

# Hungry Ghosts

A new play  
by Tim Luscombe

Draft 7  
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**Albie:** Trade's essential for human rights. Instead of isolating 'em we make 'em live by the same trading rules as everyone else, and gain 1.2 billion consumers for our products – and strengthen the forces of reform.

**CJ:** It's that simple?

**Albie:** No, it's incredibly complicated. Free trade's essential for human rights, yeah. The end of that sentence is 'we hope'. Because nothing else has worked. Chinese political prisoners will be sewing soccer balls with their teeth whether we sell 'em cheeseburgers or not, so we might as well sell 'em cheeseburgers. Let me tell you something. Thirty-seven hundred years ago in the Chang dynasty, when a King died, his slaves were beheaded. The lucky ones. The unlucky ones were buried alive. Political repression is progress.

Aaron Sorkin from *The West Wing* (season 3, episode 2)

## **Characters**

Zhi-hui        late 40s  
Tyler         mid 30s  
Liv            early 30s  
Pin-de        mid 40s  
Baz            50s up  
Woman  
Buddhists in the temple

[Five actors are needed. The actress who plays Pin-de also plays the woman in the Prologue. The actors who play Pin-de, Liv and Baz also play the Buddhists in Scene Four]

## **Scenes**

Prologue  
Apartment  
Hotel Room  
Media Suite  
Temple

Hotel Room  
Hotel Room  
Prison  
Airport/Guiyang

## **Notes**

When Zhi-hui and Pin-de speak to each other in Mandarin I've indicated this by writing fluent, colloquial English. At these points, accents would indicate class, place of origin etc, drawn from within a spectrum of Englishness.

However, they spend most of their stage time speaking English as a second language, and Zhi-hui, for example, is denied past and future tenses, definite and indefinite articles etc. Occasionally, though, I've broken the rules, because part of his character comes from his idiosyncratic use of English. Pin-de's English is better than Zhi-hui's.

A slash ( / ) marks the point of interruption in overlapping dialogue

## **Prologue**

*A cacophony of gongs and drums*

*In his Shanghai apartment, Zhi-hui, late 40s, is typing on his laptop – cigarette on the go*

*In racing overalls, Tyler Jones, a handsome 35-year-old driver, is recording a commentary for TV*

*Liv, a mixed Chinese/English PR officer, early 30s, wheels on a large antique wooden Buddha*

*The gongs and drums give way to reed instruments, which glide high and hang*

**Zhi-hui:** A brand new skyline.

**Tyler:** Start/finish straight.

**Liv:** *(Into phone)* It's Tang.

**Zhi-hui:** The defining image of reform and opening.

**Liv:** Yes, Tang. A Tang Buddha.

**Tyler:** You might get a slipstream and overtake on the first bend, but it's risky.

**Liv:** Yes, there is.

**Tyler:** 2 – tight right-hander.

**Liv:** There's one.

**Tyler:** 3 – fast left.

**Liv:** Because I'm standing right next to it.

**Tyler:** Make up time here, sometimes a tenth.

**Liv:** Astonishingly beautiful.

**Tyler:** Look at it from the air – it's shaped like a Shang – a Chinese character. Translates as rising or high or above. As in Shanghai.

**Zhi-hui:** The most modern of China's modern cities.

**Liv:** In Henan, where he bought it, they said it was the only undamaged wooden –

**Zhi-hui:** And beyond the glittering towers, where once lay a patchwork of decrepit houses and swamps – the International Racing Circuit.

**Tyler:** Take 4 in 4<sup>th</sup>. Hug the apex, sweep right, meet the racing line on the long straight. 19,000 revs. Chance to correct your diff, fiddle with your software. You're waiting.

**Zhi-hui:** Surrounded by brand new BMW and Ferrari showrooms, it marks yet one more triumphant step for the People's... *(Blows out air in frustration)*

**Liv:** I'm certain it's Tang because Tang Buddhas have a unique feature. Their stomachs open. Sometimes a foot comes off. Mostly their stomachs open.

*She opens the stomach. It's a small, hinged door*

*The Buddha is hollow and empty inside*

For secrets.

**Tyler:** Chicane, 5 and 6 –

**Liv:** Contraband.

**Tyler:** Gives way to 7 –

**Liv:** Amazing.

**Tyler:** And bang you're into 8. 8's blind. Misjudge the break point and you're on your way to a crash site. Do not pass go.

**Liv:** Don't know. Whatever was contraband in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. *(Shutting the Buddha's stomach door)* Not that he'll care, or notice. Art as investment.

**Zhi-hui:** Offers proud testament to the transformation of...

**Liv:** So, who can I talk to about exporting –?

**Zhi-hui:** Aagh. *(Rubs forehead)*

**Liv:** What? What do you mean, he can't?

**Zhi-hui:** Different tack.

**Liv:** Are you kidding me?

**Zhi-hui:** Motor sports is evolution. The cutting edge of human and technological development. The cars: more like planes, with components even jetfighters don't have.

**Tyler:** If you survive 8, watch out for the marbles at the hairpin. 9 and 10'll be tricky on a green track, but, once we've laid enough rubber down, you hardly lift.

**Liv:** That's not gonna please him.

**Zhi-hui:** At top speed you could drive upside down on the roof of a tunnel.

**Liv:** Mr Silverton paid five million quid, and you're telling me he can't take it out of the country.

**Zhi-hui:** It's high stakes stuff. Cristiano Renaldo's survival is not on the line if he misjudges a penalty. But if Jones or Kang miscalculate an overtaking manoeuvre, they're taking their lives in their hands.

