

THE COLD DARK SEA

(JACK SO: THE CONSORT'S CURSE)

Written by
Richard Tunbridge

Based on the novel
Sayonara Bitch, by Richard Tong

rtunbridge@gmail.com (+852) 6208 9639

FADE IN:

EXT. OCEAN - BIRD'S EYE POV - AFTERNOON

Swooping across the The South China Sea. The landscape changes, suddenly, to verdant green, as we hit the mountainous coast.

EXT. HILLSIDE - BIRD'S EYE POV

We climb the slope, steeper and higher. There is an old stone lion or dragon among the tropical trees and shrubs. An old pagoda. We approach the peak, and fly over the top. And there it is. Hong Kong. The metropolis rises up. The urban jungle.

TITLE: *HONG KONG, 1987*

We circle and swoop down into the city.

EXT. WAN CHAI - BIRD'S EYE POV

On the busy streets of Wan Chai, a JACK SO walks, hand-in-hand, with his daughter, MEI. She looks up at the surrounds in wide-eyed wonder.

EXT. WAN CHAI - LOCKHART ROAD

Mei is 4 and dressed in ballet attire. Hair in a bun, leotard and ballet skirt. Her 30-something father, Jack, wears jeans and a T-shirt.

Mei watches as an eagle swoop from the sky, to snatch an unsuspecting rat from the street in its talons.

Jack and Mei walk on, past the velvet curtains of girly-bars and wooden doors of faux-English pubs.

EXT. WAN CHAI - CLUB PUSSYCAT

A MAMA-SAN burns incense and "devil money" in a red fire bucket, out front of Club Pussycat. Two FILIPINO BAR GIRLS, in Lycra body-suits, watch with detached amusement. Mei looks at the Girls as she walks by. They smile at her. They eye Jack. He only has eyes for the path ahead. Mama-san straightens. She recognizes Jack.

MAMA-SAN

Mr Jack! Not see you at Happy Hour
for longest time!

Jack slows but does not stop.

JACK
Busy, Mama.

MAMA-SAN
Too busy for Mama? Got beautiful
new girls. See?

JACK
Got a girl of my own now, Mama.

Jack raises Mei's hand in his.

MAMA-SAN
And what a beauty she is! You're a
good man, Jack So. A girl needs her
father. You're a good man.

JACK
Trying, Mama. I'm trying.

MAMA-SAN
You try to hard! Take a break. Come
see us! I buy you drink!

Mama-san throws another wad of cash into the flames.

Jack and Mei walk on.

MEI
You're so famous, Ba-ba.

JACK
Infamous, Sugar-pop. I worked here.

MEI
You worked *there*?

JACK
Not *there*. Around here. Long ago.

MEI
What kind of work?

JACK
I helped people.

MEI
How?

JACK
I made sure they stayed out of
trouble, and didn't get hurt.

MEI
Like when Uncle Benny gets into
trouble?

JACK
Something like that. But I did it a
little better back then.

MEI
Oh.

EXT. WAN CHAI - TUNG KAI BUILDING

Jack and Mei enter an old, dirty building.

INT. TUN KAI BUILDING

Jack and Mei walk a dimly lit corridor. Classical music becomes more audible as they approach a door. They stop at the glass door. The light within bathes them in a soft glow.

INT. DANCE STUDIO

The ballet studio is a contrast to the dingy world outside. It is bright and open. Polished wood floor. White walls. Floor to ceiling mirrors at one end. Ancient, frosted glass windows at the another.

In the far corner, at the entrance of an office that overlooks the studio, stands IRINA WANG. She is a stern, inscrutable headmistress. She acknowledges Jack and Mei with a brief glance, then returns her attention to SAM WANG at the center of the room.

Sam is Irina Wang's daughter. A petite ballet teacher, clad in a leotard, she puts a young protege through her paces. She sees Jack, smiles at Mei, gives the student a final word of advice, then moves across the studio toward Jack.

Mei greets her teacher with a curtsy.

SAM
You're late, Mei-mei.

MEI
Sorry, Sammi.

SAM
Go and warm up.

MEI
Okay. Bye-bye Ba-ba!

JACK
Bye-bye Paloma Pavlova. Be good for Sammi.

Mei skips over to join the other student. Jack and Sam watch.

JACK (CONT'D)
How's things? You said you wanted to talk about something?

SAM
Mei got into an argument with one of the girls, last week.

