WHITE LOTUS CHIANG MAI

Episode 1

"Wai"

(SPEC SCRIPT)

Written by Tristan Thom

A BRIEF DISCLAIMER:

This is a work of pure speculation, written in the vain and possibly delusional hope that by inhabiting the richly drawn world and inimitable style of a singular creative voice, I myself will somehow draw nearer the brilliance that so vividly animates him, and perhaps one day attain some scant fraction of his richly deserved and long overdue success.

In the unlikely event that someone other than myself or my boyfriend or my friend Grace comes into possession of this script and deigns to read it, please enjoy it for the work of delirious, frothy, swooning fan service that it is, all the while bearing in mind that neither Mike White, nor HBO, nor Warner Bros. Discovery, nor any affiliated or concerned parties have approved, condoned, or otherwise commissioned the content herein.

And in the even more unlikely event that this script should find its way into the hands of Mike White, HBO, Warner Bros. Discovery, or any other affiliated or concerned party, please accept in advance my sincere gratitude for giving over even a moment of your time to indulging the whims of an utterly unknown and unproven talent, whose only hope is that his words may move, inspire, challenge, confound, and otherwise rise to the level of true art, such that one day, many years from now, he may look back on all that he has achieved and remark to himself: "I have nurtured my gifts; I have fulfilled my potential; I have lived well, and fully, and graciously, and generously; and I have made so much fucking money."

Thank you.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE:

THE AMERICANS:

GEORGETTE MORGAN

Mid 60s, thee ne plus ultra rich bitch matriarch: fearsomely chic and wickedly smart with absolutely nothing to prove and even less patience for anyone's bullshit.

DAVID MORGAN

Early 70s, reserved, mournful, sucessful but quiet about it: the Black Mitt Romney, but with slightly better style and infinitely better politics.

MANDY MORGAN

Early 30s, terminally outraged bourgeois activistcum-influencer: inherited all of her parents' intellect, but none of their discretion or self-awareness.

THE MORMONS:

MAI SCOTT

Mid 60s, Republican coded matriarch, gamely plays the part of the chipper, cheerful, Good-n-Pious Mormon Wife, but secretly harbours a depth borne of tragedy.

BRIAN SCOTT

Mid-60's, stern but warm all-American fomer golden boy who's retained his "aw, shucks!" mien, even though he's now kinda old, very rich, and extremely gay. Oops!

Late 20s, tern but Late 20s, tern but derrorisi optimisti cheerful, wholesome type: als indulged, sheltered pitiably

TIFFANY HARDING

Late 20s, terrorisingly optimistic, cheerful, and wholesome influencer type: also spoiled, indulged, entirely sheltered, and pitiably naive.

THE CHINESE:

ADAM HARDING

Mid-30s, driven and clever but woefully insecure perennial runner-up whose true nature (being an asshole) is concealed by his snivelling sense of victimhood.

THE FRENCH:

AÏDA AUBERT

Early 40s, French-Senegalese, serene, beguiling, self-possessed, and utterly enigmatic: wildly forthcoming in one moment, then terrifying evasive in the next.

ETIENNE AUBERT*

Early 40s, French, sweet and cute and appealing but also inexplicably morose and prone to silly little tantrums and low-grade emotional manipulation, which is to say, a man.

JIAO ZHANG

Late 20s, Chinese, golden child and billionaire scion: shrewd, worldly, refined, forbidding, and most of all, discreet in that way that only the ultra-rich can be.

JAMES MA

Mid 30s, Hong Kongborn, Oxbridgereared, too-slick hanger-on-cumgigilo: fucked his way to the top, then started to think rather highly of himself.

THE EXECUTIVES:

BELINDA LINDSEY

Our OG girly got a big promotion, but is still being tormented by various and sundry toxic narcissists on account of being too damn nice. Belinda!

TIMO LAINE

Early 40s, Finnish, daft but not dumb, and most importantly: handsome in a way that bends the world to his will without him even realising.

