

SHELLAC JONES AND THE PITFALL OF LOVE

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FADE IN:

INT. FANCY HONG KONG HOME - 1975 - DAY

A private courtyard. BIYU SUK-CHING(30s) takes YOUNG KENIX (5) by the arm, hurries him into a palanquin.

SUPER: HONG KONG, 1975

BIYU
Hurry, Tsui, we have to go.

KENIX
Where are we going, Mommy?

BIYU
To meet Chairman Mao.

She gets in after him.

Servants carry the palanquin through the courtyard.

They slow when they see HAN SUK-CHING (30s) at the gate.

HAN
Stop!

He yanks the curtains of the palanquin open.

SHELLAC JONES (30s) is inside!

Jones is a blond Aryan 1920s hero type preserved in a roughly rectangular transparent orange block.

Han reacts, goes to the other side, and drags his wife and son out.

BIYU
Husband, I--

HAN
Biyu, I don't know what you're trying to escape here in Hong Kong, or why you seem to find comfort in the ideals of communism--

BIYU
Because who we are - this little island of British rule - is a lie.
(MORE)

BIYU (CONT'D)

We're walled off from the from the rest of our people. And our people have chosen the invincible Mao Zedong Thought.

HAN

Maybe. And you can go and join the mainlanders if you must. But you're not taking the boy. And you're not taking Shellac Jones.

BIYU

He belongs to the people! He's a symbol of all that is pure and incorruptible!

HAN

As I once thought you were.
(off her look)
Go.

Biyu kneels to face Kenix.

BIYU

Goodbye my son. I hope someday you--

Han grabs her, drags her towards the door.

HAN

If you're going to go, then go!

She takes a last look at Shellac Jones.

Han shoves her out, slams the gate.

HAN

Shujan.

SHUJAN (30s) steps to his master's side.

SHUJAN

Yes?

HAN

Get him out of here.

SHUJAN

Where should I--

HAN

I don't care. Put him in one of our warehouses, just get him out of my sight!

SHUJAN

Very well.

Shujan takes Kenix's arm. Han stops him.

HAN

Not my son, you idiot! Shellac Jones!

EXT. JUNGLE - DAY

Dense underbrush.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Once upon a time, there was a man. A legendary adventurer. He had crossed the wide world, but though he was the stuff of dreams and myth, he was alone. He had never found love. It was as though his heart was encased in a hard, clear substance no one had ever fully identified, which is not entirely a metaphor.

EXT. GOLD MINE - DAY

Workers climb lashed ladders against the muddy cliff side.

SUPER: BRAZIL, 1997

ESCOBAR (29), a poor worker, crawls across the mud and sees a bit of amber sticking out of the ground.

ESCOBAR

Vindo aqui! I found something!

BENITO (40) comes over, Escobar digs to reveal a large corner of amber, the face of Shellac Jones within.

BENITO

What is it?

ESCOBAR
I don't know.

BENITO
Let's get it out.

EXT. GOLD MINE - DAY

Workers clear the earth from Shellac Jones with pick axes.

Benito discovers a scrap of paper buried with Jones.

BENITO
What's this?
(inspects it)
These look like military orders. I
wonder what they say?

ESCOBAR
I can't read. They may as well be
in Chinese.

BENITO
They are in Chinese. But why would
the Chinese bury such a thing in
Brazil?

ESCOBAR
What is he if not a bad omen? No
good can come of this!

BENITO
Relax, amigo. Imagine the bonus
Carlos will pay me for a treasure
like this.

They haul Shellac Jones out with ropes.

BENITO
Get on the radio, Tell Carlos we
need his helicopter.

Escobar leaves.

Light prisms through Shellac and onto a box of dynamite, like
a magnifying glass.

The box begins to smoke.

BENITO
(notices it)
Ah, what a cagada.

The mountainside EXPLODES!

Shellac Jones flips end over end into the,

EXT. JUNGLE - DAY

Shellac Jones lands far into the underbrush.

A thunderstorm brews on the horizon.

A hand holds the bushes aside.

YANOMAMI
(various walla)

The Yanomami people approach Shellac Jones from the tree line.

One of them reaches out to touch Shellac.

Thunder rumbles, the Yanomami run for cover.

YANOMAMI
(various walla)

Rain drops fall.

Shellac Jones sits alone in the torrential downpour.

The dirt erodes beneath him, and gives way in a mud slide!

EXT. AMAZON TRIBUTARY - DAY

Birds and monitor lizards watch Shellac slip down the side of the mountain.

He launches off a slope and splashes down in the river.

Piranhas try to eat him, but break their teeth.

