHRIMPBOY

If he was, why the hell did he play the hand in the first place? 'Round here, a bet is sacred. Your word is all you got.

(to Chuck)

Boba tea.

Chuck nods, goes to fetch the tea. The player to Ned's right checks his "hand," tosses three soybeans on the table.

SHRIMPBOY (CONT'D)

(to Ned)

Bet's to you, new guy. Three hundred to stay in.

NED

(matches the bet)

That all?

SHRIMPBOY

You can raise.

NED

I like to start with an insignificant sum like this. Work my way up to real money.

EMERSON

Speaking of real money -- if I was you, I'd have been looking to play another game with that fool. Sounds like an easy mark.

SHRIMPBOY

He came back and begged me to play another hand. Felt guilty about his daughter having to marry my cousin. Said he wanted to win her freedom back.

Emerson and Ned are startled by the revelation.

NED

So it wasn't about money? He was trying to help his daughter...

SHRIMPBOY

Except he had nothing to bet. So I told him to get lost.

(to Emerson)

You in or what?

As Emerson matches the bet--

INT. DIM SUM RESTAURANT - BACK HALL - CONTINUOUS

BANGING from inside the restroom as the trapped occupants try to force their way out. When PASSERSBY hear the ruckus and pause, Olive pretends to mop the floor, banging the door with her mop handle to cover the noise.

INT. DIM SUM RESTAURANT - DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The players are distracted as they draw "cards" for the second round of the hand, allowing Emerson and Ned to confer with Chuck as she serves them drinks.

CONTINUED:

CHUCK

Bao wanted to win back Mei's freedom. If Shrimpboy wouldn't play... there's still someone else Bao could have played against.

EMERSON

You mean Rubbie. Bao would've gone directly to her fiancé, try and win Mei back from him.

NED

But Bao was broke. If he gambled with Rubbie, what was he betting with?

SHRIMPBOY

Time to put up or shut up...

Shrimpboy uncovers his plates, beams.

WAITRESS-DEALER

Pork buns, shrimp dumplings. Full house.

As the players continue to uncover hands--

WAITRESS-DEALER (CONT'D)

(off another hand)

Beef potstickers, straight to the nine.

EMERSON

(aside)

Bao had life insurance! What if he gambled that? Mei's the beneficiary, but if Rubbie marries her, then he gets the money.

NED

And Rubbie wouldn't collect as long as Bao was alive...

NARRATOR

At last, the truth was clear:

CHUCK

Rubbie murdered Bao.

They look at each other.

EMERSON

We better finish up and call the police.

SHRIMPBOY

What's with the whispering? Let's see the damn cards.

Ned uncovers his plates.

WAITRESS-DEALER

Ten high.

SNICKERS from the group. Emerson uncovers his plates...

WAITRESS-DEALER (CONT'D)

Shrimp dumplings, four of a kind. Winning hand.

EMERSON

I won?

(then)

I won.

Suddenly, a HAND tears off Emerson's wig. SWING TO FIND RUBBIE, with Chuck and Mei unhappily at his side.

Rubbie lowers a restaurant menu, flashes a GUN.

RUBBIE

Time to cash out.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT FIVE

ACT SIX

FADE IN:

INT. DIM SUM RESTAURANT - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The restaurant is closed, customers gone. Find Ned, Emerson, Chuck, Olive and Mei seated with their arms tied behind their backs. Shrimpboy and his bodyguards watch as Rubbie tugs on the knot holding Emerson.

EMERSON

Does it have to be so tight? I got bad circulation.

RUBBIE

(to Shrimpboy)

Keep them here till me and my fiancée are on the plane. We're taking our honeymoon early. Right, honey?

OLIVE

(to Shrimpboy)

You help him and you're an accessory, and I'm not talking Gucci handbag, I'm talking hard time in the pen. The Big House.

SHRIMPBOY

My cousin won a bet, and around here--

NED

--a bet is sacred.

(off Chuck)

What? I'm repeating what he said.

NARRATOR

The facts were these:

INT. DIM SUM RESTAURANT - SIDE ROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Bao tearfully begs Rubbie.

