

YOU LIKE CHINESE FOOD

by

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FADE IN:

TITLE: Time and patience are called for many surprises await you! Lucky numbers: 16, 28, 30, 32, 36, 42

INT. CLARK'S & PETE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - MORNING

An unopened fortune cookie sits on a coffee table.

It's surrounded by the remnants of a Chinese-food dinner, left out in front of a couch in an otherwise meticulously clean apartment.

The morning sunshine beams in through the windows and falls on a note, neatly printed on an index card and placed next to the decaying dinner.

INSERT NOTE: "Honestly, what the fuck? - Clark." It has an emphatic arrow pointing to the mess.

INT. CLARK'S & PETE'S APARTMENT - CLARK'S BEDROOM

CLARK LANE, clean-cut and in his early 20s, sleeps in a twin bed, which is neatly made and disturbed only by his presence in it.

Everything in the room is neat, neat, neat.

On his nightstand lies a copy of a super-thick document with the title, "Budget of the City of New York."

His digital alarm clock reads 5:59 AM.

As it rolls over to 6:00 AM, it begins BUZZING LOUDLY.

Clark bolts up and SLAPS the alarm clock OFF.

He jumps out of bed, wearing just his boxers and an "I (heart) NY" t-shirt.

He grabs a small, white paper bag off his night stand.

INT. CLARK'S & PETE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM

Clark dashes over to the front door, stops, and listens.

FOOTSTEPS can be heard coming down the hallway and then a THUMP in front of the door. Clark hesitates a second and then slowly, slowly cracks open the front door.

His newspaper, The New York Tribune, is there waiting.

INSERT TRIBUNE HEADLINE: "Mayor Pushes Fine Increase for Bars, Clubs."

Clark kneels down and takes a few implements out of his paper bag, laying them on the floor in a row: a hole punch, a wad of fishing line, and a pair of scissors.

He opens up the paper to one of its inside sections and proceeds to punch a hole in the corner. He ties the fishing line through the hole. He closes the paper back up. He runs the line into his apartment, under the door. He cuts it to length and closes the door.

A trap is set.

Clark pulls up a chair, sits, holds the line, and waits.

Eventually, he hears it: more FOOTSTEPS coming down the hallway. They stop in front of his door. But the trap doesn't spring. The FOOTSTEPS fade into the distance.

Clark settles back in. He gives the fishing line an idle tug. The end of the line comes under the door.

Clark's startled. The line's been cut.

Clark jumps up and opens the door. His paper's gone. There's no one in the hallway.

INT. CLARK'S & PETE'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY

CLARK
(to the perp, in absentia)
I'm going to catch you. You know
that, right?
(no response)
And when I do, it's going to be
really awkward. For both of us.

Clark goes back inside the apartment and SLAMS the door.

MONTAGE - CLARK GETS READY FOR WORK

-- The bathroom - Clark, naked, turns the knob in the shower. A few drops come out and then ... nothing. He tries the sink ... nothing.

-- The kitchen - Clark, a towel wrapped around his waist, tries the kitchen sink ... nothing. He looks in the refrigerator and sees ... his Brita water pitcher.

-- The bathroom - Clark, naked and with shampoo in his dry hair, pours water from the Brita over his head.

-- The kitchen - Clark, in a towel and shivering, tries to stick the Brita in the microwave. It doesn't fit. He pours water from the Brita into a plastic cup and puts it in the microwave. He heats it for 30 seconds.

-- The bathroom - A tray of plastic cups, aligned in perfect parallel rows, rests on the sink. Clark takes them, one at a time, uses them to rinse and then replaces them on the tray, upside down.

-- Clark's bedroom - Clark, his hair a bit matted, gets dressed in a dark gray three-piece suit, complete with pocket watch and fedora. He grabs a press pass off his dresser. It reads, "Clark Lane, New York Tribune."

INT. CLARK'S & PETE'S APARTMENT - PETE'S BEDROOM

PETE WOOD, early 20s, good-looking, with shaggy hair, sleeps soundly in a messy bed.

There's a KNOCK at the door. Pete doesn't stir.

Clark cracks the door, but doesn't stick his head in.

CLARK (O.S.)
Seven o'clock. Water's out.

PETE
(stirring)
Fuck.
(stretches out a bit)
I'll just microwave some cups of
Brita.