**Tyler:** You use the drag on your wings to slow for 11, pull a downshift for 12  
—

**Liv:** Well, who can I speak to —?

**Tyler:** And you're back on the start/finish straight.

**Liv:** No one? There's no one who —? Yes, I understand there's a law, but this is Baz Silverton I'm talking about. Jesus. Whatever. (*Hangs up. Redials*)

**Tyler:** Then you do that 79 times.

**Zhi-hui:** 'To get rich is glorious', said Deng Xiaoping.

**Liv:** Hermione?

**Zhi-hui:** And you can't imagine it getting any more glorious than this.

**Liv:** Get me the Mayor of Shanghai, would you?

*Zhi-hui stuffs out cigarette*

*Liv and Tyler exit*

*Lights focus down onto the Buddha. Gongs and drums build*

*The stomach is being pushed open from the inside*

*A heavily pregnant woman emerges*

**Woman:** (*Rural*) They came for me. I ran to the forest. They followed me. I hid till they stop searching. I walked to another village and phoned home, but there was no one there. I called a neighbour. She tells me they've come for my family. My mother, sister, five female cousins. I phoned the prison. I asked to speak to my sister. She says they've been beaten up. She's begging me to go back home. I can hear my mother screaming in the background. So I return. They stick a needle in me. Pump something in. I give birth to a little boy. The woman won't let me touch him. Puts him in a yellow plastic bag, staples it closed and throws him in the bin.

*She opens her pregnant stomach, like a door hinged from one side, pulls out the 'pregnancy'. A yellow plastic envelope-bag stuffed full...*

*Gongs and drums build to a deafening roar, and cut out*

I go to re-education classes.

## 1.

### Zhi-hui's Shanghai apartment

SATURDAY

*The apartment is smart, with a door to the outside world, and an exit to the kitchen*

*Zhi-hui holds the phone with his shoulder as he continues to type*

**Zhi-hui:** (*Into phone*) Long Chan's? I need a table. Two. Xia. Xia Zhi-hui. (*Having been flattered*) Aha, thank you very much. Look, it's going to be sometime this afternoon. I don't know exactly. Do me a favour and hold it, would you? (*Writes in diary*) Great. Thanks a lot. (*Hangs up*)

*Doorbell*

*Irritated, Zhi-hui gets up*

*He opens the door to Pin-de (played by the same actress who played the woman in the prologue)*

*Shocked, they stare at each other*

What the...?

**Pin-de:** (*Educated provincial*) Zhi-hui.

**Zhi-hui:** Why...? What – How did you find me?

**Pin-de:** Went to your newspaper. Explained to some woman we were getting together for Hungry Ghosts –

**Zhi-hui:** They wouldn't have given out my address –

**Pin-de:** Played the family card. Charmed her.

**Zhi-hui:** How dare you?

*Pin-de enters the apartment. We might notice she has some slight mobility issues, e.g. painful arm, stiff leg*

**Pin-de:** Funny Monkey.

**Zhi-hui:** (*Picking up laptop bag*) I'm on my way to work.

**Pin-de:** We read your stuff and watch you on the telly. My boy loves what you –

**Zhi-hui:** We're not chatting, Pin-de.

**Pin-de:** Lao-Chao. My son. He doesn't understand why we never –

**Zhi-hui:** Tell me what you want.

**Pin-de:** This is lovely. Great view. You should see where I live.

*Zhi-hui gives up, shuts the door*

*(About the buildings she sees)* Which ones are yours? Can you see them from here? We read you'd 'diversified'. Who'd have thought –?

**Zhi-hui:** Is there a point to this? Because –

**Pin-de:** (*Reading from the laptop*) 'Yet one more triumphant step for the People's Republic...'

**Zhi-hui:** What do you expect?

**Pin-de:** From a journalist? You've got a point.

**Zhi-hui:** If you're not going to tell me –

**Pin-de:** I've missed you.

**Zhi-hui:** You're dead to me.

**Pin-de:** You're in shock. You need time.

*Zhi-hui shakes his head*

Your face hasn't changed. Not really. Let me look at you.

*Zhi-hui shuts laptop, bags it*

I've come all the way from Guiyang – wouldn't you like to know a bit about –?

**Zhi-hui:** No.

**Pin-de:** In '80 I got the chance to study abroad. But I'd met my husband and we were in love.

**Zhi-hui:** I'm not the least –

**Pin-de:** I was allocated a job in Nanjing. But Wentian couldn't get work outside Guiyang, so I stayed to be with him and raise Lao Chao –

**Zhi-hui:** You turned down a job in Nanjing?

**Pin-de:** Go to Nanjing because a party official tells me to? ... Let's make some tea.

*He doesn't move. She smiles, for the first time. Her warmth melts him, slightly*

**Zhi-hui:** Then you'll go?

**Pin-de:** Then I'll tell you why I'm here. I'll –

**Zhi-hui:** No! You stay there.

*He exits to the kitchen*

*She waits for him to be gone. Then, hastily, she scans his desk, finds his diary*

**Pin-de:** *(Reading)* Long Chan's.

*Alert to every noise, she takes his phone and phones herself to get his number.*

*She rifles through a folder of papers. Among the white sheets, two orange documents catch her eye. She skims through both, realises she's hit bull's-eye...*

*She decides to take one – pockets it – and replaces the other...*

*Zhi-hui returns with tea*

*Has she got away with it?*

I work alongside Feng.

