

JING-WEI or: OF BAIJIU AND POTEEN

an original screenplay by

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FADE IN.

EXTREME CLOSEUP - "TABLET" COMPUTER SCREEN

on which A HAND tippy-taps a story.

INSERT

A QUICK FLASH (1 - 2 frames) of the stunning JING-WEI.

BACK TO SCENE.

INT. BEIJING - HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Cushy hotel, plushier view. The offending hand's owner is JOHN "JACKIE" O'KELLY (late forties). He is disheveled, clearly hungover. He smokes. Writes;

JACKIE (V.O.)
Those eastbound, and predominantly
Chinese

TITLE CARD: "PEKING" appears, is struck-through, then:
"BEIJING" appears.

JACKIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
gandy dancers of railway men did,
at long last, collide like jousting
snails with their Hibernian
counterparts.

INSERT - U.S. TRANSCONTINENTAL RAILROAD MAN CAMP TENT (1869)

A hootenanny is afoot. IRISH RAIL WORKERS pour whiskey into glass and céilí music into air.

JACKIE (V.O.)
And the fabled Golden Spike still
held the heat of that big hammer's
decisive blow, when the festivities
began.

CHINESE RAIL WORKERS suddenly enter the tent. SCREECHING HALT. The FIDDLER stops abruptly, the men look up at the newcomers.

The "Head" Chinese Railman nods, smiles at the "Head" Irish Railman. The Irishman *man-nods* in retort.

BACK TO SCENE.

(CONTINUED)

Jackie sips a hair of the dog, lights another ciggie, continues writing.

JACKIE (V.O.)

It wasn't out of any sense of racism that the *Paddys* looked on the *Chinamen*... for Pete's sake, they themselves were in the same figurative boat. Both parties, *green and yellow*, were equally unequal in the WASP gods' eyes.

Jackie reads aloud.

JACKIE

No, it was pity they felt. Not for Chen or Han or Ding, but for Chen and Han and Ding's *poor liver*... But how could they have known?? In all those cumulative centuries of Celtic boozy immortalization, how were they not prepared?

Still typing, Jackie BREAKS THE FOURTH WALL.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

(*Shatner-ey*)

How could any one of those ruddy, whiskered faces have even a rudimental cognizance to the ancient Chinese art of... **GANBEI??**

The CAMERA PUSHES IN tight on JACKIE'S FACE.

CUT TO:

INT. BEIJING - SWANKY PRIVATE CLUB - NIGHT

TITLE CARD: "LAST NIGHT" appears, is struck-through, then:

"THIS MORNING" appears.

AMPLIFIED VOICE

Ganbei! Ganbei! Gaan! BEI!

Seemingly important (buzzed) CHINESE BUSINESSMEN, hobnobbing with one another, stop suddenly; grab healthy shots of *baijiu*, throw them back. Random CRIES of "GANBEI!" lap the room.

(NOTE: **NO** Chinese - English translation titles are used in our story. We understand what Jackie does; *nothing*.)

(CONTINUED)

The CAMERA WORKS THE ROOM/FINDS Jackie, flanked by his liaison LIKO (male, twenties, slight) and two well-off ADMIRERS. ADMIRER #1 goes on, and on in Mandarin.

LIKO

Jackie, he says your... *ironic*
humorist style blends well for the
new Chinese literary palate.

JACKIE

Thank you. *Xie xie*. Just make sure
you spit that style out once you've
swished it around.

Liko translates, the Admirers laugh.

AMPLIFIED VOICE

Gaaaaan! BEEEEIIIII!!

Everyone grabs a drink, shoots them down. "Ganbei!"

ADMIRER #2

(in Mandarin), Jackie O'...

JACKIE

(interrupting)

Whoa. Please, just Jack. Or
O'Kelly. Or anything but **Jackie O**.
I went by that handle for a while:
but Greek men kept wanting to get
me on their yachts... *and penises*.

Liko starts to translate.

JACKIE

No! Jesus, Liko, no. Don't
translate that.