Pete rolls over. He bumps into a foot with pedicured, painted-red toenails. He's briefly perplexed, but then loses interest and rolls himself out of bed.

EXT. STREETS OF CHINATOWN - MANHATTAN - MORNING

Pete, disheveled in gym shorts and a ratty Journey t-shirt, drives a white pedicab -- a space-agey cross between a tricycle and a taxicab.

Clark sits in the back, crammed in uncomfortably next to BLAISE, an attractive brunette in her early 20s, who's wearing a skimpy red evening dress and high heels.

Pete darts in and out of lanes of car and bicycle traffic. Drivers HONK at him.

Blaise smokes and text messages as Clark leans as far away from her as possible, intently scribbling notes on a pad of paper.

Pete spots a dog sniffing a hydrant and gestures to it.

PETE

See, that's what I was talking about last night. Always sniffing. Always accumulating information.

CLARK

(looking up)
For Chrissake. I'm in front of Mickelthwait in...
(pulls out pocket watch)
...half an hour, and I have to hear about the goddamned Canine Olfactory Network?

PETE

I was talking to, uh...

BLAISE

Blaise.

PETE

Really? That's your real name?

Blaise takes a hard drag off her cigarette.

BLAISE

It's not my fucking stage name.

PETE

No, no, it's hot. I just mean it sounds made up.

Clark turns back to his scribbling, pulling his hat down to block the sun.

PETE (CONT'D)

Anyway, you've got all these dogs with all this information, right? Thousands of dogs all over the city. Hundreds of thousands even. But no way to aggregate it. No way to use it.

BLAISE

What the fuck are you talking about?

PETE

I don't know. Feed it into a computer. Use it to find missing children or catch murderers or something.

BLAISE

How in the shit would the information get from the dog to the computer?

PETE

There'd be a sensor in its nose, and then, like, an antenna on its collar.

CLARK

(unable to contain himself)

You'd put the antenna in the tail. Not the collar, the tail. You take advantage of the natural contours of the dog.

Clark turns right back to his scribbling.

PETE

You're so right.

As the pedicab approaches an intersection, a GUY IN A LEATHER JACKET repeatedly pushes the "Walk" button.

PETE (CONT'D)

Look at this asshole.

The light turns red, and Pete has to come to an abrupt stop. The Guy starts crossing the street.

PETE (CONT'D)

(yelling at the Guy)

Hey, button fucker! Why are you such a button fucker!?

GUY IN A LEATHER JACKET

Fuck you! It doesn't do anything anyway!

PETE

Then why the fuck did you push it!?

The Guy keeps walking and flips Pete off.

PETE (CONT'D)
I fucking hate fucking button
fuckers.

Stopped at the light, the three are subject to a STRIP CLUB
HAWKER peddling his wares to the passing traffic.

STRIP CLUB HAWKER
Live! Nude! Girls! See 'em while
they're hot! Come to Crazy Vin's Go-
Go Palace!

Blaise flips closed her cell phone, flicks her cigarette into
the street, and jumps up.

BLAISE
I'm gonna get off here, boys.

Blaise climbs over Clark and out of the pedicab. Clark
doesn't look up, but tips his hat as she lands.

Blaise stands facing Pete for a second.

BLAISE (CONT'D)
It was, uh...

Pete whips out his cell-phone to take a picture.

PETE
Smile.

Blaise doesn't. Pete SNAPS her picture anyway. She gives a
half-hearted wave and walks off.

A BUSTY BRUNETTE walks by and Pete SNAPS a picture of her,
too. Clark looks up and sees what Pete's doing.

CLARK
You know, that's what a monkey
would do with a cell-phone camera.

PETE
I like monkeys. They really know
how to have a good time.

Pete SNAPS another picture of a PASSING BLONDE.

The light turns green.

EXT. NEW YORK TRIBUNE - DAY

The Tribune building is an imposing, 42-story behemoth in Midtown Manhattan.

Pete pulls up next to the sidewalk. Clark shoves his papers into his bag and gets out of the pedicab.

PETE

Quick, you got the ring for tonight?

Clark reaches in his pocket, pulls out a jewelry box, and opens it. The ring is small, but nice.

PETE (CONT'D)

(inspecting the ring)

Man, it's been so long since I've had regular sex.

Clark grabs the ring back and puts it away.

CLARK

What kinds of sex have you been having, you pervert?