JACK
They're getting on fine, now.

SAM
Not this girl.

JACK
And?

SAM
She's a lovely girl, Jack. But sometimes she can be quite impatient. *Determined*. A little headstrong.

JACK
She got that from her mother.

Sam shoots Jack a disapproving glare.

JACK (CONT'D)
Sorry. Is she okay? The other girl, I mean.

A dark shadow looms behind Jack, distracting Sam. She takes a step back

Jack, instinctively, swivels to face the interloper and braces for conflict.

A giant man-child stands before him.

BRONSON CHUNG is as wide as he is tall. A pudgy face beneath curly, permed hair. Gaudy shirt and baggy trousers. He stares at Jack with a hint menace in his eyes.

Irina Wang steps between the two men. She looks Chung in the eye and challenges him in *Cantonese*.

IRINA

What do you want, Lion Tamer?

Chung's anger is defused, a little. He looks confused. He speaks quietly, respectfully.

BRONSON CHUNG

I am looking for Kitty.

He casts his eye to Sam, briefly.

BRONSON CHUNG (CONT'D)

I am sorry, Little Sister. I thought you were Kitty.

Irina slaps Chung across the face.

IRINA

Do not sully my daughter or this school with that name.

Chung is almost sheepish and apologetic in his reply.

BRONSON CHUNG

I am sorry. I thought-

Irina slaps him again.

IRINA

Do not think. Bronson Chung. You will not find her here. She left, long ago. And you will leave us now. This is a place for children.

More students, and their guardians, are filing through the door. Jack takes the initiative and addresses Chung in *Cantonese*.

JACK

Brother Cheung. Perhaps we can leave Madam Wang and her little friends to their dancing?

Irina moves to greet the students. Jack, leans into Chung and whispers.

JACK (CONT'D)

I can help you find her.

Tension returns to Chung's body.

BRONSON CHUNG
You have known Kitty?

JACK
*I know **of** her. She was here long ago. And I know a better place to look for her. Come.*

EXT. LOCKHART ROAD - EARLY EVENING

Jack walks beside Chung, half a step behind.

JACK
 What was Kitty to you, Brother Chung?

BRONSON CHUNG
 She was my girl.

JACK
 I hear she was quite a lady.

BRONSON CHUNG
 She was like all girls. But she could dance too.

JACK
 A man shouldn't leave a girl like that alone for too long. She is not going to dance by herself.

BRONSON CHUNG
 I didn't leave her. They took me away from her. I have not seen her for a long time.

JACK
 No one has.

BRONSON CHUNG
 I didn't get a chance to say goodbye.

Jack and Chung arrive at the entrance of a faux English pub.
 THE AULD ALL & CHAIN.

INT. THE AULD BALL & CHAIN

Jack and Chung enter. It is dimly lit. The walls are decorated with beer posters, neon signs and WWII memorabilia.

Four OVERWEIGHT EXPATRIATES play darts at one end. They give a dismissive glance to Jack and Chung as they sit at the bar.

Jack orders beer from MABEL, the Bar Maid. She puts two heady pints in front of him and Chung. Jack raises his glass. Chung looks around the bar.

The men playing darts pass shallow judgement on Jack and Chung. Jack raises his glass to them.

JACK

Boys. Triple twenty, one-hundred
and eighty.

Only one of the men raises his glass in reply. Chung drinks impatiently. Jack addresses the Bar Maid.

JACK (CONT'D)

Sister. Has Kitty been here lately?

The name cuts through the air. Mabel draws breath. Her eyes dart across to the men playing darts. One of them, breaks from the pack and walks toward Jack.

DRUNK 1

You a friend of Kitty?

JACK

Kind of. Sort of. Not really.

DRUNK 1

What is it... kind of, sort of or
not really?

BRONSON CHUNG

She is a friend of mine.

DRUNK 1

Is that a fact? Mabel, tell Nifty a
friend of Kitty's is here.

Mabel walks hesitantly toward the back of the pub. DRUNK 2 and DRUNK 3 join their fat friend at the bar.

DRUNK 2

You looking for Kitty, the dancer?

BRONSON CHUNG

She danced. She could sing too.

DRUNK 3

And she could play the fucking
flute.

DRUNK 1

Kitty's not here, China. She's long gone. Danced on Nifty's nuts and hoofed it with his dough.

DRUNK 2

You looking for that bat-smoking bitch, Jackie Chan, you're in the wrong fucking place.