Shellac Jones bobs to the surface and floats downstream.

INT. PALACE, AMIRAH'S BEDROOM - DAY

PRINCESS AMIRAH (29) sleeps on a mountain of pillows.

She stirs.

LAYLA (23), a plump Filipino maid, comes to attend.

LAYLA

Amirah. Good, you're awake.

AMIRAH

Oh, Layla, I had the most bizarre and disturbing dream. They were digging for gold, but they found a man preserved in... something. Then the mountain exploded. What do you think it means?

LAYLA

I don't know, but you'd better get up. It's two o'clock and your mother-in-law is on the rampage.

HAMIIDAH (73) sweeps into the room.

HAMIDAH

Aha! Still asleep!

LAYLA

Oh, Hamidah. We were just interpreting Amirah's dream!

HAMIDAH

I think it means she sleeps too much!

AMIRAH

What are there for me but dreams, mother-in-law? The people I awake to never change.

HAMIDAH

We change, darling, but slowly. And as your face decays, so will your dreams!

Hamidah sweeps out.

AMIRAH

Why does she have to live in our
palace?

LAYLA

It's the only place she won't scare
the children.

EXT. AMAZON RIVER - DAY

A small tour boat trolls down the massive river.

INT. BOAT - DAY

Saudi Prince NAIF NA'IL IBN ABDUL AZIZ (40s) sits at a table
drinking expensive liquor with his servant, MOHAMMED.

NAIF

Yes, the countryside is beautiful,
Mohammed. No doubt it will continue
to be beautiful long after I am
mercifully gone from it. I have
seen snakes, alligators, piranhas,
and

(slaps his arm)

mosquitoes. Even the prattling of
my wives would be preferable to
this interminable din. What is that
noise?

MOHAMMED

(pours the last of it)
Squealer Monkeys, your highness.

NAIF

Reminds me of my children. You have
a family. How do you stand them?

MOHAMMED

(lifts his glass)
Strong drink, your highness.

NAIF

Mohammed! I didn't know you were
given to indulgence.

Mohammed stands and teeters along the side of the boat.

MOHAMMED

It is the will of Allah that a man
should temper himself, but it is
not His will that we should suffer.

NAIF

Bring us another bottle, would you?

EXT. AMAZON RIVER - DAY

Shellac Jones bobs towards the boat.

INT. BOAT - DAY

Mohammed vomits over the side.

He spots Jones in the water, blinks in confusion.

MOHAMMED

Whua?

He drags the Prince to the side of the boat.

NAIF

Could it be? I don't believe it!

MOHAMMED

(shouts to a deck hand)
Call the Captain to slow the boat!

Naif falls to his knees in excitement.

NAIF

Do you know what it is, Mohammed?
For eons, he has roamed the earth.
See how he seems to be alive
depending on how the light hits
him? Small wonder they say a curse
follows those who seek it!

(rises shakily)

We have found the legendary
Shellacked Johnson!

MOHAMMED

A curse? Really?

NAIF

They only say that because it's
priceless.

The CAPTAIN (40s) joins Naif and Mohammed at the rail.

CAPTAIN

We don't have room for any--
(sees Shellac)
what da?

NAIF

Well? Fish it out!

EXT. AMAZON RIVER - DAY

The boat drifts, deck hands struggle to pull Shellac aboard
with a net.

INT. BOAT - DAY

CAPTAIN

Your highness, this isn't going to
work! It's too heavy!

NAIF

Nonsense, pull harder.

With a scream, one of the deck hands slips and falls in the
river.

He is immediately reduced to a skeleton by piranhas as he
hits the water.

DECK HAND

(screams)

The Captain, Mohammed and Naif react in horror.

NAIF

Maybe we should just tie it off.

EXT. RIYADH AIRPORT - DAY

A Saudi Airliner lands.

EXT. RIYADH STREET - DAY

A limousine cruises down the street.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Love will always bring you home,
even when you live in a desert.
For, contrary to popular belief,
there is love in Arabia. But not
love as we know it in the west.
Most marriages in Arabia are
arranged. Like a line of dominoes,
waiting to be tipped!

EXT. PALACE - DAY

The limousine turns into the long driveway.

Naif gets out.

NAIF

Ah, it's good to be back in the dry
air again. Finally, I can breathe!
Mohammed, get the luggage.

Mohammed, Layla, AFAAF (Female, 30s) and KARSINI (Female,
30s) - the servants - carry luggage in.

INT. PALACE, FOYER - DAY

Naif enters.

NAIF

Greetings, my wife. Your husband is
returned. And I have brought--

Amirah and Hamidah stare at him, fume.

NAIF

What is it?