NARRATOR

Bao's desperate plea for a chance to win his daughter's freedom was paired with an unfortunate lack of funds. When Shrimpboy refused...

TIME CUT:

Bao signs papers as Perry Long and Rubbie look on.

NARRATOR

...Rubbie suggested Bao simply wager the payout from a life insurance policy. If Rubbie won the hand, he would marry Mei and wait for Bao to die before claiming his reward.

OMIT

INT. DIM SUM RESTAURANT - DINING ROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Bao and Rubbie play dim sum poker. Rubbie looks up from a killer hand, a new and dangerous glint in his eye.

NARRATOR

Rubbie won the poker game with an amazing straight flush. Bao had failed his daughter and was devastated.

INT. DIM SUM - BAO'S PREP ROOM - DAY (PARTIAL RE-USE, SCENE 17)

Rubbie uses a wrench to crimp the RELEASE VALVE on the BUN STEAMER.

NARRATOR

Even more devastating was Bao's next realization, that his future son-in-law demanded payment...

TIME CUT:

Working alone, Bao has his back to the steamer, which is SHAKING, STEAM pouring from all sides--

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

...immediately.

The steamer EXPLODES.

RETURN TO SCENE - ON MEI, distressed.

MEI

Dad was risking his life for me. I thought he didn't care about anything except winning his stupid poker games. I wouldn't even speak to him...

CHUCK

It's not your fault.

MEI

I thought I knew my dad. I didn't know him at all.

On Ned.

NARRATOR

It struck the Pie-Maker, he'd always believed his father's actions spoke for themselves. But did they speak for his father?

SIMONE (O.S.)

Speak of the devil.

CONTINUED:

Simone marches through the door with her dog.

EMERSON

Simone?

RUBBIE

Nobody locked the door?

EMERSON

Probably not the best time...

SIMONE

And when *is* the best time? Certainly not earlier, when you dove into your car to hide from me.

EMERSON

You don't underst--

Simone CLICKS, Emerson stops short.

SIMONE

I require honesty, loyalty and respect -- qualities you've done an extraordinary job of *not* showing. So let's try a new set of rules. From now on...

(CLICKING before each)

...you will not speak to me. Or call me. Or come within twenty feet--

SHRIMPBOY

Lady?

THREE PISTOLS are drawn, COCKED and held in Simone's face. She looks over at Shrimpboy and his bodyguards.

SIMONE

(lightly)

What's going on?

Rubbie tries pulling Mei to her feet, and she resists.

RUBBIE

We have a plane to catch.

MEI

No...

Simone's dog is staring at Rubbie, and begging.

CHUCK

Look at the dog.

CONTINUED: (2)

SIMONE

Bubblegum, stop begging.

(to Rubbie)

Do you have food in your pocket?

RUBBIE

No.

It hits Chuck--

CHUCK

You do, don't you.

RUBBIE

What are you talking about?

CHUCK

I was waiting on you when you beat Shrimpboy at poker. I bet you only won 'cause you had the winning pork bun in your pocket. 'Cause you're a cheater. Cheater, cheater, cheater.

EMERSON

(to Shrimpboy)

Then you *know* he cheated when he played against Bao.

NED

Around here, a bet is sacred. Right?

As Shrimpboy absorbs this...

Rubbie pulls Mei to the door, finds it blocked by one of Shrimpboy's bodyguards.

RUBBIE

Out of my way.

The bodyguard grabs Rubbie's pocket and rips it; several PORK BUNS fall to the floor. The dog starts eating them.

Rubbie looks to Shrimpboy. The cousins stare at each other...

NARRATOR

While there were things Shrimpboy could forgive, such as homicide, kidnapping and illegal poker, he drew the line at cheating.

A FLASH--

INSERT - 3 POLAROID PHOTOS FROM THE '80S (À LA "RUN LOLA RUN")

PHOTO: A YOUNG RUBBIE (9) plays cards with YOUNG SHRIMPBOY (11).