Jack winces and shifts back in his seat.

Chung considers Drunk 2's statement, then looks at the pint in his hand. He raises it to his mouth to drink. And then decides to do something else.

Chung smashes the pint glass across the head of Drunk 2. Then, while Drunk 2 is working out what just happened, Chung drives his fist into the middle of Drunk 2's face, shattering his nose. Blood plumes onto Jack's white shirt. Jack steps away from Chung.

Chung collects Drunk 2, as a rugby player would tackle an opponent, and drives him forward into Drunk 1 and Drunk 3.

Drunk 4 watches in horror as Chung pummels his friends into unconsciousness.

NIFTY appears at the back of the pub. A tall, aging lothario, he is mortified by what he sees.

Chung becomes aware of Nifty's presence. He stops and looks to the back of the pub. Then strides toward Nifty.

Nifty disappears out the back. Chung follows. Wood splinters. Fittings break. A loud bang is followed by furniture being overturned. And then silence.

Jack, Mabel and Drunk 4 look to each other.

Chung emerges from the darkness. Blood is smeared across his Versace shirt. He holds a pistol in his hand.

BRONSON CHUNG

Kitty's not here.

Chung heads toward the door. He tosses the pistol on the floor as passes Jack.

BRONSON CHUNG (CONT'D)

Thank-you for your help, and the drink, Brother So.

Chung exits the darkness of The Auld Ball & Chain, disappearing into the early evening light.

Jack look at a terrified Mabel. He walks to the back of the pub, to see if Nifty is in need of assistance.

INT. OFFICE

The door to this small space is broken. Nifty lies motionless on the floor. His battered head in a pool of crimson. A blood-smeared Gunn & Moore cricket bat at his side.

INT. THE AULD BALL & CHAIN

Jack walks to the bar. He picks up the phone by the register, punches numbers into the dial, and passes it to Mabel.

JACK

Ask for Detective Oldham. Tell him what happened. Tell him Jack So will be in to give him a statement in an hour.

EXT. LOCKHART ROAD - EVENING

Jack stands at the entrance of The Auld Ball & Chain. He looks up and down the street. The red-light district getting ready for the night ahead. Neon signs flicker into life. Working girls emerge from behind the velvet curtains, seeking to entice clients. Jack sighs. And walks back to the Tun Kai Building.

INT. POLICE HEADQUARTERS - NIGHT

Jack walks with Mei, past police officers and their desks, to an office in the corner.

INT. POLICE OFFICE

Behind a large desk sits SENIOR DETECTIVE OLDHAM. He wears a bad suit and a permanent scowl.

Jack marches Mei through the door, presenting her to Oldham, as if she were a prisoner.

JACK

We got her, Chief. She put up a fight but we got her. Ma Barker has pulled her last job.

Mei giggles. Jack picks her up by the shoulders and stairs into her eyes.

JACK (CONT'D)
You think this is funny? There
won't be any laughing where you're
going, Jail-bird. They're gonna
throw the book at you.

MEI
What book, Ba-ba. Sneetches? Green
Eggs? Horton?

Jack addresses Oldham, still holding Mei off the ground.

JACK
You got any Seuss out the back?

Oldham signals to a young CONSTABLE. She enters the room.
Jack hands Mei to her.

JACK (CONT'D)
Put her in chains and throw away
the key!

The Constable ushers Mei from the room. Jack sits in the
chair opposite Oldham.

JACK (CONT'D)
What can I do for you, Officer?

OLDHAM
You called me, remember? Thanks,
Jack. Just what I need. Another
homicide.

JACK
Just trying to do the right thing.

OLDHAM
Stay home. That would be the right
thing to do. Don't even open the
door. What were you doing there?

JACK
Having a beer.

OLDHAM
Quite a bunch, your drinking
buddies.

JACK
Chung turned up at Mei's dance
class.

OLDHAM
Looking for lessons?

JACK
Looking for someone who used to
teach there. I pointed him in the
right direction.

OLDHAM
Nifty wasn't much of a song and
dance man. Who?

JACK
Whom. *Who* is subjective. *Whom*
should be used in the objective
position.

OLDHAM
I'll try to remember that, next
time we're splitting infinitives
and conjugating verbs. *Whom*?

JACK
Kitty Ho.

OLDHAM
Fill in the blanks.