ALEXEI CHERNIN*

Mid 50s, Russian, billionaire playboy who's successfully laundered his reputation (and money), but made more than a few enemies along the way.

THE STAFF:

CHET BHO

Mid 30s, warm and congenial, but also deeply striving, constitutionally dissatisfied, entirely full of himself, and monumentally bitchy.

SUDA BHO

Mid 30s, calm, quiet, reserved, and most of all, a profoundly, deeply, agonisingly kind and decent truly good person who will therefore always finish last.

AMY JELLICOE

Laura Dern, Laura
Dern, Laura Dern,
LAURA DERN, Laura Dern,
Lauraaa Dernnn,
Lauradern, Laura.
Period. Dern.
Period. L-a-u-r-a-d-e-r-n, and what's
more, Laura Dern.

^{*}Does not appear in Episode 1

INT/EXT. BUDDHIST TEMPLE - THROUGHOUT - DAY

A funeral is in progress at a modest open air temple in Chiang Mai. A simple, unadorned wood coffin sits on the altar. Four MONKS flank the coffin, chanting (in Pali):

MONKS

Impermanent alas are formations, Subject to rise and fall. Having arisen, they cease; Their subsiding is bliss.

A small crowd of white-robed mourners are seated within the temple, gathered around the altar to pay their respects.

OUTSIDE THE TEMPLE

A larger crowd of curious onlookers, mostly tourists, have gathered to watch.

An affluent-looking but gaudy older American couple, TEXANS, approach, pushing their way through the gathering crowd to get a better view of the procession.

TEXAN

WOMAN
(gasping)Isn't it just
stunning?

TEXAN MAN

Tell that to the man in the box...

The Texan Woman flicks away her husband's admonishment.

INSIDE THE TEMPLE

A veiled MOURNER steps forth to present the Monks with a small packet, wrapped in brown paper and secured with a string.

One of the Monks takes it with a bow then carefully begins to unwrap the packet revealing a neatly folded cotton cloth, crisp and pristine white. He shakes the cloth open, and three other Monks step forward to grab a corner. They unfurl the cloth between them, pulling it taut and holding it over the coffin.

A fifth Monk approaches the altar, holding an elaborately ornamented ceremonial dagger. He raises the dagger above his head then plunges it into the centre of the outstretched cloth. It pierces it cleanly.

OUTSIDE THE TEMPLE

TEXAN WOMAN

(gasping)
Oh my Lord!

The Texan Woman grabs her husband's arm then points emphatically toward the other side of the crowd.

TEXAN MAN

What the-

TEXAN WOMAN

See that girl over there? The little blonde?

The Texan Man scans the crowd and locates the girl in question: a YOUNG WOMAN in her twenties, obviously American, bare-faced and slightly disheveled: long blonde hair extensions piled atop her head in a tatty mound, mascara-clumped eyelashes coming unglued, red-eyed and puffy-faced. She's the type who generally wouldn't leave the house without a blow out and a full beat, but today for some reason...

TEXAN MAN

Yeah...

TEXAN WOMAN

(stage whisper)

I follow her...she's a big deal...

TEXAN MAN

Huh. She doesn't really look the type...

TEXAN WOMAN

She looks like hell is what she looks like. I tell you what: she certainly dressed down for the occasion.

TEXAN MAN

She's on vacation...

The Texan Woman SCOFFS and gestures at her own impeccable hair/makeup/outfit.

TEXAN WOMAN

I don't even know why I follow her to be honest. She's bang average, boring as sin, naive like you wouldn't believe, and, well...I'll just go ahead and say it: dumb.

TEXAN MAN

Be nice now...

TEXAN WOMAN

Why? Ain't nothing with being a little dumb. I'm sure she's happier than all of us put together.

They both appraise the Young Woman intently.

TEXAN WOMAN (CONT'D)

Let's go say hi...

TEXAN MAN

(sighing)

Oh Lord...

