

A CHINESE PUZZLE

by

Norman Szabo

P.O. Box 7-262
Keelung 202
Taiwan ROC

+886 (0)931 371 477 (cell)
+886 (0)2 2463 1015 (home/msg)
Szabo@WobbleheadStudios.com

FADE IN:

EXT. CHINESE RESTAURANT, URBAN USA - NIGHT

Departing guests spill out from a traditional Chinese banquet. Valets fetch their expensive cars.

WAYNE SOONG and MING-LI, a classy, handsome, 30-ish couple, smile their way through the crowd and climb into a BMW.

INT. PARKED CAR - CONTINUOUS

A-CHI ('ARCHIE', 35, ratty clothes, hunched shoulders) watches. The BMW drives off into the night.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Archie's nondescript saloon follows.

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT

The two cars head into an industrial zone.

Wayne finds a music station on the car radio.

Archie overtakes, pulls in front of the Beamer and forces it to stop.

Archie gets out of his car and walks over to the BMW. He taps on the glass. Wayne cracks the window a couple inches.

ARCHIE

Hey bro. Get out of the car.

WAYNE

Do I know you?

ARCHIE

C'mon. Get out of the car.

Wayne exits the car and is halfway into a shrug when Archie stabs him in the stomach.

A twist, a vicious wrench, and Archie pulls the knife free. Wayne slides to the ground.

SCREAMS from Ming-Li. She tries to scramble out of the car, but Archie reaches in, grabs her, hits her a couple times. He bundles her into the back seat, climbs after her, punches her some more and proceeds to rape her.

EXT. SAME - MINUTES LATER

Half-conscious groans and sobs from inside the car.

Archie extracts the cash from Wayne's wallet. He wipes his knife on the dead man's clothes, then lifts up Wayne's head by the hair and contemplates the lifeless face. He lets the head fall again, walks back to his car and drives away.

EXT. MADAME WONG'S RESIDENCE, FRONT PORCH - DAY

MICHAEL KREUZER (28, medium height, medium build, quietly and respectably dressed) rings the doorbell. He carries an old brown leather briefcase.

MADAME WONG herself opens the door. A mature, sensual woman in her sixties, she is careful of her appearance, and very aware of how well her black mourning dress becomes her.

KREUZER

Madame Wong? My name is Michael
Kreuzer. I'm a private detective.
May I come in?

INT. MADAME WONG'S PARLOR - DAY

Madame Wong pours green tea.

WONG

So what can you do for me, Mr
Kreuzer?

KREUZER

Well, ma'am, I read in the papers
that you posted a reward of ten
thousand dollars...

WONG

...for information leading to
the arrest and conviction of the
man who murdered my grandson.

KREUZER

And raped your granddaughter-in-law.

WONG

Yes. That too. You're here to
claim the reward?

KREUZER

No, ma'am, I'm here to offer my
condolences and my services.

WONG

I see. You think you can succeed where the police have, so far, failed?

KREUZER

The police do a fine job, ma'am, but they don't have much to go on in this case.

WONG

They have -- the DNA samples.

KREUZER

Yes, ma'am, but the perp -- that's the perpetrator, ma'am -- isn't in any of their databases. You can use DNA typing to confirm that you've got the right man, but if he's not already in the computer, it won't help you to find him in the first place.

WONG

The police surely have other resources?

KREUZER

Yes, ma'am, they do, but -- with respect, ma'am?

WONG

Yes?

KREUZER

You wouldn't have offered a reward if you had total confidence in the police.

WONG

Lieutenant Marvin warned me that a large monetary reward would attract people like you.

KREUZER

It's my job, ma'am.

WONG

Ambulance chasers.

KREUZER

That's lawyers, ma'am. But it's a similar thing, yes.

Madame Wong considers for a moment, then rises and exits. She returns. She puts an envelope on the table.

WONG

Five hundred dollars. Is that enough?

KREUZER

To get started ma'am, yes.

Kreuzer takes the envelope, stands, gives her his business card.

KREUZER (CONT)

This is my card. It's a twenty-four hour service.

Madame Wong offers her hand.

WONG

Good day, Mr Kreuzer. Come and see me again when the money is gone and tell me what you have learned.