JACK
The dance studio is owned by Irina
Wang. Her daughter, Sam, teaches
Mei ballet. We go back a way.

OLDHAM
You conjugated her verb and split
her infinitive?

JACK
When my mom died, Irina and Sam
took me in. We grew up together.

OLDHAM
Chung was part of your nuclear
family?

JACK
He turned up, looking for a girl
that taught there a while ago.

OLDHAM
Kitty Ho.

JACK

Turns out she did a bit of folk dancing with Chung, once upon a time. I thought Nifty might know where Kitty was. He cut the rug with her when Chung went up the river.

OLDHAM

Is that why he punched Nifty's ticket?

JACK

He wasn't happy about something.

OLDHAM

Where's Kitty now?

JACK

No one knows. Look, I took a guy to the pub. That's not a crime.

OLDHAM

Actually, when that guy is Bronson "The Lion Tamer" Chung, and he goes on a killing spree, it kind of is.

JACK

Okay but, technically, one murder is not a spree.

OLDHAM

He's only been out a couple of days. Maybe he's just getting started.

JACK

Like all those cats he butchered?

OLDHAM

Hard to imagine anyone with a predilection for torturing animals knowing where to draw the line.

JACK

Such a troubled youth. So much anger.

OLDHAM

What were you thinking, Jack?

JACK

You know me, Oldham. I help people.

OLDHAM

You can't help yourself. I know.

JACK

I was thinking I had to get Chung away from women and children. I was thinking I could help him out and kill two birds with one stone.

OLDHAM

Mission accomplished. What else to know you about Kitty Ho?

JACK

Irina Wang bought her out of Big Spender and brought her across to the dance school. Kitty was the daughter of a friend. But she didn't stick around. She walked out and went back to working in bars. Danced up a storm. Tango'd with Nifty. Cha-cha'd with Bronson Cheung at some point too, it seems.

OLDHAM

Do you know which point?

JACK

The point of ejaculation?

OLDHAM

Nifty put a call in to the Department after the Securicor heist? He fingered Chung for the job and claimed the reward.

JACK

How would Nifty get that information, I wonder?

OLDHAM

Kitty screwed them both, one way and another.

JACK

Find her and I bet you'll find him.

OLDHAM

Easier to catch crabs on a hill.

JACK

If it's crabs you're after, Wan Chai's not a bad place too start.

OLDHAM

Go home, Jack. And stay there.

INT. RESIDENTIAL BUILDING - NIGHT

Jack and Mei exit the lift and approach the door to their apartment. Boisterous voices come from within. There are many pairs of shoes at the entrance. They look to each other, unsure of what awaits on the other side.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Eight sets of eyes turn to Jack and Mei as they enter. Conversation ceases. There is POR-POR, Jack's Chinese mother-in-law. GU-POR, her older sister. And six other CHINESE WOMEN. They are squeezed onto the sofa and chairs. Luggage clogs the floor. They study Jack and look at Mei, hiding behind his legs. Someone burps. Someone farts. The noise begins again, mostly directed at coaxing Mei out from behind Jack. An enthusiastic relative drags her over to the gushing relatives. Por-por addresses Jack in Cantonese.

POR-POR

The family will be joining us.

JACK

For dinner?

POR-POR

For longer.

RELATIVE 1

For our holidays!

Gu-por approaches Jack. She notices the blood on his shirt.

GU-POR

You eat already?

INT. MEI BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jack is tucking Mei into bed. There is a mattress on the floor next to it. The chatter of the in-laws can still be heard, bubbling away, in the dark distance.

JACK

*I'll be right here. Be careful if
you get up in the night.*

MEI

I will stay here. So many of them
out there.

JACK

Wait 'til you go to China. They're
everywhere.

MEI

Why they all come here, at the same
time?

JACK

They live with Gu-por. She takes
care of them. And she takes them
everywhere she goes.

MEI

Like Thidwick! The Dr Suess moose,
with those animals in his horns!

JACK

Just like Thidwick. She even has
the horns.

Jack lifts his index fingers to his head, making "horns". He
leans over and kisses Mei on the forehead.

JACK (CONT'D)

Good night, Bingle-bug.

MEI

Good-night Suess-moose.

INT. ELEVATOR

Jack looks at the buttons on the panel as they count down the
numbers. The door opens at the First Floor. He exits.