The Texan woman grabs her Husband and drags him through the crowd.

INSIDE THE TEMPLE

The monks have returned to their original positions on the altar at the corners of the coffin. The fifth monk approaches the coffin from behind and closes the lid. The monks end their chanting then bow their heads.

Two MOURNERS approach the altar. They each hold an overflowing cup of water. Once they reach the coffin, they raise their cups above the coffin and begin to pour. As they do, the monks resume their chanting, but a different refrain now:

MONKS

As water raining on a hill flows down to the valley, Even so does what is given here benefit the dead. As rivers full of water fill the ocean full, Even so does what is given here benefit the dead.

OUTSIDE THE TEMPLE

The Texans have made their way over to the Young Woman. The Texan Woman places a hand warmly on her arm.

TEXAN WOMAN

Tiffany?

The Young Woman, TIFFANY HARDING, spins around, startled.

TIFFANY

Yes? Uh, hi?

TEXAN WOMAN

Oh my word it is you!

(beat)

I'm a longtime follower...

The Texan Woman trails off expectantly, but Tiffany offers nothing in return. She seems dazed; stricken; elsewhere.

Suddenly something clicks and an almost manic cheerfulness comes over her. An impossibly wide, impossible fake smile spreads across her face as she grabs the Texan Woman's hand.

TIFFANY

Bless your heart! That is so sweet! Where y'all visiting from?

TEXAN WOMAN

Dallas, Texas!

TIFFANY

Oh my gosh! Me too!

TEXAN WOMAN

Oh, I know honey! You know, we probably live not two miles from each other, and we've never bumped into each other, but here we are, all the way on the other side of the world and...BAM! Head on collision!

TIFFANY

I know!

(beat)

So! Is this y'all's first time in Thailand?

TEXAN WOMAN

(nodding)

Mmmhmm. We just arrived this morning, dropped our bags off at the hotel, and headed straight out. I said to my husband, I said "I travelled halfway around the damn world, I'm not wasting a single minute!"

(beat)

Now if it was up to him, he'd spend the whole week sitting in the room flicking through the TV trying to find his ESPN!

TEXAN MAN

For \$1600 a night darling: I'm going to do do as I please...

The Texan Woman smacks her Husband.

TEXAN WOMAN

Out here talking about money like that...can't take you anywhere!

The Texan Woman winks at Tiffany

TEXAN WOMAN (CONT'D)

(stage whisper)

We're staying at The White Lotus...

Tiffany stares blankly at her for a beat; the dazed, glazed expression is back. The Texan Woman looks on, unsure of whether to be concerned or offended.

TEXAN WOMAN (CONT'D)

You alright, sweetheart?

Tiffany snaps out of it.

TIFFANY

Oh my gosh, yes! The White Lotus! That's where I've been the past week!

TEXAN WOMAN

Stop it right now!

INSIDE THE TEMPLE

The mourners have finished pouring the water over the coffin. The chanting stops and once again gather at the four corners of the coffin. They each grab on to a handle of the stretcher beneath the coffin and lift it up in one swift motion. They raise the coffin above their heads then let it come to rest on their shoulders. The mourners in the temple part to create a path for the casket.

OUTSIDE THE TEMPLE

As the Monks approach the threshold of the Temple, the gathered onlookers confusedly move out of the way and end up clustered together in a dense throng. The Texan Woman gets jostled and almost loses her footing.

TEXAN WOMAN (CONT'D)

(to no one and everyone)
Excuse me! Excuse me! Mind
yourself! Yes; you; hi! Watch where
you're going! Please and thank you!
 (beat)
Good God!

She composes herself then turns her attention back to Tiffany, whose eyes have started to well with tears.

TEXAN WOMAN (CONT'D)

Oh sweetheart! Are you okay?

Tears begin to stream down Tiffany's face. She stares fixedly at the casket as it passes by. The Texan woman follows her gaze.