**Zhi-hui:** (*Pouring tea*) Feng?

**Pin-de:** And Li-Tong, her husband, and others –

**Zhi-hui:** Feng got married?

**Pin-de:** We hold meetings, mostly in the evenings after work. We're like witnesses. We collect stories. Rural corruption, abuse. Women mostly. One-child brutality. I take the most likely cases. Pursue them through the courts.

**Zhi-hui:** The courts.

**Pin-de:** Wentian is a wonder. He took care of Lao-Chao while I went to evening classes. First improved my English. Then trained for the bar exams.

**Zhi-hui:** A lawyer? You?

**Pin-de:** Got my practising certificate. Occasionally we even manage to find someone brave enough to seek redress for old crimes – even abuses from the Cultural Revolution –

**Zhi-hui:** (*Warning*) Pin-de...

*They regard each other*

*He gives her tea*

**Pin-de:** They arrested her.

**Zhi-hui:** Who?

**Pin-de:** Five days ago.

**Zhi-hui:** Feng? What's the charge?

**Pin-de:** Treason.

**Zhi-hui:** What did she do?

**Pin-de:** Nothing.

**Zhi-hui:** For pity's sake.

**Pin-de:** I tried to mount an appeal but they stopped me on the way to court.

**Zhi-hui:** Who?

**Pin-de:** Thugs the party sent. Rolled the car into the ditch. Thing was, I was still in it. I didn't know where to turn. We need you.

**Zhi-hui:** We?

**Pin-de:** The family.

**Zhi-hui:** My family is here. (*Lights cigarette*) Tell me what she did.

**Pin-de:** She brought some documents home from the Ministry where she works.

**Zhi-hui:** She stole them.

**Pin-de:** Evidence against local officials. Stuff I needed to prosecute a case I was preparing. Yes, party documents, but freely available inside the Ministry. She posted them on our website. It was shut down within hours.

*Zhi-hui leaves his tea untouched, pours himself an alcoholic drink*

She's going to die. They're going to shoot her in the head.

**Zhi-hui:** Well, I suppose it was only a matter of time –

**Pin-de:** You dog. You piece of shit. What's wrong with you?

**Zhi-hui:** What's wrong with *me*?

**Pin-de:** They lock our sister up and –

**Zhi-hui:** You want weeping and wailing?

**Pin-de:** Don't you care, you monster?

*Zhi-hui drinks*

**Zhi-hui:** Why are you telling me? Why have you come here? What the hell do you think I can do?

**Pin-de:** The word of a party boss trumps any judge, any law.

**Zhi-hui:** You think I –?

**Pin-de:** You don't evacuate thousands of people – erect shopping malls on their land – without a hell of a lot of help from the party. 28 days to demolish two thousand houses. You boasted about it –

**Zhi-hui:** Shouldn't believe everything you read in the papers.

**Pin-de:** How you silenced the protest. Congratulations.

*Pin-de takes from her pocket and holds out, challengingly, a USB memory drive. A bright red chip. It looks innocuous enough, only a few cms long*

Go to your editor. Eight gigs of facts, figures, pictures. The cases Feng's been involved with.

*She continues to hold the memory drive out to Zhi-hui*

The party's laws that defend her right to do what we do.

**Zhi-hui:** (*Ignoring the memory drive*) Let me show you... Where is it?

*He's searching through the folder of papers*

*Pin-de's hand clenches nervously around the stolen document in her pocket*

I'm writing a piece about some motor sports guy. Innocuous enough, but – Where the hell is it? It was here. (*He finds the orange sheet of paper Pin-de replaced, and doesn't notice that the other is missing*) Yes.

*Pin-de relaxes*

These are instructions – from the party. What I must write. And you think I can pitch an article about some obscure rural protester –?

**Pin-de:** To save her life!

**Zhi-hui:** Are you out of your mind?

**Pin-de:** Then get this (*i.e. the memory drive*) to the international media. You have contacts. ... Enough shovels of earth, a mountain. Remember, Monkey? Enough pails of water, a river. Otherwise... We let her die? ... We've got less than three days. Tuesday morning. That's when they've scheduled... 7 a.m.

*Zhi-hui squashes his cigarette, gulps the remains of his drink*

**Zhi-hui:** Finish your tea.

*Collects things together, including the file of papers*

**Pin-de:** You and I can grow old hating each other if we must, Zhi-hui. But Feng...

**Zhi-hui:** (*Putting on a rather racy pair of shoes*) I've got to go.

**Pin-de:** Mother's on her way to see her.

*Zhi-hui freezes*

Course, she's not allowed visitors, so it's doubtful she'll even –

**Zhi-hui:** Mother?

*Zhi-hui is still a moment, then makes to go*

**Pin-de:** Talk to me!

**Zhi-hui:** We have nothing more to –

**Pin-de:** Monkey, can't we? Together, can't we?

**Zhi-hui:** It's all gone, little one. Our old lives – vanished like mist and smoke. That's how it had to be. I can't help Feng. *Mei you fa tze*. Nothing can be done.

**Pin-de:** You're wrong.

*He shakes his head, starts to exit*

We should be together.

*Zhi-hui looks at her*

I'm coming with you.