INT. OFFICE LOBBY

Jack approaches the glass doors of SO FUK YU, his advertising
agency. It is dark inside. He tests the door. It is locked.
He reaches into his pocket and retrieves his keys and looks
upon his reflection. Deeper in the glass, he sees the
silhouette of a ballet dancer. Jack changes his mind. He is
not going in to the office. He enters the adjacent stair-
well, and descends into darkness.

EXT. LOCKHART ROAD - LATE NIGHT

The street is lit with neon and littered with late-night revelers, stumbling out of pubs and being dragged behind the velvet curtains of girly bars. Jack stands outside The Auld Ball & Chain. It is dark and empty inside, sealed by police tape. He looks across the road at a faux English pub. The Horse & Groom. Jack crosses the road.

INT. THE HORSE & GROOM

The air is thick with smoke and loud Country music. Tables are full. Drunk office workers play dice games. Service men on a furlough. Working girls. Boys on the town. Jack surveys the room. KENNY "The Cowboy" LAU is perched on a stool at the bar. Mid-40s. Thin. Long pony-tail. Western shirt. Denim jeans. Cowboy boots. Jack drops onto a stool beside him. A BARMAID approaches. It is Mabel, from The Auld Ball & Chain. If she recognizes Jack, she doesn't show it. Jack is equally non-plussed as he orders a drink.

JACK

Bourbon on the rocks, Mabel.

KENNY

Give him an extra shot.

Mabel drops the drink on the counter. Jack raises the glass in Kenny's direction. A toast.

JACK

Yippee-ki-yay.

KENNY

Yippee-ki-yay, Motherfucker.

Kenny lights a smoke. Jack takes one and lights up too.

JACK

Can I ask you a couple of questions?

KENNY

Is that one of them?

JACK

Know anything about what happened at The Auld Ball & Chain?

KENNY

No.

JACK

Mabel didn't tell you why she left her last job.

KENNY

Didn't have too. Everyone knows.

JACK

See, you do know something. Maybe you know why Chung iced Nifty.

KENNY

Could be a lot of reasons. A man only needs one. Who cares?

JACK

Friend of a friend.

KENNY

Choose your friends carefully.

JACK

What do you know about Nifty's girl, Kitty Ho?

KENNY

Why you looking for her?

JACK

I want to offer my condolences.

KENNY

You find her, tell her to call me. She was good for business. Hasn't been seen since the divorce.

JACK

They were married?

KENNY

Maybe. They split. She got more than half the money. Messy business.

JACK

Didn't end well today either. Know where I could find her?

KENNY

No.

JACK

Maybe Mabel knows. Mind if I ask?

KENNY

Not if she doesn't. She's on a break. Make it quick.

Jack stands and puts \$100 on the bar.

JACK

Buy yourself something special with the change.

KENNY

I don't drink.

JACK

Get yourself another packet of smokes then. Yippee-kay-yay.

KENNY

Yippee-ki-yay, Motherfucker.

EXT. LOCKHART ROAD - THE HORSE & GROOM

Jack exits the bar. He sees Mabel talking with a MAMA-SAN at the entrance of Club Pussycat, a neighboring girly bar.

MAMA-SAN

Mr Jack! I knew you come back. You cannot resist me, huh?

EXT. LOCKHART ROAD - THE AULD BALL & CHAIN

From across the road we watch Jack and Mabel walk away from the Mama-san. They talk. They smoke. They talk some more. Jack extinguishes his cigarette. Mabel returns to work. Jack crosses the road, toward The Auld Ball & Chain. He enters a dark alley behind The Auld Ball & Chain.

EXT. WANCHAI ALLEY

Jack walks in the shadows, past an old man washing dishes in a tub on the ground. Past two prostitutes talking with their pimp. Past a passionate couple fornicating against a wall. Jack stops at a door. He turns the handle. He leans his shoulder into it. The door opens. Jack enters.

INT. THE AULD BALL & CHAIN BACK OFFICE

The room is dark. Dim light spills in from the alley. A long shadow glides into the room as Jack comes through the door. He flicks a switch.

The room is illuminated by the weak orange glow of an bare bulb. A stain of congealed blood is all that remains of Nifty. Jack goes to the desk and scans the notice board. He takes a coaster and a pen and writes a few phone numbers down. He uses the pen to push some invoices and papers around. An envelope gets his attention. The address.

Mr Neil Teplice
5C Bowen Road, Mid-levels, Hong Kong

A line has been drawn through it and forwarded it to The Auld Ball & Chain.