Liko catches on, throws something else out in Chinese.

JACKIE

Actually, if you gentlemen would
excuse me... I have to visit the
little SiFu's room.

LIKO

Come, let me escort you.

JACKIE

Not at all. You just keep right on
spinning my legend.

(CONTINUED)

LIKO

Ah, Jackie, I was told to never
leave you.

JACKIE

And you never will. But I've got a
job to do too, and where I'm...
bloody hell, man, I'll be fine.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

A) Jackie is stopped by yet another ADMIRER. Praises ensue.

AMPLIFIED VOICE

Ganbei!!

Drinks are drunk.

B) Jackie is hiding in plain sight behind ORNATE STATUARY.

AMPLIFIED VOICE

GAAaan BEI!

A HAND appears "through" the statue, provides him a baijiu.

C) Drunk, he stands, smokes under lavish OUTDOOR LANTERNS.

AMPLIFIED VOICE

(from inside)

Ganbei!

Stylized: a WAITER butler-passes a booze tray. Jackie grabs
one. Foreground MOVES "FAST", Jackie HARDLY AT ALL.

JACKIE

ganbei.

D) Jackie is in the MEN'S ROOM. He throws cold water on his
face, peers at his reflection.

JACKIE

You, sir, need to retreat. With
both a writer **and** an Irish
reputation at stake, you need to
retreat. Now.

A kindly old BATHROOM VALET hands him a warm towel.

JACKIE

Thanks. Xie xie very much, Pops.

Jackie tosses bills in the tip jar, reaches for the door.

(CONTINUED)

AMPLIFIED VOICE
(muffled)
Ganbei...

Jackie ABOUT FACES, return to the lavatory. He peruses the Valet's toiletries spread, pulls out a smoke. The Valet instantly has a flame ready.

He sarcastically (stereotypically?) pantomimes the Chinese businessmen drinking; mouths the word "*Ganbei!*". The Valet laughs, hard.

VALET
(broken English)
Very good impression!

Jackie smiles/winks, places more bills in the tip jar. He pauses a second to make sure, PUSHES the door open.

BACK TO SCENE.

Jackie tries to look casual, BREAKS for the main door. He moves toward the closing elevator.

JACKIE
Hold the elevator. *Please.*

Just missing it, he looks inside the shutting doors to catch a glimpse of the gorgeous twenty-something

JING-WEI, and the distinguished sparkles of her green/blue dress. Jackie pushes the elevator button. Rapidly.

SWANKY PRIVATE CLUB

Back inside, Liko is looking frantically for Jackie. Still searching, he places a call on his smart phone.

LIKO
Hi, Larrabee Xiānshēng... Yeah, it is Liko. Jackie O'Kelly's liaison... Yes, here at the ganbei club... Well, that is the thing... I cannot seem to find Mister O'Kelly - he has *three sheets toward his wind*, and he is not answering his phone. I thought perhaps you could try...

We hear DISTANT YELLING issuing from the phone.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEIJING STREET

The night is vibrant, thumping with color. Jackie RUNS into frame, searching. Searching.

He passes discos/diners/street-food'ers, with patrons *all*. His heart pumps baijui-infused blood faster and faster.

Searching. Nothing, nothing... Then, something. **Everything**. He catches the blue, the green of Jing-Wei's dress in a bar.

INT./EXT. BAR

which is a mix of modern feng shui and electric urban.

Jing-Wei sits at a window-side hightop with three FRIENDS. As they chat, laugh; we SEE Jackie slowly approach the large window from the street.

The gals first try to ignore him; then look out, up at him. Jackie breaks the situational awkwardness by bumping into the glass, rubs his head.

The girlfriends laugh. Jackie enters the bar, approaches the ladies.

JACKIE

So. Well, here's the thing - I saw you in the elevator, and I think you saw me. Then it was 'Run, Jackie, Run' time. See spot run. I'm seeing spots. Actually I'm only seeing your eyes. And *that dress*. My God you're *beauti-Fool*. Stop being a fool, Jack!