CONTINUED:

NARRATOR

*In part, it was the countless hands of poker
he'd lost to Rubbie in the years since
childhood...*

FLASH, and our next PHOTO: YOUNG RUBBIE with a shit-eating grin
as he takes the pot. FLASH--

PHOTO: THE ACE Young Rubbie holds behind his back.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

...now seen in a different light.

INT. DIM SUM RESTAURANT - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

On Adult Shrimpboy.

NARRATOR

*But Shrimpboy also believed in a fundamental
truth about gambling...*

The bodyguards hold Rubbie as Mei, Simone, Emerson, Ned and
Chuck hurry past and exit the restaurant. Chuck waves 'bye--

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

*...that all gains are meaningless unless we
risk something real.*

A FLASH--

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

As Rubbie has his mugshot taken.

NARRATOR

*Rubbie risked something real and what he
gained, as Olive predicted, was a visit to the
Big House.*

Another FLASH, and we're CLOSE on a STACK OF BILLS--

INT. EMERSON'S OFFICE - DAY

Mei is holding the money--

NARRATOR

*After the insurance company made a grudging
payout to Mei...*

--and passes it to Lai Di, who gratefully passes it to Emerson.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

*...she shared it with her mother, who shared
it with Emerson, payment for a job well done.*

CONTINUED:

Pleased as he is by the cash in his hand, Emerson's attention is drawn to something he spots out the window--

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Still, Emerson was forced to acknowledge...

EXT. DIM SUM RESTAURANT - DAY

We SLIDE DOWN from Emerson's office to the dim sum, where--

NARRATOR

...it had been a job not-so-well done where Simone was concerned.

Emerson catches up with Simone as she reaches the restaurant.

EMERSON

Simone, hold on--
(she CLICKS, he stops)
Dammit.

SIMONE

Whatever it is, say it quickly.

EMERSON

You're all about control, and I'm not denying that's a turn-on. But you never show your cards. I thought, if I go all in, I'm gonna wake up on the street with a tin cup and a borrowed blanket. You with me?

SIMONE

For about ten more seconds.

EMERSON

When you barged into that restaurant to tell me off? That was a whole new Simone, 'cause it meant you were... I dunno...

SIMONE

Hiding a shred of vulnerability?

EMERSON

Shred's better than nothing. I'm saying, you show me your cards? I'll show you mine.

As they hold a look, and Simone softens...

NARRATOR

It struck Emerson that while some people are terrified of a gamble, and others can't say no to one...

EXT. COZY HOUSE - PORCH - DAY

Ned and Chuck stand waiting by the front door.

NARRATOR

...the best approach lies somewhere in the middle.

CHUCK

I would ask what changed your mind.

NED

Except?

CHUCK

Except you haven't rung the doorbell which will be proof that you *have* changed your mind, and anything I say now is tempting fate.

NED

It's easier to make assumptions about Dad and why he did what he did, than admit I don't know. I don't know my family, or what it would be *like* to know them...

(off the doorbell)

But the finding-out part makes me a little queasy.

CHUCK

Whatever happens? I'll be right here.

Ned braces himself, RINGS the bell. Smiles nervously at Chuck.

NED

Thanks.

The door swings open -- it's Ralston and Maurice.

RALSTON

Hello?

NED

Hi, I'm Ned. Thought I'd stop by because, basically, we have the same dad.

NARRATOR

As the brothers gazed at each other for the first time...

LONG-DISTANCE POV - TWINS' HOUSE - Seen from across the street as Ned explains -- and Maurice steps forward, embracing Ned.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

...the Pie-Maker sensed this gamble would pay off in ways he could never predict.

INT. DWIGHT'S CAR - ACROSS THE STREET - CONTINUOUS

Dwight, sipping soda through a straw as he studies the scene on the porch.

NARRATOR

And from his vantage point across the street...

TRACK DWIGHT'S HAND as he sets the soda down -- next to a FORTY-FIVE CALIBER HANDGUN.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

...Dwight agreed.

OFF Dwight, eyes narrowing as he watches...

FADE OUT.

END OF SHOW