JACK
Hello, Mrs Teplice. I'm Sorry for
you loss.

EXT. BOWEN ROAD - EARLY MORNING

A white Range Rover turns down a quiet street. There are no high-rises here. Only three- and four-storey apartments. The car climbs the curb and parks on the footpath.

INT. RANGE ROVER

Jack sits behind the wheel. Mei is in the back, on a booster chair. Jack unbuckles his seat belt and turns to face her.

MEI
This is not the playground.

JACK
I have to see a client first. Won't
take long.

MEI
Why can't I sit in the front?

JACK
Yours is the best seat. It's the
safest.

MEI
It's the most boring too. All I can
see is the back of your head.

JACK
Better the back of my head than the
back of a bus, Beetle-bomb.

Jack gives her a book from the Sesame Street backpack. The Sneetches, by Dr Seuss. He pushes a cassette into the stereo. The Cookie Monster sings "C is For Cookie".

JACK (CONT'D)
I'll be quick.

MEI
It's already taking forever.

JACK
Don't open the door to strangers.

Jack exits the vehicle. He stops, turns back and winds the window down an inch. He smiles at Mei as he closes the door. She watches him walk to the apartments.

EXT. 5C BOWEN ROAD

Jack walks up to the door of 5C and rings the bell. He looks back to car. He smiles at Mei. She scrunches her face and sticks out her tongue. Jack distorts his face comically and blows a raspberry at her.

The door opens behind him. Jack turns. His expression drops dramatically when he sees what he has been greeted by.

LYNNE SPRUDEL is short, stocky woman in a towelling dressing gown. She has peroxide blonde hair, with black roots, piled on her head. Her pudgy face is blotchy and red. She keeps a steady hand on the door and a cigarette in the other.

JACK
Mrs Teplice?

LYNNE SPRUDEL
Lynne Sprudel.

JACK
Sorry?

LYNNE SPRUDEL
Lynne Sprudel. Mrs Teplice is Lynne Sprudel. I'm Lynne Sprudel.

JACK
Oh. I see. Thanks.

LYNNE SPRUDEL
I didn't take his name. I took everything else. But I said he could keep his name.

A ginger Tomcat moves around her swollen ankles.

LYNNE SPRUDEL (CONT'D)
What do you want?

JACK
I knew your husband.

LYNNE SPRUDEL
Didn't everyone?

JACK
I'm sorry for your loss.

LYNNE SPRUDEL
Don't be. What do you want.

JACK
I'm with Callett, Crambazzle,
Dratchell and Feague. Solicitors.

LYNNE SPRUDEL
Don't see too many lawyers in jeans
and t-shirt.

JACK
I'm with their investigative team.
A client is looking for an
associate of Neil's.

LYNNE SPRUDEL
He didn't have associates. He had
debtors, creditors and whores.

JACK
It's a female companion we seek.

LYNNE SPRUDEL
Good luck with that. Man had more
slatterns than a Mong Kok madam.

Sprudel looks over Jack's shoulder, to the Range Rover. Mei has been watching the exchange with her father. She screws up her face and sticks out her tongue. Sprudel returns her attention to Jack.

LYNNE SPRUDEL (CONT'D)
That mongrel in the back is not one
of his, is it?

JACK
No. That mongrel is mine.

Sprudel doesn't know what to say. A voice call from within the apartment.

HAZEL (O.C.)
Alright Linnie?

LYNNE SPRUDEL
Man looking for one of Nifty's
tarts!

HAZEL (O.C.)
Oooh! A man!

HAZEL appears behind Sprudel. She is a larger version of her friend. She also wears a housecoat and holds a tumbler of gin in one hand, a smoke in the other.

HAZEL (CONT'D)
Well, don't keep him to yourself.
Bring him in. Give us all a look.

The women retreat into the shadows of the house. Jack turns to the car. Raises his hands, signalling to Mei with his hands. Ten minutes.

INT. 5C BOWEN ROAD

A typical, tired lounge room. There's a bottle of gin, dirty glasses and an overflowing ash-tray on the coffee table. And there are cats. Lots of them. Draped over furniture, lying on the floor, walking out of the kitchenette. 8 or 9 of them. Hazel drops onto the sofa.

HAZEL
You going to make the
introductions, Lynne?

JACK
Jack So.

HAZEL
So far so good, eh!

