

Chop Suey

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EXT. SAN FRANCISCO RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

BRIAN JACKSON (36) shows off his rippling muscles as he moves boxes from the back of a U-Haul onto the sidewalk in front of a colorful Victorian house in a busy residential neighborhood.

Thirty-something PATTY MULDOON helps him, her eyes sparkling with mischief and admiration.

PATTY

Hey, Jackson, you must've spent a lot of time at the gym in Chicago.

BRIAN

I did alright. And I used to jog around the lake and box. My ex used to spar with me. She's pretty feisty.

PATTY

I guess that explains the nasty divorce.

BRIAN

You could say that.

PATTY

Why San Francisco?

BRIAN

I came here once - a long time ago. I always wanted to come back.

PATTY

Well. . . welcome to the building. A lot of good people live here. I'll introduce you. And we'll throw a party. You might get sick of seeing me. Your new boss by day, your neighbor by night.

BRIAN

You seem tolerable. I've enjoyed working for you so far. I love working on Fisherman's Wharf. The smell, the tourists, the sea air, the fantastic seafood. I can't wrap my head around it. Your family has owned that restaurant for fifty years! That makes you part of San Francisco history.

PATTY

I've had nothing but compliments on your seafood dishes since you started working for me, Chef Brian. With all the competition, we're barely making it. But I know you'll help me turn things around. We have one competitor in particular that I'd love to take out - the Oriental Palace in Chinatown. They've won "Best of San Francisco" five years in a row. They just can't be beat.

BRIAN

And that reminds me of lunch. Let's finish this and go eat chop suey. I can't miss my chop suey. I've been addicted to it since I was a kid.

PATTY

How in the world did a little black boy from Chicago get addicted to chop suey? Did you live near a Chinese restaurant or something?

BRIAN

(chuckles)

As strange as this sounds, my black mama dated the Chinese cook who lived down the street. I loved his chop suey. They ended up getting married and living happily ever after.

PATTY

Now, THAT sounds like San Francisco.

INT. ORIENTAL PALACE RESTAURANT - SAME DAY

Enjoying the upscale ambience of the Oriental Palace Restaurant in Chinatown, Patty doodles away on a napkin with her pen while Brian finishes off the last of his chop suey.

BRIAN

(wiping his mouth with his napkin)

Man, that was good - almost as good as my stepdaddy's. What did you think, Patty?

PATTY

I'm not a connoisseur of chop suey, Brian. Give me a shark steak or clam

chowder. That's where I excel.

BRIAN

What are you doodling, anyway? You hardly spoke during lunch.

PATTY

Just some private thoughts on how to improve our customer base. Excuse me a moment. I need to use the powder room.

Patty heads toward the restroom, and THE BUSBOY comes by to pick up the dirty dishes. He reaches for Patty's plates and utensils and picks up the used napkin.

BRIAN

Wait - she was keeping the napkin.

The busboy nods and hands Brian the used napkin. He collects Brian's dirty dishes and bustles away. Brian casually glances at Patty's notes, then sits up straight and carefully reads what she wrote.

BRIAN

Now, what the hell is this? "July 24th. 2 a.m. Disable security system. Hire Daniels for the job. Break into restaurant through back door. Set fire. Get the hell out." My God, Patty, what are you planning on doing?

Patty falls into her seat, snatching the napkin from Brian's hands.

PATTY

That wasn't meant for your eyes, Brian.

BRIAN

How can you be so diabolical, Patty? You can't burn down a restaurant just to kill the competition. Be sensible!

PATTY

If I don't, my family's business will die, and the family legacy will be lost. Can't you understand that?

BRIAN

I can't let you do it, Patty. I'm going to do whatever it takes to stop

you.

Patty folds up the napkin, stuffs it into her purse, and stands up to leave.

PATTY

You don't have any proof, Brian.
Nobody will believe you.

She hurries away. Brian pulls out his cell phone and dials the police.

BRIAN

Hello, police? I need to report a crime. No, it hasn't happened yet. What do you mean, there's nothing you can do? I have information that will prevent a crime, and you don't want it? Let me speak to someone, please. I know you're busy with real crimes. No, I'm not trying to waste your time. Well, screw you, too!

Brian sets down his cell phone and thinks for a few moments. THE WAITER appears.

WAITER

Can I get you anything else, Sir?

BRIAN

Yes. Can I please speak to the manager? It's very important.