*She walks to him to embrace him. For a moment we think he's about to allow it, but he manages to evade her arms*

*Sound of a high-speed racing car passing from one side of the stage to the other, the engine popping and grinding, breaks tearing and screaming*

*Lights*

## 2.

*Sound fades, but cars can still be heard testing in the near distance*

*Lights come up on*

### **The lounge section of a very smart hotel suite**

*A door to the bedroom. A door to the corridor*

*Liv is massaging Tyler's neck*

**Tyler:** Bloody Sponsors. Sodding bloody hoarding. No one can miss it. 'BritishCityGroup'. See it from every stand round the circuit. Just a pity it's made turn eight blind –

**Liv:** Nasty shunt.

**Tyler:** You hit the new tarmac, accelerating at 190 miles-an-hour – your boots touch the rumble strip – your undertray connects, your arsehole tries to change places with your teeth –

**Liv:** Naughty tarmac.

**Tyler:** I think I lost half my fillings.

**Liv:** But the Doc's cleared you for qualifying?

**Tyler:** Yeah.

**Liv:** Good man. That's the important thing. *(Checks watch)*

**Tyler:** I was perfect. *(Guiding Liv's hands)* More there. Rrgghh. That's nice. *(Reading telemetry on a laptop)* I'm hooked up like I'm painted to the road. *(Showing Liv)* Seven. You gotta have blind faith it'll stick, and I nailed it.

*Liv continues to massage with one hand and text with the other*

But then – look – seven into eight. There's no way. Ran out of grip, ran out of space –

**Liv:** Ran out of talent?

**Tyler:** Jesus, Liv.

**Liv:** *(Sends text, puts phone away)* Everyone else made it.

**Tyler:** They were tiptoeing. Or lucky.

**Liv:** You drove like a loser. Big deal. Move on.

**Tyler:** The team's on my side.

**Liv:** BCG's on your side?

**Tyler:** They're furious.

**Liv:** Well, they can't do much. It's their sponsor's name on the hoarding. They're the ones who've had the corner changed. And, Tyler, they're not gonna re-sign you if you keep breaking their cars.

**Tyler:** If I'm re-signed, I could think properly about the drive. They expect me to concentrate when next year's still up in the air? This is exactly the situation they put Dad in, in '84...

*Liv passes him headshots, photos and letters to sign*

*(Dutifully signing)* I'll talk to Baz about the turn. He'll listen to me.

**Liv:** Baz? He's not taking calls. He's in Japan.

**Tyler:** What's he doing there?

**Liv:** Buying a football team.

**Tyler:** *(Miming phone)* Get me five minutes with him.

**Liv:** Impossible. *(Re photos)* These ones are the Internet competition winners.

**Tyler:** I'm the senior driver round here. I've got a bit of weight for heaven's sake. Try.

*Liv's phone rings*

**Liv:** *(To phone, silencing it)* Oh, go away. *(To Tyler)* So you're gonna be alright?

**Tyler:** I told you, they cleared me.

**Liv:** For the interview.

**Tyler:** Interview?

**Liv:** The guy trailing you all weekend.

**Tyler:** Crap.

**Liv:** I've negotiated him down to specific times. He's with you now – in fact he's late – till your media strategists' thing at 12.15. In the garage before and after quali, during the Red Bull party tonight –

**Tyler:** Wheyhey!

**Liv:** And for the hour before the race tomorrow –

**Tyler:** Before the race?

**Liv:** I know –

**Tyler:** Won't work.

**Liv:** Bottom line.

**Tyler:** But the hour before the race?

**Liv:** BCG are keen this goes well.

**Tyler:** Yeah, but –

**Liv:** He's huge.

**Tyler:** How huge?

**Liv:** Readership's about a quarter of the planet.

**Tyler:** Christ.

**Liv:** He's like a kind of a communist Murray Walker. No, much bigger than that, but you get the idea. He's got a nationwide sports chat show. Hyper connected. Vertically integrated. Party, industry, media. Tyler? He's insisting on a one-to-one with you, i.e. not me –

**Tyler:** What?

**Liv:** Which, to be honest, suits me down to the ground this morning because I've got an ongoing viral media tactics meltdown crisis and a large Tang Buddha I can't shift (you don't need to know). You're not listening.

**Tyler:** I've got to go through this telemetry before quali.

**Liv:** But obviously you can phone me anytime you need me and I'll come running. So I'll set you up and then leave you to it. Tyler – listen – the only thing to bear in mind is he's quite old-school and he can be tricky.

**Tyler:** How?

**Liv:** He might try and lure you away from the paddock.

**Tyler:** What, like with sweets?

**Liv:** Take you downtown. Funky food places, temples, markets. It's his thing. (*Phone*) Fuck off. (*Silences it*) The idea is you crack from culture shock and reveal stuff. Obviously I've told him you're committed to the paddock. But I had to give him something.

**Tyler:** The hour before the race. Jesus.

**Liv:** He's agreed to all the usual conditions. You've agreed not to mention all the unmentionables.

*There's a noise from the bedroom*

Wait. Is there someone in...?