Jing-Wei and party look at each other.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

You know, this isn't like me. This ain't me at all. But you! You are so-

(sudden realization)
not getting a word of this, are you?

Eureka! He whips out his smartphone. Nine missed calls. He fumbles around for the TRANSLATION APP, opens it.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

(into phone)

Hi. Hello. I'm not a weird American. Well, *maybe*. But

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JACKIE (CONT'D) (cont'd)
regardless, could I buy you a drink
- *all* of you a drink, and could
we... *talk*?

The App translates to Mandarin. It seems to speak forever.
The girls look at each other, unsure. They nod.

JACKIE
Ah, great! Oh, oh...
(remembering the translator)
Ah, great! Uh, wait here. How does
a nice bottle of wine sound? I'll
be back directly.

He waits for the translation to finish, gives up, tosses the
smartphone on the table. It is still *Manderin'* as he heads
for the bar itself.

Of course there is a crowd waiting to order. Jackie looks
back occasionally to the table, waves.

His turn. A BARTENDER walks over to him, smiles, greets him
in Chinese, then in English.

BARTENDER
Hi, sir. What would you like?

JACKIE
Yes! I'd like a bottle of your
finest wine... *TWO* bottles of your
finest wine. One red, one white.
And three, four, *FIVE* glasses.
Please bring it over to that...

Jackie first points to, then looks at Jing-Wei's table, to
see it... Empty.

JACKIE (CONT'D)
Um, one second. Hold on just one
sec.

He approaches the table. Jing-Wei, gone. Her friends, gone.
His smartphone, gone. His heart,...

A HAND suddenly comes into frame, holding the phone. The app
is still open. It speaks in a cyber-female's voice.

SMARTPHONE
Would it be okay if we took a walk
instead?

He follows the hand to the arm to the shoulder to Jing-Wei.

(CONTINUED)

JACKIE
That would be amazing.

She smiles. Jackie does the same.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Jackie is still working on the story. Suddenly frustrated, he begins deleting it.

JACKIE
What are you doing? Writing this
tripe, when you know what is trying
to break

INSERT - U.S. TRANSCONTINENTAL RAILROAD MAN CAMP TENT (1869)

We are back at the hootenanny. The Irish and Chinese, now drunk, sing and dance around. Together.

JACKIE (V.O.)
...out of the galactic collective
confines,

Suddenly, A SHAKE. Then another. A stronger one still.

JACKIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
through the freedom tunnels of your
fingers, and into the bright light
of the page,

The entire "world" begins to "DELETE" around the railmen, who are shitting respective bricks.

JACKIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
of the screen. You were brought
here to write a piece on the new
China.

BACK TO SCENE.

JACKIE
Not to obsess over a piece of
(sotto)
asoulmate Ahh, Jing-Wei...

A loud KNOCK on the door, which Jackie opens. It is Liko.

(CONTINUED)

LIKO

You realize that my position is highly sought after...

JACKIE

Right. Lookit, Liko, I'll square things with Larrabee. Last night was one-hundred percent on me. Right now I need a favor...

LIKO

I AM NOT FINISHED!

Jackie appears shocked.

LIKO (CONT'D)

Many highly qualified... *cats*, as you would call them, are waiting for the opportune opportunity to replace me. And let me tell you something else, Jackie O'Kelly; losing my biggest assignment yet, *that's you*, in the biggest urban area in the world, *that's Beijing*, gives those cats just the reason they need to take MY DAMNED JOB FROM ME!

JACKIE

You're right. You're right. And I'm sorry. You are great at what you do. But there was this girl, Liko. I found my Muse last night, and I lost her... *twice*.

Liko starts to interject, Jackie starts to tear up.

JACKIE

No! Now it's your turn to let me talk! I saw her only because I was trying to leave... and any bullshit notions I had about love at first sight descended away with her in that elevator car.

FLASHBACK - DOWNTOWN BEIJING (LAST NIGHT)

SERIES OF SHOTS:

A) *Giddy'ed-up*, Jackie strolls with Jing-Wei. BIG CITY TRENDINESS abounds.

