

## SCENE FOURTEEN

### CHARACTERS

Xu Xia - female, early 20s, Chinese, student

Doug - male, late 20s, CBP officer at JFK

Xu Lin - Male, early 30, Chinese, Xu Xia's brother, CEO of Eat Pray Love Inc.

Waiter

Other Customers

### SCENE

A Chinese restaurant

### TIME

Present – Thanksgiving

Doug and Xia sit at a table. The restaurant is full of people. Doug kisses Xia and holds her hand.

### DOUG

Honey, don't be nervous. This is no big deal. You are making that serious face again.

### XIA

I really hope you would like each other.

### DOUG

Of course we will!

Hey, what are we going to have tonight? Kong Pao Turkey or Turkey dumplings?

Lin shows up at the door. He gives a bag to the waiter and joins the table.

### LIN

Happy Thanksgiving!

### DOUG

Happy Thanksgiving!

They shake hands.

### LIN

Glad to finally meet you. I'm James.

### DOUG

Oh, I thought your name...

### LIN

Lin or James. Whichever you like.

DOUG

Oh, hi. I'm Doug. Glad to meet you too. Actually Xia didn't tell me she had a brother here until yesterday.

LIN

Really? How dare she!

DOUG

But thank you for inviting me over for dinner.

LIN

My pleasure. Although I never heard your name before yesterday either. Isn't it just in time?

DOUG

Totally.

Silence

DOUG (cont'd)

Xia says you work in cultural exchange. Sounds very interesting.

LIN

Interesting indeed. (smiles at Xia)

DOUG

How long have you been here?

LIN

Very long... Let me think... almost 15 years.

DOUG

And you never went back?

LIN

Nope. Too busy with work I guess.

DOUG

Not even once?

LIN

Nope.

DOUG

Wow.

LIN

So Xia says your family is in Texas. You don't go back home for Thanksgiving?

DOUG

You know, I work for the customs. My job keeps me here even in the holidays.

LIN

Exactly. Same here.

DOUG

But how do you manage the cultural exchange without knowing what's happening there? What type of cultural exchange is that?

XIA

Shall we order first? I'm starving.

DOUG

I'm just curious.

LIN

That's a very good question! I was worrying about the same! Thank god, Xia came. She knows more than I do, like Confucius, Peking Opera, Great Wall stuff. Nothing illegal if that's what you are wondering.

XIA

Hey, let's order! Waiter!

LIN

Don't worry about that. I ordered already. The restaurant owner is a good friend. The food will come. Let's drink first.

The waiter brings a bottle of rice liquor. Lin pours himself and Doug each a glass.

LIN (cont'd)

Bottom up.

They toast and drink. It's too strong for Doug.

LIN (cont'd)

In Chinese culture, once you drink with me, you have to marry my sister.

Doug chokes.

LIN (cont'd)

See? I'm making some cultural exchange here.

XIA

Shut up Lin. You made that up.

(To Doug) Are you ok?

DOUG

Where did you get that? I never tasted anything so intense.

LIN

You can't find it in stores. We save it only for good friends. I like making friends. Don't you, Doug?  
But you'd better not smoke in the next half hour.

XIA

Are you ok?

LIN

Of course he is fine.

DOUG

I'm fine.

LIN

Want another one?

XIA

Lin!

DOUG

Sure, why not?

LIN

I like this guy!

They drink and put down the glasses on the table heavily.

DOUG

Hey, I didn't know Chinese people celebrate Thanksgiving.

LIN

I'm American.

DOUG

Oh, sorry.

LIN

So how long have you and Xia been together?

DOUG

One month.

XIA

Six months.

They look at each other. The whole restaurant becomes quiet.

XIA  
What?

DOUG  
We've been dating for six months, but we've only been together for one month.

XIA  
Excuse me? What were those five months then? Internship?

DOUG  
No. We were just hooking up on Facebook in the first month. And then casually dated for two months, and exclusively dated for two months, and last month, we both agreed to move on to a relationship.

XIA  
By we you mean you and ME? Cuz I missed all that. You kissed me on the first date, and we made out when you took me to that beer garden, and the night after we...

LIN  
Guys, guys...

XIA  
And during all that, we weren't together?

DOUG  
There must be some misunderstanding...

XIA  
What misunderstanding?!

DOUG  
That's the way it is.

LIN  
Shh, guys. Calm down. Xia, calm down. He is right. That is how Americans date. Right? We are all in America, aren't we? Anyway, I'm glad you two are together now. And you and I have become friends. Doug, you work for the custom, right? I'd love to share some business opportunities with you in the future. But first, let's have another drink to give thanks to all of these!

DOUG  
I think I've had enough.