**Tyler:** Of course not.

**Liv:** (*Approaching the bedroom*) Coz he's gonna be here –

**Tyler:** There's no one –!

**Liv:** And if –

**Tyler:** I swear! Leave it, Liv! Don't you trust me?

**Liv:** Not to have a girl in your bedroom?

**Tyler:** What the hell should I say when he asks why I'm not re-signed yet?

**Liv:** Mmm – say the announcement's imminent. Say they want to get the timing right –

**Tyler:** Even the sodding test drivers are signed.

**Liv:** It's a boardroom decision.

**Tyler:** *You* know what's going on.

**Liv:** Me?

**Tyler:** You know everything.

**Liv:** No idea.

**Tyler:** Come here. (*Pulls Liv onto his lap*)

**Liv:** Oh, I love our special time together, Tyler.

**Tyler:** Get me out of this.

**Liv:** How can I?

**Tyler:** I can't do my job if I'm drowning in media shit.

**Liv:** It's far too late to cancel –

**Tyler:** I won't love you anymore.

**Liv:** You're too fickle to love me.

**Tyler:** Fickle?

**Liv:** You've only been single five minutes: you've got a floozy in the bedroom, and me on your lap.

**Tyler:** But you know, of everyone, I love you the best.

**Liv:** See? Fickle. Five seconds ago you weren't gonna love me at all.

**Tyler:** (*Cuddling Liv*) We'll run away together.

**Liv:** Shall we take her with us?

**Tyler:** She's very pretty (*Whispering*) but she's very dull.

**Liv:** What's new?

**Tyler:** Yerright.

**Liv:** Disposable. Like you like 'em.

**Tyler:** I get half a Sunday to myself every fortnight. Who'd be interested in that? You meet them at races, or get them at short notice – they're rarely Nobel Prize winners. Why can't I find one like you? Bit of fire, bit of ambition.

**Liv:** We decided a long time ago that I'm far too clever for you.

**Tyler:** Can't I have one with brains?

**Liv:** You *think* that's what you want –

**Tyler:** I wouldn't mind one that answers back.

**Liv:** You're outrageous!

*Liv walks away*

**Tyler:** I couldn't get him out of my mind this morning in practice.

**Liv:** Who?

**Tyler:** Dad. Couldn't shake him.

**Liv:** Tyler...

**Tyler:** And when I lost control of the back end –

*Zhi-hui enters, with laptop and folder of papers, killing the reflective moment*

**Zhi-hui:** Door is open. Come in ok?

**Liv:** (*Springing up*) Here he is!

**Zhi-hui:** Apologies. Domestic complexity.

**Liv:** Nothing serious, I hope.

**Zhi-hui:** Not-wanted relative make visit.

**Liv:** Oh dear.

**Zhi-hui:** I am canny and lose her in car park! (*Cheekily feeling Tyler's arms etc*) Tyler Jones – in one piece?

**Tyler:** Well, that's what practice is for, right?

**Zhi-hui:** (*Handing Tyler name cards*) Xia Zhi-hui. Shanghai People's Daily. You are famous in your region. I make you global. Miss Liv. Mandarin? You learn more please?

**Liv:** Oh don't! I'm terrible!

**Zhi-hui:** Dishonour her grandfather. Speak like foreign devil. He from Shaanxi. She has Shaanxi eye. See?

**Tyler:** Yeah, I know.

**Liv:** I'm afraid I'm more Buckinghamshire than Shaanxi really. And I have so little time to –

**Zhi-hui:** My grandfather from Hubei. Between Shaanxi and Yangtze River. English teacher. My father too, also English teacher. Teach me love of your language when no one speak it. Now more people here than in America speak English. Want public job – must know one hundred words. I require one thing.

**Liv:** Of course. Water? Juice?

**Zhi-hui:** Interface with Mr Baz Silverton.

**Liv:** Impossible.

**Zhi-hui:** Essential.

**Tyler:** Get in the queue, mate! We'd all like some interface with Baz.

**Zhi-hui:** I am important messenger. My senior boss require me to convey.

**Liv:** Baz is in Japan. Is it something I can pass on?

**Zhi-hui:** Telephone meet. Ten minutes minimum. You set up.

**Liv:** Well –

**Zhi-hui:** Of significance.

**Liv:** I'll see what I can do.

**Tyler:** What? He'll speak to a journalist but he doesn't / have time for –?

**Liv:** Let it go, Tyler.

**Tyler:** Fantastic.

**Zhi-hui:** She get for me. Good girl. (*Turning on Tyler, all smiles*) Very happy do interview with Mr Tyler Jones.

**Tyler:** You mean you couldn't get Lewis.

**Zhi-hui:** Yes, I want Lewis. But my editor believe Tyler Jones is key to our future in Motor Sport. I smoke?

**Liv:** No.

**Zhi-hui:** Exactly so. We go out.

**Liv:** Absolutely not. This was agreed –

**Zhi-hui:** Escape hotel. Go to restaurant. Have good time.

**Liv:** I told you. He's sly! Now, what can I get you?

**Zhi-hui:** We wait till she leave. Go nice place. You see. You like Chinese food? I buy you Chinese food. Or, as we call it here, food.

**Liv:** Juice? Coffee?

**Zhi-hui:** Whisky, soda. No ice. Large one.

*Liv makes the drink.*

*Zhi-hui sits, opens his lap top*

**Tyler:** (*Reading Zhi-hui's cards*) This is for a shopping mall downtown. And this one's a hotel in Vegas.

**Zhi-hui:** I am part owner. Plus three offshore companies.

*Liv's phone rings. She takes the call, still making the drink*

**Tyler:** Blimey, it's a crazy kind of communism you got going on.

**Zhi-hui:** Socialism with Chinese characteristics. Prime Minister Wen say class struggle is disruptive.

**Tyler:** Prime Minister? Hang on - I thought you had a President.

**Zhi-hui:** President is Hu.

**Tyler:** The President is Hu and the Prime Minister is Wen? That's brilliant.

**Zhi-hui:** (*Fiddling with cigarettes, without lighting one*) Each time Beijing change, it is necessary to turn in correct way. 'Bend with wind to survive hurricane'. Now we are capitalist, I wish send my son to Princeton.