Lynne Sprudel sits in the lounge chair, stubbs her cigarette out and lights another.

HAZEL (CONT'D)
Looking for one of Nifty's
swifties, you say?

JACK
We believe they may have had a more
permanent arrangement.

HAZEL

Yes. By the hour, usually.

Jack ignores her and turns his attention to Sprudel.

JACK

When did you last see your husband,
Ms Sprudel?

LYNNE SPRUDEL

Ex-husband. I told the police last
night. I haven't seen him in years.

HAZEL

Since he went native.

JACK

We might get through this quicker
if we have a few less
interruptions, Hazel.

HAZEL

Oooh, get you. Don't mind me. Just
lending support to a friend in her
hour of need. Might need a lawyer
myself if my old man doesn't pull
through. He was down there with
Nifty and the boys last night.

JACK

I hear it was an ugly scene.

HAZEL

He's been living with me for 20
years. He's used to ugly.

JACK

Have you spoken to him?

HAZEL

He doesn't remember much. But he's
been like that for ages. The damage
might not be too bad.

JACK

That's lucky.

HAZEL

Yeah. Lucky me.

Jack returns his attention to Sprudel.

JACK

You haven't seen Mr Teplice for quite some time then?

LYNNE SPRUDEL

Threw him out when he stopped being discreet about his indiscretions.

JACK

You've spoken with him?

LYNNE SPRUDEL

Not if I could help it.

JACK

Where was he living?

LYNNE SPRUDEL

At the pub.

JACK

Anywhere else?

LYNNE SPRUDEL

He had a fuck-pad around the corner.

JACK

Did you know any of his...?

LYNNE SPRUDEL

Oh yes. We were all great friends. Karaoke on Fridays. Mahjong on Saturdays. Gosh we didn't half have some nights, did we Haze?

HAZEL

(snort)

JACK

Kitty Ho?

LYNNE SPRUDEL

What makes her so special?

JACK

They may have married.

LYNNE SPRUDEL

He'd have to get unmarried first.

JACK

You're not divorced?

LYNNE SPRUDEL

We are now.

HAZEL

(snort)

LYNNE SPRUDEL

The motion was before the court, as you legal types say. What does it matter now?

JACK

There are some questions over the estate.

LYNNE SPRUDEL

The estate! Does this look like an estate? It's all I have. No one is taking it away from me.

JACK

What about the bars? The Auld Ball & Chain?

Sprudel raises her glass to Hazel, as a toast.

LYNNE SPRUDEL

Didn't think of that, did we? A place to call our own!

JACK

There may be some dispute over that, if he'd remarried.

HAZEL

That would make him a bigamist *and* a wife-beating, cheating bastard. What would your lawyers have to say about that?

JACK

Our client has an interest in the building, as a whole. We need to determine if Ms Ho has any entitlement. If not, the offer will be made to you.

LYNNE SPRUDEL

A lot of people are interested in that pub. And your Kitty Ho.

JACK

You have no idea where she might be?

LYNNE SPRUDEL

In someone else's bed? You find her
you tell I'd like to buy her a
drink. At my pub.

Sprudel stands. Uneasily.

LYNNE SPRUDEL (CONT'D)

Maybe I've got something that will
help you find her.

She waddles down to the back of the house. Jack stands. A cat
rubs up against his leg. Hazel smiles and adjusts herself on
the sofa, an attempt to look seductive.

INT. RANGE ROVER

Jack walks to the car. Mei attempts to hide something under
her book as he opens the door.

JACK

Watcha hiding under there,
Sneetchy?

Jack lifts the book. The cassette is in her lap. The metallic
tape is uncoiled and spread out like spaghetti.

MEI

I didn't do it on purpose.

JACK

I know. Sorry this is taking so
long. I'll get you a new one.

MEI

Now?

JACK

Soon.

MEI

How much longer?

JACK

A couple of minutes. It will only
take a second.

MEI

I'm going to count. One... two...
three..

Jack closes the door. Mei watches him return to the
apartments.

EXT. 5C BOWEN ROAD

Lynne Sprudel stands in the doorway, holding an old manila envelope.

LYNNE SPRUDEL
Thought you'd gone without saying
goodbye.

She present the envelope to Jack.

LYNNE SPRUDEL (CONT'D)
Maybe Kitty Ho is in here.

