

PACIFIC RIM

by Chris Van Strander

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CHARACTERS

CORGI WOODWORTH A WASP. Female. Thick Boston Brahmin accent.

WALDRON WOODWORTH Her husband, a WASP. Thick Boston Brahmin accent.

MR. CHING Chinese. Waldron's boss.

SETTING

The Woodworth home, in the fashionable suburb of Park Hill. And this theater.

Now.

CORGI, seated at table with a stack of Thank You notes, a pen, and the makings for martinis. On the table too, a radio, playing a classical music station quietly throughout.

CORGI writes, sips, and listens. WALDRON enters.

CORGI

Morning, darling. Martini?

WALDRON

Truly you are my wife. *(takes glass, raises it)* To my dearest Corgi. Congratulations on another smashing party. *(drinks)*

CORGI

Enjoyed yourself?

WALDRON

Oh, you know how it is hosting. Spend five minutes with everyone. Where are we lunching?

CORGI

Mother's, then cocktails and a spot of badminton with the Hintons, then dinner at the Putnam's.

WALDRON

Can't we send regrets? I'm dog tired.

CORGI

Things *did* go late.

WALDRON

I'll say, I was prying guests out of nooks and crannies. *(her notes)* Starting these already?

CORGI

Figure I'd get the jump.

WALDRON

Never understood why we *hosts* send Thank Yous to our *guests*.

CORGI

Because it's what's done. Our forebears did NOT cross an ocean for us to be discourteous.

WALDRON

But must we hand-write every one?

CORGI

Waldron Woodworth, I did NOT hear you ask such a question. The letter one writes proclaims one's character. One wouldn't typewrite a social note any sooner than one would drink champagne from a claret glass! Do you know Olive's niece sent me a Thanks over *email? Email!* For Baccarat crystal!

WALDRON

Just saying, lot of work.

CORGI

Well, civilization takes effort.

Awkward beat.

WALDRON

Hadn't we better address the, uh... pachyderm in the room? *(beat)* Last night?

CORGI

Your boss?

WALDRON

Hundredth time, he's *not* my boss, I only answer to him. He's just some... underling. Reports to Lord High Executioner back in Dragon Country.

CORGI

I know it's ill-mannered to complain, but as you've brought it up... Never, in my ENTIRE life, have I met a more abhorrent person.

WALDRON

He did behave atrociously, didn't he?

CORGI

Waldron he displayed the sophistication of an Alabama outhouse. *(little beat)* I wasn't expecting him to've mastered, say, continental fork etiquette. If the oyster course arrives, and you're from a culture that can only afford chopsticks, so you haven't been taught your oyster fork's set on the right-hand side of your bowl inside your soup spoon, I'd understand! But that man has no breeding at all! He arrived at six o'clock! When our invitation CLEARLY said "*Six!*" *Who arrives at six o'clock for a six o'clock party?!* As if what? Punctuality is some sort of virtue?!

WALDRON

Suppose the tradition of polite lateness hasn't penetrated the Himalayas.

CORGI

And conversing with him? Impossible! I tried everything! "So which musical

instrument do you play, piano or violin?” “How many panda bears do you own?” “Waldron tells me you have a two-year-old! Ah, the Terrible Two’s! You practically have to bind their feet at that age!”

WALDRON

Well I fared no better! Tossed out every subject under the sun!: tennis!, squash!, polo!, lacrosse!, rugby!, cricket!, yachting!, skiing!, fencing!, shooting!, rowing!, equestrianism! Nothing! He offered me no common ground!

CORGI

Then get this: I ask him which church he attends, Episcopalian or Presbyterian... and he says he practices *Confucianism!* Which seems apt, because I couldn’t understand a word he was saying! [Confusion-ism]

WALDRON

No, pet, Confucius. The lad with those quips. Confucius say “Virginity like bubble: one prick—all gone!”

CORGI

Oh right! Confucius say “Foolish man give wife grand piano. Wise man give wife upright organ.”

WALDRON

Did he give you what he gives me, just that poker-faced smile?

WALDRON imitates the poker-faced smile.

CORGI

Yes! (*joins him in the imitation*) Maddening! If there’s one thing I CANNOT abide, it’s a charade of civility.

WALDRON

I know!, the stultifying *courtliness!* Since Grandfather’s day, our office has run on a first-name basis. To everyone—superiors, inferiors—I’m plain ol’ Waldron. *Only he* insists on calling me Mr. Woodworth! “Mr. Woodworth, why don’t these accounts match? Mr. Woodworth, where’s the missing petty cash?” Christ Almighty, old boy, I said, we’ve known each other an entire fiscal quarter, it’s *Waldron!* And God forbid I call him Chong, or even Mr. Ching! No, one must address him *Manager Ching.*

CORGI

Wait—his first name’s Chong? But he introduced himself as Ching Chong.

WALDRON

Use your noodle, pet, they’re from the opposite side of the world. Everything’s reversed! They put last name first—ie, Dick Black here would be Black Dick there.

CORGI

Gracious!, I referred to him all night as Ching, I pray he didn't overhear.

WALDRON

Oh, Ching Chong, Chong Ching, what's the difference? Sounds like a bucket getting kicked down a staircase either way. *(beat)* I truly thought I was doing right, inviting him.

CORGI

And why not? Our Labor Day do's are legend!

WALDRON

Precisely! Where else does everyone in Park Hill come together as they do here? *(little beat)* He probably dropped by just to bug our home. Sure, he's all assurance on the surface: "We want to be your partners. We're not here to drive anyone out." *Ha!* He's a spy. *(beat; remembers himself)* Sorry, darling—carry on, I'm just raving.

WALDRON fixes another drink. CORGI writes a Thank You note, reading aloud as she goes:

CORGI

"Dearest Chip: Well! Not every day does a girl find herself the recipient of a pearl necklace! And then another on top of that? Sure folks heard my delighted howl clear across the dining room! Your generosity made my night. Yours truly, Corgi Woodworth."

WALDRON

He's bought a house, Ching. Here in Park Hill. Perkins place. Skipper says he paid cash.

CORGI

How... gypsy.

WALDRON

Buying everything, these people. Our homes. Our grandfathers' businesses. Imagine they won't rest 'til they've bought the world entire. Crust, mantle and all. *(little beat)* Father warned me this day would come. The long slow fade to brown and yellow. Chinese. India. Brazil. *Brazil!* When a country named after a NUT is overtaking you, you know you're in decline. *(little beat)* We're a vanishing tribe, Corgi. There'll soon come a day when people speak of Martha's Vineyard like we speak of Atlantis. Babies will go to museums, point to a Brooks Brothers suit under glass, "What is that strange ancient costume?" Mark my words: our grandchildren will grow up speaking Mandarin Orange.

CORGI

Be that as it may, darling, we do still have eighty-three Thanks to send... and though I pride myself a cunning linguist, I haven't the first clue what to write your boss.

To read the rest of this play, please contact me at:

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