**Liv:** (*Hanging up phone*) You know the story. The President of the U.S.A. and the President of the People's Republic meet for a summit. They're in a car being driven to some banquet or other. But the driver gets lost. They come to a T-junction. The American President says 'Go right'. The Chinese President says 'Go left'. Impasse. So they agree a compromise. They'll indicate left but they'll go right. (*Hands drink to Zhi-hui*) The only capitalist country with a nationwide network of prison camps...

**Zhi-hui:** Careful, Miss Liv.

**Liv:** Unwritten rule, Tyler. Chinese never criticise China in front of a foreigner. So don't start.

**Tyler:** Hypocrite.

**Liv:** I'm special. I'm allowed.

**Zhi-hui:** Always ear on other side of wall. Probably understand English.

*Zhi-hui swallows his drink in one, holds out empty glass to Liv*

**Liv:** Chinese manners. Contradiction in terms.

**Zhi-hui:** English teach us many things. English manners. Very grateful thanks.

*Liv makes drink*

You like circuit?

**Tyler:** I won the championship here in '05, so this place has always had –

**Zhi-hui:** Party invest 3.8 billion yuan. 6,000 workers on day and night shift. Finish 93 days ahead of schedule.

**Liv:** Bet no one took lunch breaks though, right?

**Zhi-hui:** You are sly one.

**Liv:** You're not claiming the high ground when it comes to workers' rights, are you? A part time land developer! You throw up these high-rises. You don't give a toss who you trash in your blind dash to catch up with the West –

**Zhi-hui:** Catch up with West? We leave you behind in dust! Another thing you teach us. Motor racing. It start with Hitler and Mussolini. Mercedes Benz race Alfa Romeo. And even today, blond European race rich South American boy, and President of Sport is son of fascist leader Moseley! Yes, we have so much to learn from Europe about good government. (*Drinks*)

**Liv:** Listen! You'd know! Baz has bought a big old Buddha, thirteenth century – beautiful thing. But – I need to find someone high enough and let's say flexible enough to sign some papers to ease it through customs –

**Zhi-hui:** You get me phone time with Baz – I help you with Buddha.

**Liv:** You old dog. Take it easy with Tyler; he's got a sore head. Big kiss.

*Liv exits, leaving the two men alone*

**Tyler:** Lewis Hamilton's not white. By the way. You said we're all rich and white.

**Zhi-hui:** Exception that prove rule. Token Negro.

**Tyler:** Well, actually, we don't say –

**Zhi-hui:** Liv say do not mention Lewis. But you say Lewis.

**Tyler:** Right – I shouldn't have.

**Zhi-hui:** You jealous?

**Tyler:** Of Lewis? If I was driving his car, *I'd* be winning races.

**Zhi-hui:** In '03 you drive his car. He win more races.

**Tyler:** I'd be grateful if you'd put those cigarettes away.

**Zhi-hui:** Quite right. We go, yes? I show you my town. Huangpu river, floating temple, hutongs – buy beautiful gift.

**Tyler:** Do you actually know anything about motor racing?

**Zhi-hui:** I am Mr Motor Sports! Four hundred new skyscrapers every year. You see –

**Tyler:** Because I'm qualifying for tomorrow's race in a couple of hours.

**Zhi-hui:** Tyler Jones! What you see? Airport. Hotel. Hotel next to racetrack. Sleep, race, back to airport. I show you Pudong – biggest boomtown in history. Twenty years ago – swamp and sheep. Now 4 million people.

**Tyler:** Liv explained to you, we're wrapping this up in half an hour, because there's a BCG media strategists' thing –

**Zhi-hui:** Between quali and Red Bull? Seven hours. What you do? Eat, jog, rest. You eat with me.

**Tyler:** See, I've got my own cook and my own nutritionist. Why don't you use the time you've got now, instead of –?

**Zhi-hui:** Shaquille O'Neil, Tiger Woods, Rafa Nadal – they all come downtown with me, have good time. Tyler Jones? Corporate widget.

**Tyler:** Are you drunk?

**Zhi-hui:** (*Holding out empty glass*) Not yet.

*Tyler doesn't move*

I get myself, if is too big deal. (*Gets himself a drink*) I joke, Mr Jones.

**Tyler:** You should change your tone, Mr (*reading from the cards*) Xia –

**Zhi-hui:** (*Correcting pronunciation*) Xia. Not to worry. I am personality. You get used to me. Call me Zhi-hui. (*Returning with drink, fiddling with cigarettes and smoking paraphernalia*) Your championship is dead.

**Tyler:** Far from it –

**Zhi-hui:** You off pace.

**Tyler:** Hundredths.

**Zhi-hui:** Tenths. Two DNF in three races.

**Tyler:** Hydraulics failure; lost radio contact; break fluid. I've had bad luck.

**Zhi-hui:** In this game you make own luck.

**Tyler:** Look –

**Zhi-hui:** Since Monaco, everything go down. You crash. Your girlfriend leave you –

**Tyler:** I'm not talking about Monaco.

**Zhi-hui:** You're not talking about Lewis Hamilton.

**Tyler:** Bring that up again – the interview's over, ok? Look. The BCG10 is as quick as any other car out there. You know, we say on any given Sunday, at BCG we feel like we're the / axis the world turns...