LIN  
What are you talking about? Aren't we friends?

DOUG  
Yes.

LIN  
Aren't we good friends?

DOUG  
Uh...

LIN  
No?

DOUG  
Yes, but

LIN  
Awesome! Bottom up!

Lin drinks. Doug has no choice but to follow.  
Waiter brings a big plate to the table, covered by a  
metal cloche.

LIN  
Turkey is ready.

DOUG  
Can't wait to try the Chinese turkey.

LIN  
You will be surprised.

Doug opens the cloche. It's a plate of Chinese Mitten  
Crabs.

LIN (cont'd)  
Ta-da.

XIA  
You must be kidding me, Lin.

DOUG  
Am I too drunk or something?

LIN  
Try one.

DOUG  
No!

LIN  
It's delicious.

DOUG  
No thanks.

LIN  
Did you see the commercial in Times Square?

DOUG  
Yes I did. It's creepy.

XIA  
You said it was beautiful!

DOUG  
You were beautiful, but the whole video was creepy. It's slaughtering. You tore the whole crab up. It was a short horror movie.

LIN  
Isn't the same way you eat turkeys?

DOUG  
These crabs are not even legal for sale.

LIN  
They are not selling it. The owner is a friend. Come on. Try one.

He gives everyone in the restaurant a crab.

CUSTOMER 1  
Is this the famous Peking roasted duck?

LIN  
You can call it whatever you like.

CUSTOMER 1  
I always want to try one!

He eats it.

CUSTOMER 1  
Yum!

CUSTOMER 2  
Does it have mushrooms? I hate mushrooms.

CUSTOMER 3

Me too! I mean, once I did. I really hated mushroom. Every single kind of mushrooms I hated. I hated fungus too. I couldn't stand the smell. I would hate the whole dinner if I smelt mushrooms. I just hated it! AAAAAAAH! And one day, when I was 12, I turned to love it. I don't know what happened on that day. But I just didn't hate that smell anymore. I tried one kind after another, and I didn't hate any of them. And I even started to like the smell, the taste, the texture. And I can no longer recall what I hated so much about mushrooms.

CUSTOMER 2

Well, I still hate them.

CUSTOMER 1

Don't worry. There is no mushroom in it.

Customer 2 and 3 eat the crab.

CUSTOMER 2

This tastes... strange. (chewing) Really strange.

But surely not the strangest thing I've tried. I ate booger when I was little. I picked a piece from my nostril and I ate it. It was soft, but not that soft, it was more like chewy, no, not chewy, but firm... at first it was salty, and then turned sweet. It was so delicate, so many layers. I was amazed by the multi-purpose of our bodies. We could create food and live on ourselves! Boogers were my favorite snack in childhood. But I never ate them again after elementary school. Not that I hid my true self in front of people, but I lost the desire. I became this totally different person – a normal one. I still pick my nose, but instead of putting the boogers in my mouth, I wipe them with a napkin and wash my hands.

CUSTOMER 4

I like to try new things. I look at the menu and order the ones I never heard of. The world is so big. You can't only live in a small piece of land. I watched this on BBC. Every bird migrating season, the Inuit catch thousands of little birds with net bags and stuff 500 birds to one sealskin. They bury those into the ground to ferment. After three months, when the birds get incredibly stinky, the Inuit dig them out and eat them raw. It's incomparable delicacy to them.

CUSTOMER 1

Casu marzu is a Sardinian cheese and is considered a delicacy amongst locals. The cheese is filled with live maggots and is often eaten whilst the maggots are still bouncing around.

CUSTOMER 2

Once in a supermarket in Montreal, I saw a bottle of pig tongues soaked in white vinegar. That totally changed the way I felt about French cuisine.

CUSTOMER 4

I have to try them once before I die!

But my husband is the opposite. He only accepts the food he used to have in his childhood, the food his parents and grandparents made. And I have to cook them strictly following the receipt. He would try new things if I forced him, but I could tell he never enjoyed. He is boring, but I always

valued that as a virtue in relationships. And maybe that's why I found it so hard to believe when he had affair with another woman.

CUSTOMER 3

I always try to recall what happened on the day that made me forgive mushrooms. And will I wake up one day and start to hate them again? What decides our love or hatred for food? Everyone was eating the same raw meat until being pinned down to the ground by different crops. And then those crops grew on our ancestors and shaped them. And they became part of the soil after they died. And new crops grew out from the soil. And that's when we started to take a stand in food.

DOUG

No. You can't eat them.

LIN

Yes you can. People in China started to eat them 2000 years ago.

DOUG

We are supposed to have turkey for Thanksgiving.