Jack opens the envelope and pulls out the contents. It's a stack of photos. Polaroids. Four-by-threes. He studies them. There's Nifty and his friends, with girls. Bar girls. Party girls. Girls in bikinis. Semi-naked girls. Pictures from a stag night that lasted for years. One shot captures his attention. A girl of uncommon beauty.

LYNNE SPRUDEL (CONT'D)
You think that's her?

JACK
I don't know. Do you?

LYNNE SPRUDEL
I'd fuck her.

JACK
You didn't show these to anyone?
The police?

LYNNE SPRUDEL
Didn't seem important. Until now.

JACK
Why did you, do you, keep pictures
like this, of your husband?

LYNNE SPRUDEL
Ex-husband. I thought I might need
them. The divorce. Irreconcilable
differences? My arse.

JACK
Smart.

LYNNE SPRUDEL
Not just a pretty face. I'd send
him one every now and then. A
picture. Birthdays. Our
anniversary. Christmas.
(MORE)

LYNNE SPRUDEL (CONT'D)
I'd cut the girls out. Just leave
him standing there, on his own,
with that idiot grin on his face.

JACK
Can I take a couple? This one?

LYNNE SPRUDEL
Knock yourself out. About as close
to her as you'd want to get, I
reckon. No good ever comes of a
woman like that.

Jack walks back to the car, photos in hand. Hazel shouts out
from inside the house as he draws away.

HAZEL
I'm downstairs if you want to ask
me anything, Jack So! (snort)

INT. SO FUK YU RECEPTION - NOON

Jack enters reception. His PA and business partner, ANGEL FUK
stands behind the counter. She has high heels, long legs and
a tight Lycra dress. Hair in a high ponytail. Diamond studs
in her ears. Piercing almond eyes stare straight at Jack.

ANGEL
Where's Mei-mei?

JACK
With the outlaws.

ANGEL
How many are there?

JACK
I'm not sure.

ANGEL
We've had at least half a dozen
through here. Your toilet's
blocked, upstairs.

JACK
Someone probably fell asleep in it.

ANGEL
Gu-por is not happy.

JACK
That's her natural state.

The phone rings. Angel answers it. Jack continues into the Creative Department.

INT. SO FUK YU CREATIVE DEPARTMENT

Jack sits behind his desk, pretending to work. Nifty's photos are in a pile beside the keyboard. A constant distraction.

The Creative Department extends from Jack's desk, down to windows overlooking the street at the far end. Three others are working at their stations. FLORA, a young Chinese Writer. WING, a long-haired Chinese Art Director. And BENNY YU, an Art Director, the Yu in So Fuk Yu. He is confined to a wheelchair.

ANGEL, stands in front of Jack's desk, staring at him, demanding attention. She tosses a newspaper on his keyboard.

ANGEL

Was it Mei-mei causing all that trouble in Wan Chai yesterday?

JACK

I don't know what came over her. One minute we're sitting there, sharing a pint. The next she's ripping the place apart.

ANGEL

Oldham is on the phone.

JACK

Is it about the library books?

ANGEL

Yes. He's joined the Special Branch of the Library Police. With the Handover coming they've re-opened the cold-cases from the 60s. They got a tip-off about you and A Tale Of Two Cities.

JACK

I'll call him back, later.

Angel holds his gaze for a moment. Then pivots on a sharp heel and struts away. Jack goes back to his work. Angel returns. She stands before him. Arms crossed.

ANGEL

What happened?

Jack leans back and puts his hands behind his head.

JACK

It was a bright cold day in April,
Angel. The clocks were striking
thirteen...

ANGEL

Knock it off, Jack. This is '88.
Not 1984.

JACK

The party has started, Sugar-lips.
It'll be in full swing by '97.
Control the past, control the
future. Control the present,
control the past. War is peace,
freedom is slavery and ignorance is
strength.

ANGEL

That would make Benny Mr Universe.

BENNY

Climb up on these shoulders and
I'll rock your world, Angel.

Angel picks up the photos of Kitty.

ANGEL

Who is she?

JACK

The root of all the evil.

Benny wheels over to Jack's desk.

BENNY

I like the sound of her already.

JACK

She screwed Sam's mom. She screwed
The Lion Tamer. She screwed Nifty.

Benny looks at the pictures in Angel's hand.

BENNY

She can screw me too if she wants.

Benny pops a wheelie in his chair, and pulls a pirouette.

ANGEL

Where were you this morning?

JACK

With the widow Teplice.