

Khan

by
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A locker room. This one is dark and dingy, fluorescent lights radiate throughout. Clothes strewn ambiguously about the room. JIM is digging through his locker. He has a bodybuilder's body, cut and muscular. BILL walks up to him, he's wearing a tan suit that's far too big. Their frames are polar opposites.

BILL

Nervous?

JIM

Oh hi. Yea, yea a little.

BILL

You'll be fine. You're supposed to get nervous, it's part of the profession.

JIM

Yea.

BILL

Remember you're a show person first and foremost. You're here to entertain. If you have to, y'know, like detach yourself to do the work then—by all means.

JIM

Right.

BILL

By the way, you need a stage name.

JIM

I do?

BILL

Yea, y'know. What you've never been in a strip club before? Never seen one on TV? Everybody's got a stage name. It's like Beyoncé or Prince but for stripping.

JIM

Beyoncé... yea, no no you're right.

BILL

So pick one.

JIM

How-how do I do that?

BILL

I don't know, you got your conventional names. Your "Action" and "Magic" and "Bear."

JIM

I'll take Magic.

BILL

No, no you can't do that. You see that Black guy over there, that's Magic. And those two by the showers, Action and Bear.

JIM

So, something original?

BILL

Original, perfect yes exactly. Something original.

JIM

What about Delta?

BILL

No.

JIM

Delta, you don't like it?

BILL

What is this like the Greek alphabet, no. Nobody's gonna understand that. It has to have punch. Like your name alone could sock somebody in the face, leave them with a bloody nose.

JIM

What about Socker?

BILL

The sport?

JIM

No, like sock a pu- nevermind. How 'bout something toned down like Darryl.

BILL
Your name's not Darryl.

JIM
Isn't that the point?

BILL
I don't like it. C'mon, nothing?

JIM
Blade.

BILL
Better.

JIM
Blade?

BILL
Yea, I don't mind it.

JIM
Cool, I'll go with Blade.

BILL

(immediately following the preceding line)
How about Genghis?

JIM
Sorry?

BILL
Genghis.

JIM
Like the-

BILL
Like the historical Chinese dude who like invaded a bunch of villages right? That's a strong name, y'know. It conveys power and strength and masculinity.

JIM

I don't know-

BILL

When the girls come in, they'll be like Genghis. That's so unconventional. That's so fun. You can be my show stopper. You can be next big thing with a name like that.

JIM

I don't feel like it's the right image to be sending out,

BILL

What image? It's just a name. A damn good one, but just a name nonetheless.

JIM

No, I mean Genghis Khan was like a rapist. He raped like thousands of women.

BILL

That's in the past.

JIM

I know but this is a strip club. That's not the right rhetoric, I'm supposed to be professional.

BILL

C'mon. What are you? It's not Hitler or anything. That would be bad. I think. You're Genghis Khan, that was so far back in history. It won't be a problem, really.

JIM

But I don't know if I feel comfortable.

BILL

This job isn't about comfort. So Genghis Khan? That's it?

JIM

I-

BILL

Y'know. I read some statistic somewhere that said Genghis Khan's blood is in like one twentieth of the world population. That's a fuck ton right? So, maybe you have some of his blood in you already.

JIM

That statistic seems wrong.

BILL

Twenty percent. That's what I read, I swear by Jesus's name. So, y'know you're from that part of the world, you probably got like a 50/50 chance of being this guys relative.

JIM

I'm Burmese.

BILL

I don't think that really matters. What I'm saying is- you already got his blood kid. You just have to channel it. GENGHIS KHAN! GENGHIS KHAN! It fits! It's perfect!

JIM

Genghis Khan.

BILL

So we're settled. You've got a new name.

JIM

I'm sorry but-

BILL

You want to get paid right?

JIM

Of course.

BILL

Then do what I say.

JIM

Oh- ok.

BILL

Kid- I don't want to pressure you, I really don't. But stuff like this doesn't come around often. Y'know, I gotta sink my claws in an opportunity like this. You could be the focus point of this whole place, wouldn't that be exciting? People would flock here. "Genghis Khan." Wasn't he a rapist? Exactly as you said. They come here out of curiosity.

And then they see you and I mean, a buff Asian guy in a strip, that is gold. GOLD! I struck Gold, this is like California in the 1840's. We've hit.

JIM

California in the forties?

BILL

The Gold Rush kid, pick up a history book.

JIM

Right.

BILL

Listen, I need to pay my bills. You're gonna attract a lot of new business. You get big, you go on to bigger, better things. Maybe move to Miami, or Atlanta. A bigger market. There, you can rebrand yourself.

JIM

Yea, OK. I'll do it, sure.

BILL

Beautiful. Beautiful.

(pause)

Look, I'm not trying to be racist.

JIM

I know.

BILL

My white and Black guys, they got boring names. Action, Magic, who the fuck cares. They aren't you. They're throwaway pieces. You're rare. I want you to have a special name. Woo them.

JIM

With my name?

BILL

Yea, reel them in with your name. Then you can take off the mask, you're just another Asian guy. Grab em in first, that's what a name like this can do,

JIM

I'm just another Asian guy.

BILL

You're just another guy, scratch the Asian part. That doesn't matter. It doesn't.

JIM

I'm just another guy.

BILL

Exactly. Genghis, that's just another identity. A different you. It's your body and your mind and your soul, but—different, somehow. Right? You look hesitant.

JIM

I'm not.

BILL

You still worried.

JIM

Yea, about different things now.

BILL

OK. What?

A chilly pause.

JIM

I'm worried that my skin is a prop.

Another pause.

BILL

You worked in stripping before?

JIM

Yea, in New York. It was an Asian strip club though.

BILL

What was your name there?

JIM

Just-- Jim.

BILL

Well, let me tell you something. In New York, your skin was a prop. Not here. No, not here. We are embracing your skin. Embracing your beautiful, soft, yellow skin. We love it. We're giving it a different name because it's too special to give up. Your skin is a weapon here. Be proud of that.

JIM

Bill, right?

BILL

That's right.

JIM

Who named you?

BILL

My mother, after her dad. One of the best people I ever knew.

JIM

Well, my name is Jim. My mom picked it out of book of names when she was pregnant with me. She wanted her kid to have an American name, of course. My real name is Tin Aye Myint.

BILL

Not as catchy.

JIM

No it's not. Jim. Jim. Jim. Jim is good. I like it. But it's not real. So, I guess what's the harm in another nickname.

BILL

Exactly.

JIM

I've got three names to keep track of: one American, one Burmese, and one for Bill.

BILL

One for me, champ. Alright, go on out there. Take off your shorts. Let's see that calf definition, come on.

Jim takes off his shorts. He is standing before Bill completely bare, completely vulnerable.

BILL

Good. Now, go out there. Shout your battle cry.

Nothing.

BILL

Come on, I wanna hear it. Scream, kid, scream.

Jim takes a deep gulp of air.

JIM

AHH-

Jim shouts, his voice starts to crack by the end. Slowly but surely, his scream fades into the throbbing of club music.