LIN

2000 years ago, crabs like these attacked a village after the flood. When everyone were freaked out, one brave man thought "maybe we can eat them." So he tried and it was heaven! Thanks to him, we can enjoy such a delicacy instead of other way around. Now it's your move to save the city.

XIA

(to Doug) You don't have to eat any. (to Lin) I don't understand why you are doing this.

LIN

Have you ever had burritos?

DOUG

Yes.

LIN

Cappuccino?

DOUG

Yes.

LIN

Sushi?

DOUG

Yes.

LIN

That's what I'm talking about! That's the spirit of America! And it should not be represented by turkey! Not "thank you for admitting us to your land and giving us food and letting us kill you all".

Let's forget about that page! American spirit is Chinese Mitten Crab! "Welcome to America. Show me what you got and I won't be afraid because I will be stronger by absorbing you!" Chinese Mitten Crabs are the new turkeys.

Hey, Xia! That's a very good slogan! We should use it for branding. "Chinese Mitten Crabs are the new turkeys."

DOUG

You know nothing about America. You have no right to criticize. You are not wanted by this country. You smuggled in and cheated for citizenship.

Silence

XIA

What are you talking about?

DOUG

I checked you. The custom system doesn't have any record of yours. No entrance no exit. That suggests only two possibilities. You was either born American and never left the country or you smuggled in.

XIA

You CHECKED him? You checked my own brother?

DOUG

(to Lin) Whatever you are doing, leave Xia out of it.

XIA

Is this how you trust me?

DOUG

I trusted you and you lied to me!

XIA

Because I didn't want to put my brother and myself in danger! Like this! Mr. Border Protections!

LIN

Calm down, Xia. Calm down. No one is in danger. No one can't deport an American citizen. And don't yell at your boyfriend. We are a family now. And people in a family have to be open to each other. Firstly, let me respond to your comment Doug. I am definitely wanted by this country. And that's why I *am* part of this country. I was born American, just in a wrong place. I fought all the way like those American frontiers did in history and finally got recognized by the land I belong to. Now let me ask you a question: How do you know *you* are wanted? There is no way to prove it. Just because you are born here, doesn't mean you are wanted. If there were a citizenship renewal test every five years, I think you would probably have failed it. And you would have to leave and figure out where you really belong to.

DOUG

How do I know my country wants me? By looking at you. My country asks me to protect her from

people like you. What do you think my job is for? To keep you out of door. We live in a beautiful house and so many people like you want to get in, but we never invited you. So you broke the window and snuck in. We couldn't throw you out because you hid well. And now you claim you are part of the family? No, we are not family and will never be.

XIA

What about me? Am I invited?

DOUG

You and him are different. You came with a legal visa.

XIA

And you've approved I don't have immigration intent.

DOUG

Yes.

XIA

Are you always ready to lose me at some point?

DOUG

No.

XIA

Then will you help me stay if one day I have to go?

DOUG

Can we talk about this later?

XIA

I don't understand. You don't want me to leave; you don't want me to stay.

DOUG

Let's not mix up our relationship with other things. Let's keep it pure between us. We should first be independent individuals who are responsible for our own futures and *then* we can consider a future together.

XIA

Which means if one day your country kicks me out, it's none of your business.

DOUG

You don't have to leave. Maybe you will find a job and you can stay. And have a green card one day if you work hard. It's a fair country. All you have to do is be good enough. That's what everyone does. That's what people call American Dream.

XIA

And then we can be together.

DOUG

Yes!

XIA

I have to get a green card to to be with you. What do you think you are? An award?

DOUG

Even if you have to leave, it's not like you are going to die. What's wrong with your own country? I love my country. It's so weird people love another country more than their own. You are not being with me for green card, are you?

XIA

How dare you? How dare you say that to me?

DOUG

Xia, honestly, I don't know you well. We've only been together for one month.

LIN

Six months.

DOUG

I had no idea what I got myself into when I first met you.

XIA

So now you are going to hit and run.

LIN

Doug, you are making it such a big deal. Don't flatter yourself. How much do you think your sacred citizenship worth? 40 grand! Yes, your folks sell it for 40 grand. That's the market price. 40 grand and they will marry anyone. I have a long list of people waiting for that easy money. I can call any of them tonight and Xia will get a green card tomorrow. Are you more expensive? How about 80 grand? But you think that's my sister's future worth? No, my sister is not cheap as you.

Doug stands up and about to leave.

DOUG

(to Xia) You ruined it.

Lin laughs.

LIN

Hey Doug, actually you are from Mexico.

DOUG

What?

LIN

Texas belonged to Mexico. But too many American immigrants flooded in and Mexican

government lost control of it. We are same.

DOUG

No, we are not. And by the way, work on your lousy grammar.

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