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.
Your name’s not Darryl.

Isn’t that the point?

I don’t like it. C’mon, nothing?

Blade.

Better.

Blade?

Yea, I don’t mind it.

Cool, I’ll go with Blade.

How about Genghis?

Sorry?

Genghis.

Like the-

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 word 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 guy’s 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

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
AHNNNNHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH-

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