**Zhi-hui:** The axis the world turn around. I read press release.

**Tyler:** The aero boys in Woking are doing a great job with downforce –

**Zhi-hui:** The 'options' grain badly for you.

**Tyler:** Bridgestone are doing excellent work –

**Zhi-hui:** Yes, they all excellent – but you big disappointment. Stuck in mid-field. Since Monaco –

**Tyler:** I told you Monaco's not – You're not recording this?

**Zhi-hui:** I am artist. I invent you with my own words.

**Tyler:** As I said, I'd be grateful if you'd put those away.

**Zhi-hui:** (*Grudgingly putting cigarettes etc away*) You crash in practice.

**Tyler:** You noticed? The circuit organisers altered the corner. I misjudged the breakpoint –

**Zhi-hui:** Pile of debris on your head. Because BCG want bigger hoarding display.

**Tyler:** We'll get it changed back. No biggie.

**Zhi-hui:** (*Smiling*) BCG make sharper corner to increase exposure – their own car crashes.

**Tyler:** Make sure you point out the irony to your readers.

**Zhi-hui:** No word for irony in Mandarin. In China irony is built into everything already. (*Slugs drink down in one*)

**Tyler:** I'm gonna ask Baz to talk to the track people –

**Zhi-hui:** Yes?

**Tyler:** BCG can put their signage elsewhere. They're excellent sponsors. It's an extremely creative relationship –

**Zhi-hui:** Why protect people who play with your safety?

**Tyler:** Loyalty?

**Zhi-hui:** To BCG?

**Tyler:** To the sport.

**Zhi-hui:** Good puppet.

**Tyler:** It's wrong that I protect my team?

**Zhi-hui:** With your *life*? Protect BritishCityGroup? Fiscal management and pension. Care more about sponsor stockholder than about own safety? What you get from it?

**Tyler:** I get to race.

*Zhi-hui nods*

We all have things we protect.

**Zhi-hui:** I watch video. You lose it at 5.

**Tyler:** No, it was a perfect lap till –

**Zhi-hui:** Slick tyres not give contact you feel. You make same mistake many time since Monaco.

**Tyler:** I'm not talking –

**Zhi-hui:** You lock break at 6.

**Tyler:** Not so. Look. (*Goes to telemetry*)

**Zhi-hui:** Is why you offline at 7 and blind at 8.

**Tyler:** You're talking bollocks. Wait a... (*Looking up from the telemetry, amazed*) You're right. There was a tiny lockup at 6.

**Zhi-hui:** On this surface in slicks, you are out for next two corners –

**Tyler:** Yeah. How did I...? How the hell did you spot that?

*Zhi-hui gets up to pour another drink*

**Zhi-hui:** You think of your father when you crash today?

*Tyler is silent, fuming*

**Zhi-hui:** When he die in Germany, he is your age now. Is hard to understand, but is common. Son follow dead father onto track. Guy Villeneuve – Jacques Villeneuve. Damon Hill – Graham Hill.

**Tyler:** And you know my father's shunt is definitely something I won't –

**Zhi-hui:** Tell me about him.

**Tyler:** So it's going to be a very long weekend if you –

**Zhi-hui:** (*Getting out cigarette again*) Give me something new, Tyler Jones. Not old bollocks. Clue is in name. *Newspaper*.

**Tyler:** You said you were an artist. Make something up.

**Zhi-hui:** What can we talk? Not next year race contract, not Monaco, not your father, not even break up with Vee Chen, singer-model-hairdresser. Is what my readers want to know. (*Gets out matches*)

**Tyler:** I dunno. I'd have thought you might want to talk about tomorrow's race.

**Zhi-hui:** I tell you why BCG make no announcement about your drive next year.

**Tyler:** Why?

**Zhi-hui:** This interest you?

**Tyler:** It's just a question of getting the timing right –

**Zhi-hui:** You lie.

**Tyler:** Why should I lie to a journalist? Look, if there's one thing I'm certain of, it's BCG's loyalty to me.

**Zhi-hui:** Sure?

**Tyler:** Are you kidding?

**Zhi-hui:** I hear from Beijing –

**Tyler:** What do you hear?

**Zhi-hui:** They say next year Kang Jao-Wang get your drive.

**Tyler:** That's bollocks. That's paddock gossip. There's absolutely no truth to the – No way! For a start, he's not ready for a big team.

**Zhi-hui:** He already show ability –

**Tyler:** I disagree. He's making every kind of rookie error –

**Zhi-hui:** Because he is rookie. Next year is not.

**Tyler:** One season piloting a Silver-Meyerhold from the back of the grid – Where did you hear this?

**Zhi-hui:** Your team talk to his agent.

**Tyler:** Impossible.

**Zhi-hui:** (*Toying with match*) BCG understand the future. They want a Chinese driver.

**Tyler:** But they wouldn't jettison –

**Zhi-hui:** They are not happy till they get what they want.

**Tyler:** That's completely ridiculous. Kang does not deserve my race seat. I deserve my race seat! Look, I told you. You're not smoking in here, alright? I won't put up with –

*Zhi-hui strikes the match*

Don't light that cigarette!

**Zhi-hui:** A proposition. I tell you what I hear about Kang and BCG; you help me with article. Your father, Monaco –

**Tyler:** I said don't light –

*Zhi-hui lights up*

This is completely unacceptable, ok? No. I will not accept this.