WAITER

Wait here. I'll get her for you.

A few moments later, a beautiful middle-aged CHINESE WOMAN wearing a tight silk dress appears with the waiter. The waiter bows and exits the scene.

CHINESE WOMAN

You wish to speak with me, Sir? There was no problem with your meal, I trust.

BRIAN

No, no, nothing like that. But you might want to sit down. I have some very important information that affects this restaurant.

CHINESE WOMAN

(sitting down across from Brian)

How so?

BRIAN

Look, this might sound crazy, but my lunch companion owns Muldoon's Seafood on Fisherman's Wharf. She's been complaining that the Oriental Palace is her primary competition. She's so disgruntled, she's planning on burning this place down on the night of July 24th. She wrote down all of her plans, and I happened to see them.

CHINESE WOMAN

July 24th is next week. How do you know she will follow through with her plan since you know about it? She could just change the date or abandon the plan.

BRIAN

She might do that. But you need to be aware that this could happen. I've already phoned the police, but they say they can't do anything about it.

CHINESE WOMAN

We don't need the police. In Chinatown, we have other ways of dealing with threats. Come by my office tonight at eight o'clock, and we'll discuss it with the owner. He'll know what to do.

INT. MANAGER'S OFFICE, ORIENTAL PALACE RESTAURANT - EVENING

The silver-haired owner of the Oriental Palace, WONG LEE, sits behind an ornately-carved mahogany desk. The Chinese woman stands next to him. Two rough-looking CHINESE TOUGHS stand behind Brian Jackson, who is seated facing Wong.

WONG LEE

What game are you playing, Mr. Jackson? Are you trying to shake us down for cash?

BRIAN

What do you mean? Your manager there told me to come by tonight, and I did.

WONG LEE

And you told her some fantastic story that our rival, Patty Muldoon, is planning to burn down the Oriental Palace on July 24th. So, what price are you asking for the information?

BRIAN

Hey, man, I'm just doing my civic duty because the police wouldn't. I'm just trying to prevent my boss, Patty Muldoon, from doing something stupid.

WONG LEE

That's the problem, Mr. Jackson. The woman you know as Patty Muldoon is really an undercover FBI agent named Sandra Burns. Her mission is to shut down the Chop Suey Tong here in Chinatown, of which I am the head. And I can't let that happen.

BRIAN

I don't know what you're talking about! I just moved here from Chicago. Why would I know what Patty Muldoon - or Sandra Burns - or whoever the fuck she is - is up to. She lied to me.

WONG LEE

We've taken the liberty of sending a note to Miss Muldoon, telling her of your plight. You'll be staying here as our guest until this matter is cleared up.

Lee waves his hand, and the two toughs tie Jackson up in the chair and tie a gag around his mouth. Jackson struggles unsuccessfully.

WONG LEE

In the meantime, my men will be on the lookout for Miss Muldoon. The two of you will not survive the night.

Jackson struggles to free his bonds and mumbles something at Lee, but Lee just laughs.

INT. PATTY MULDOON'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Patty (AKA SANDRA BURNS) is on her cell phone discussing the

situation with her FBI CONTACT.

PATTY/SANDRA BURNS

I never meant for the damn fool to get involved in this. He's just a nice guy who likes chop suey and creates wonderful seafood dishes. He's an asset to the restaurant. Miss Muldoon should feel real proud of herself for hiring him. Now, we have to get him out of there. Tonight. . . Yes, I know my cover's blown. Yes, I know the tong will be waiting for us. Look, the guy's an innocent civilian. We can't leave him there. Let's make our move tonight and rescue him. The smuggled jade dragons must be somewhere inside that restaurant. Great. Meet you at the starting point.

Patty ends the call and straps on her gun.

EXT. THE ALLEY BEHIND THE ORIENTAL PALACE RESTAURANT - SAME EVENING

THREE CHINESE TOUGHS with automatic rifles guard the rear entrance of the restaurant. A tear gas ball rolls at their feet. Coughing and gagging, they run down the alley.

Patty Muldoon and TWO FBI AGENTS, wearing gas masks and carrying automatic rifles, creep out from the shadows.

PATTY/SANDRA BURNS

(talking into a handheld radio)
Has Daniels disabled the security system yet? Good. We're approaching the back door now.

The three FBI agents approach the back door, and Patty slowly opens it. Seeing a clear passage, they slip into the restaurant.