They say little, as does *Mistress Smartphone*.

(CONTINUED)

JACKIE (V.O.)
We walked for hours, Liko.

The two stop at a street vendor for *Tang hu lu*.

JACKIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
The world has never seen two of its
tenants talk so little, yet speak
so loudly. We got it. We simply
"got" each other. I tell ya pal,
some kind of *cosmic alchemy* was
going down.

B) They saunter around LAKE SHICHAHAI. Jing-Wei wears
Jackie's sport coat.

JACKIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
That's exactly what it was. The
elements that went into the pot
were relatively insignificant; A
westerner with a sudden case of
bamboo fever; a would-be
one-note-samba one night stand
orchestrated by Maestro Il
BOOZE-ini.

C) They have now cruised over to the SANLITUN BAR DISTRICT.

JACKIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
But what we ended up with; what
came out of Paracelsus' "mercury of
life" alchemy foundry was the most
significant solid of them all.
Gold... Love-gold... Uh, *Love*.

BACK TO SCENE.

Jackie peers out the massive window. Liko sits behind him.

LIKO
Listen, Jackie...

JACKIE
About that favor; Liko, I need you
to help me find her... I know that
sounds impossible. But I need you
to help - quite literally - find my
"one in a billion"... I barely
slept, but somehow managed a dream
about her.
(trailing off)
I was wooing her with a full-on
Gene Kelly/Vincente Minnelli song
and dance number.

(CONTINUED)

LIKO
The thing is...

JACKIE
I'm almost finished... Her name is
Jing-Wei,

FLASHBACK - SANLITUN BAR DISTRICT (LAST NIGHT)

Jackie and Jing-Wei hold hands. They stop walking. They
kiss.

JACKIE (V.O.)
Jing-Wei *something*. I can't quite
call up her surname in my mind. I
think it most likely had X's in
it... Yes, the *X-to-normal-letter*
ratio was definitely askew.

A large after hours crowd suddenly pours out of a nightclub.
Jing-Wei is PUSHED DOWN by the newly-formed mob. Jackie
reacts. He GRABS the YOUNG PUNK that collided into her.

JACKIE
What's your problem, motherfucker?
Huh? Huh?!

The Young Punk looks to his FRIENDS for help, they give him
the international "you're-on-your-own" motion. Jackie is
boiling over, ready to strike. Petrified, the Punk breaks
free, flees. Jackie gives chase.

JACKIE
Come back and apologize to her, you
little creaton!

The Punk yells, runs faster. Jackie gives up, remembers
Jing-Wei. He tries to return to her, but the club's closing
crowd has tripled in size. Jackie can't break through the
one-way stream.

BACK TO SCENE.

Jackie wipes away a tear.

LIKO
Man, you really *heels over head*
fell for this girl.

JACKIE
Tell me you'll find her, Liko.

(CONTINUED)

LIKO
(smiling)
"You'll find her, Liko."

JACKIE
This isn't the time to practice
your American humor.

Liko's smile widens, he heads for the door.

JACKIE (CONT'D)
Liko, come back here! Hey, I said I
was sorry about ditching you last
night.

LIKO
...yes, and you've suffered enough.

Liko reaches the door, Jackie gently grabs his shoulder.

JACKIE
Please. My suffering will not end
until I...

Liko winks, opens the door to REVEAL Jing-Wei in the hallway

JACKIE (CONT'D)
...find her.

Jackie is dumbstruck.

LIKO
Come on inside, sis.

FADE TO BLACK.

STINGER JACKIE'S DREAM SEQUENCE

which plays under ENDING TITLE CRAWL. Various Beijing
locales set the stage for a musical number. Jackie serenades
Jing-Wei:

JACKIE
(sing-songy)
Our tongues are strangers...
they're internationally in
danger... I can't even begin... to
capisce Mandarin... and your
Engrish is rousy, Oh... Strangers
they may be... *Pero* our hearts
comprende, si... LOVE WILL BE OUR
ESPERANTO!