**Zhi-hui:** No, you see, I believe what you not accept is that Chinaman has your race seat. You not accept, in fact, like most Westerner, that China is successful. But you must accept. Because success make China strong. (*Exhales grandly*) You come here and trade with us in order to change us. But we get rich and think 'Why we must change?' Then you give us Olympics and say 'Aha! *This* will change them'. But no. We increase defence budget 47%. We can take out your satellites. Build submarines your Navy cannot see. (*Bringing an ashtray to the table*) Grand Prix depend on cigarette advertising. But now no cigarette logos allow on race trim in European Union. So you come here. Here is very liberal –

**Tyler:** (*Angrily wafting smoke away*) Is that what it is here?

**Zhi-hui:** Free to advertise cigarettes on cars and TV. Keep cigarette companies happy. Yesterday it was your opium and silver for our tea. Today it is your cars and cigarettes for our cheap clothes. Some we take up nose, some we smoke, some we drink, some we drive. Nothing change. So if you do not mind, I enjoy your cigarettes and you must live with my smoke.

*Tyler takes the cigarette from Zhi-hui and puts it out in his whisky.*

We go Long Chan's. Serve best bean curd in town.

*Chinese pop music begins under*

*Tyler dials a number and waves his finger at Zhi-hui, impotently demanding silence*

**Tyler:** Liv, get your ass here now!

*Lights*

### 3.

#### **The media suite at the Shanghai International Circuit**

*Less than an hour later*

*Liv and Zhi-hui drinking coffee. Zhi-hui in shades*

**Liv:** You bully my driver?

**Zhi-hui:** You fix telephone session for me with big man? Is urgent I speak –

**Liv:** You give me a name to ease my Buddha out – you might get your call to Baz. Tyler was in a bad way on the phone.

**Zhi-hui:** I must get under skin. Must find flaws –

**Liv:** Must stop drinking. What's the matter with you? You don't –

**Zhi-hui:** I stop now. Headache.

**Liv:** You stick to the rules, buster. Ok?

**Zhi-hui:** Key is his father, but –

**Liv:** We should be heading to the pits for quali. (*Moving*) What kind of article is this going to be? You rate him, right?

**Zhi-hui:** He is one of three great drivers in paddock.

**Liv:** Absolutely. He ought to have four world championships, not one.

**Zhi-hui:** You and I biggest fan.

**Liv:** When I met him he was determined not to be a driver. Doing an engineering degree. Fighting his nature – his destiny. He was...very charming, and, err, just incredibly hot –

**Zhi-hui:** But now past his prime.

**Liv:** No. What? No, he's still –

**Zhi-hui:** Your famous Baz Silverton rents our circuit. What does the Englishman pay? Nothing. *We pay him.* 500 million UK a year. People's Republic want to see Chinese driver.

**Liv:** Well, they've got Kang –

**Zhi-hui:** In piece of junk, four seconds off pace. Put him in lead team. AltaVista. *(As if it's just occurred to him)* BCG.

**Liv:** BCG?

**Zhi-hui:** Why not? He quick.

**Liv:** Yeah, but who'd he...?

*Zhi-hui smiles. The penny drops for Liv*

Now, wait a minute. They wanna replace...?

*Zhi-hui gets out the folder of papers he brought from his desk*

There's room for both of them, surely. The home audience needs a Brit in a top team.

**Zhi-hui:** *(Searching through papers)* My home is China. Every day one thousand new cars on road. Europe shrink. China grow. Tyler no good. Get rid.

**Liv:** Pragmatic.

**Zhi-hui:** Racing is sentimental? Motor sport is corruption and greed. Cheating fair game. Capitalism teach us –

**Liv:** You learned greed from capitalism –?

**Zhi-hui:** Wild West China –

**Liv:** I don't think so!

**Zhi-hui:** Baz has control. You set up phone time for me.

**Liv:** So the rumour's true. A great shame.

**Zhi-hui:** (*Searching papers*) Where in hell is it?

**Liv:** And why are you the go-between?

**Zhi-hui:** Because of my quickly impeccable English. And I earn their trust. It is honour. The party send me instruction. (*Unable to find the paper he's looking for, because it's the one Pin-de stole*) Here, somewhere...

**Liv:** Well, I hope it's a very generous offer.

**Zhi-hui:** Ah yes. I show you. The party give eight –

**Liv:** Don't! If I don't know, I can't tell.

**Zhi-hui:** I cannot find. Stupid. Leave home in hurry. Not check. Idiot. No problem. I open negotiation with Baz. Return home for contract paper later. (*Giving card*) This man help you with Buddha of Baz.

**Liv:** Ok. Go to the hospitality suite in the BCG motor home. Tell them I sent you – they'll put you through to him.

**Zhi-hui:** I get my call. You are treasure. What happen to you?

**Liv:** Me? Oh, He'll put me with another driver, I guess. I...should've made the break ages ago. You never know – might even be for the best.

*Zhi-hui exits*

*Liv, alone, rests her head in her hands.*

**Liv:** Bugger.

*Then, resolved, she takes out her phone, dials*

(*Into phone*) Xia Zhi-hui from the Shanghai People's Daily will be phoning you. I think it's best if he explains. Oh, and Baz? He's given me a heads up on exporting the Buddha –

*Baz has evidently hung up*

*Pin-de enters*

IF YOU'D LIKE TO READ THE REST OF THIS PLAY PLEASE CONTACT  
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