INT. ORIENTAL PALACE RESTAURANT - SAME EVENING

The three FBI agents slowly make their way through the kitchen without encountering any thugs. The dining area is empty. They make their way upstairs to the manager's office and stop outside the door. Everything is quiet.

Suddenly the door opens, and the Chinese woman ushers them inside.

CHINESE WOMAN

Welcome, Miss Muldoon, we've been waiting for you.

INT. MANAGER'S OFFICE, ORIENTAL PALACE RESTAURANT - EVENING

The three FBI agents push their way inside the office with guns ready to fire. Wong Lee claps his hands, laughing. Jackson stares at Patty in fear.

PATTY/SANDRA BURNS

Don't worry, Jackson, we're getting you out of here now.

The two Chinese toughs back away. FBI AGENT #1 unties Jackson's hands and removes the gag from his mouth.

BRIAN

What the fuck, Patty - Sandra - whoever you are!

WONG LEE

Do your worst, Miss Muldoon. By now, my brethren in the tong have gathered forces and surrounded this building. There is no escape. The FBI will do nothing to help you.

PATTY/SANDRA BURNS

Pretty words, Lee, but we already have enough evidence to take you and the whole tong down. By now, the FBI has sent reinforcements to surround your brethren. We just need the dragons.

WONG LEE

And those you will never find. Feel free to search.

Patty pulls out her handheld radio.

PATTY/SANDRA BURNS

Hey, Daniels, take your men and start searching the premises for the dragons. Start in the kitchen.

DANIELS

Uh, no can do, Patty. The tong have us and. . .

Static drowns out his voice, then silence. Outside the door,

boots on the stairs. The door bursts open. The tong rush in with automatic weapons. Patty and her FBI companions open fire. Jackson hits the floor.

An explosion rips through the dining area below.

WONG LEE
(jumping out of his seat)
The dragons!

Lee, the Chinese woman, and the two Chinese toughs rush out of the room. The tong withdraw their weapons and follow them.

PATTY/SANDRA BURNS
Come on, Jackson, we have to get out
of here!

Jackson and the three FBI agents run out of the room.

INT. ORIENTAL PALACE RESTAURANT - SAME EVENING

The restaurant is on fire. The smoke is getting thick. Jackson and the three FBI agents dodge falling debris and fiery objects as they run through the dining area, the kitchen, through the back passage, and out the back door.

EXT. THE ALLEY BEHIND THE ORIENTAL PALACE RESTAURANT - SAME EVENING

Jackson and the three FBI agents rush into the alley. FBI REINFORCEMENTS have rounded up THE TONG, who stand lined up with hands up in the air. Wong Lee and his companions are nowhere in sight. Patty hooks up with her FBI contact.

PATTY/SANDRA BURNS
(pulling off her gas mask)
Wong Lee, his manager, and a couple of his thugs are still inside the building. They were trying to retrieve the dragons. Where's Daniels and his men? Did they get out? They were being held by the tong.

Fire engines arrive in the alley, and more engine sirens can be heard from the front of the restaurant. The restaurant is consumed in flames. An ambulance arrives.

FBI CONTACT
I'm sorry, Patty. Nobody has exited the building but you four.

PATTY/SANDRA BURNS

Fuck! We blew it. We got Jackson out, but we didn't get the dragons or Wong Lee.

FBI CONTACT

If Lee is still in there, he's dead. The dragons might show up in the debris. But we got them, Patty! The Chop Suey Tong is broken.

Patty smiles and shakes his hand.

PATTY/SANDRA BURNS

Thanks, Boss.

Brian grabs Patty by the arm.

BRIAN

Can you explain to me what's going on? I sure as hell didn't sign up for this!

PATTY/SANDRA BURNS

You need to get checked out by the paramedics, Jackson. You've inhaled a lot of smoke.

BRIAN

Yeah, I'll get to that. Who are you? Where's the real Patty Muldoon? What's the story here? All I wanted was some damned chop suey - not the towering inferno.

PATTY/SANDRA BURNS

The real Patty Muldoon is safe. Muldoon's Restaurant is secure. Chinatown will be a safer place to live and work. And a dangerous smuggling ring has been destroyed by the FBI. We'll talk about it tomorrow over a plate of chop suey. Now, go see the paramedics.

BRIAN

You got it, Boss!