PETE

Sex on a regular basis.

Clark turns around and confidently looks the Tribune building up and down.

CLARK

You sure you don't want me to check into that photo internship? With your clips from college--

PETE

I've already got two jobs, man. Three if you count the third.

CLARK

It's the New York fucking Tribune.

Pete appears unmoved.

As a truck pulls past Clark and Pete, a towering billboard becomes visible across the street.

INSERT BILLBOARD: "Mayor Merriwether would like to remind New Yorkers: An Apple a Day keeps the doctor away." It features a picture of the gray-haired, distinguished-looking mayor holding an apple in one hand and giving the thumbs-up with the other.

Clark and Pete look up at the billboard.

PETE

Great. I hate apples now.

Pete looks at Clark.

PETE (CONT'D)

Why aren't you nervous?

CLARK

Nerves are for the weak, Pete. I'm Superfly.

(beat)

By the way, sorry about using all the Brita.

PETE

That's OK. Maybe it'll rain later.

INT. NEW YORK TRIBUNE - NEWSROOM - DAY

Clark wends his way through acres of gray-walled cubicles, which vanish off into the distance under florescent light.

No windows are in sight. You could hear a pen drop.

INT. NEW YORK TRIBUNE - MICKELTHWAIT'S OFFICE

MILES MICKELTHWAIT, 50s, silver-haired, severe looking, sits behind a large oak desk with papers stacked neatly.

Clark sits in a chair in front of Mickelthwait's desk with a notepad and his papers on his lap.

MICKELTHWAIT

The good news is, we're not firing you.

CLARK

(startled)

I'm sorry?

MICKELTHWAIT

For what?

CLARK

What do you mean you're not firing me?

MICKELTHWAIT

Well, technically, you don't even work here. As an intern, for accounting purposes, you're considered a janitorial subcontractor.

CLARK

I was told this was a routine evaluation for the end of my internship, to discuss what part of the paper I wanted to go to.

MICKELTHWAIT

Who told you that?

CLARK

The memo had your name on it.

MICKELTHWAIT

Did it say, "dictated but not read"?

CLARK

Yes.

MICKELTHWAIT

That memo's ten years old. And I've never read it. They let go the girl who did all my typing nine years ago. The intern helping me run the internship program must have sent it out by mistake.

CLARK

I thought there was an opening on the City Hall beat. I've got ten pages of story ideas here on the mayor's race.

Clark puts his papers in Mickelthwait's desk. Mickelthwait doesn't touch or look at them.

MICKELTHWAIT

There was an opening ten years ago. I can check, but I think they've filled it.

CLARK

There must be some--

MICKELTHWAIT
(shuffling through some
papers)
You're Clark Lane, right?

CLARK
Yes, sir.

MICKELTHWAIT
You're an acceptable writer. You
might even be a passable reporter
someday. But do you know what a
newspaper is?

Clark thinks for a moment.

CLARK
Well, Thomas Jefferson said, if it
were up to him to have a government
without newspapers or newspapers
without a government, he'd choose
the latter.

MICKELTHWAIT
A newspaper is just the junk that
fills space between department
store ads, Master Lane. And there's
fewer ads and less space every
year.

CLARK
What about cell phone ads?

MICKELTHWAIT
There are three other significant
newspapers in this city, of varying
quality.

Clark sits silently, stunned.

MICKELTHWAIT (CONT'D)
(reluctantly)
Though, if you really want to stay
at the Tribune, there's one thing I
could do.

Clark perks up.

MICKELTHWAIT (CONT'D)
The hours are long, the work's
tedious and meaningless, and you
run a non-zero chance of being
bitten.

CLARK

Bitten?

MICKELTHWAIT

It's an intern spot in our parenting section. Spawning equals spending equals space. I can keep you on at the same salary.

CLARK

This is an unpaid internship.

Mickelthwait grabs a piece of paper from a fax machine. He gives it a quick look and offers it to Clark.

MICKELTHWAIT

You ever covered a playground opening?

Clark takes the paper and starts reading it.

MICKELTHWAIT (CONT'D)

You've got twenty minutes to get out to Brooklyn. Get comment from the mayor.

Clark stands up to go.

CLARK

(swallowing his pride)
Thank you, sir.

MICKELTHWAIT

(sadly)
The American newspaper's a dying institution, Master Lane. You know that, right?