TEXAN WOMAN (CONT'D)

Oh my God: did you know...

The Texan Woman nods in the direction of the casket. Tiffany seems to nod in assent

TEXAN WOMAN (CONT'D)

(gasping)
Oh sweetheart!
 (whispering)
Who was it?

TIFFANY

TEXAN WOMAN

Stop it right there! What in God's name is happening at these resorts??? People are dropping like damn flies!

TEXAN MAN

C'mon now darlin'...

TEXAN WOMAN

Oh don't you "c'mon now darling"
me! Every time I open up the news:
"White Lotus: accidental death!
White Lotus: shoot out! White
Lotus: MURDER." Oh no: absolutely
not! I'm as serious as a heart
attack right now: I got a BAD
feeling about all of this.

TEXAN MAN

You're being-

TEXAN WOMAN

Don't you dare say it! I'll be damned if I'm gonna pay two thousand dollars a night for the privilege of signing my own death warrant! You're not about to take me out like th—

Suddenly, the crowd begins to surge away from the temple. A deafening ROAR of SHOUTS and SCREAMS kicks up. Chaos. The Texan Couple and Tiffany are nearly trampled in the melee, but they cling together and manage to keep their footing.

Then, at incredibly close range: GUNSHOTS.

(The Texans and Tiffany are unharmed)

A split second later, directly behind them, the anonymous VICTIM slumps to the ground with a THUD. Silence. Beat. The Texan Woman SCREAMS.

SMASH CUT TO:

FRONT-FACING CAMERA VIDEO

SUPER: TEN DAYS EARLIER

A young Black woman is seated in a low-slung club chair in what appears to be an airport lounge She holds a glass of wine in one hand. This is MANDY (30). She calmly takes a sip of her drink, then sets it down and leans forward. She stares directly at the camera with a cool but menacing intensity.

MANDY

Let me repeat it once more for those of you struggling to comprehend: Yes. All. White. People.

(beat)

Whiteness does not acknowledge us as fully human. We are subhuman; inhuman to them; to all of them. Yes: all of them. Even your best white bestie; the one who's doing the work and holding the space...even that bitch. Especially that bitch.

(beat)

Because let me tell you what: when that bitch looks at us, no matter what she says, no matter what her hashtag this and her crocodile tears that may suggest, she sees someone just a little bit less worthy of compassion; just a little bit less capable of feeling pain. Different. Other. Lesser.

(beat)

But just as they don't see us as fully human, neither should we feel obliged see them as such. Because they have forfeited their humanity. And every white person who has profited by or taken comfort in or simply been permitted to exist peacefully within the temple of whiteness — which is to say, fucking all of them — has also forfeited their humanity. They are the subhumans, the in-humans, the un-humans. Them, not us.

A WIDE VIEW reveals:

INT. SPRINTER VAN - DAY

Mandy sits opposite her mother GEORGETTE WILLIAMS (60s) and her father DAVID WILLIAMS (70s), both Black, elegant, and impeccable (which is to say, rich).

Mandy's screed continues to play on Georgette's phone, and she watches her mother watching her.

Georgette looks perturbed and incredulous. David stares out the window at the lush landscape of Northern Thailand, wilfully oblivious.

MANDY (O.C.)

Which is why when I say burn it all down, I'm not speaking metaphorically; I'm literally asking you to set the world on fire. Burn down the physical world that they built - actually, sorry: that we built for them. The stores and the schools and the churches and the banks and the hospitals and the airports: all of it. Burn it all the fuck down. Just do it. DO IT. Destroy their whole fucking precious beautiful world with the same gleeful indifference that they have raped and murdered and pillaged and plundered and colonised OURS. Do it with glee. Burn it all-

Georgette pauses the video and sets her phone down on the seat beside her.

GEORGETTE

Well, it's certainly direct.

(beat)

Usually ideologues are terribly evasive: you just got straight to it.

MANDY

I'm not a fucking "ideologue..."

GEORGETTE

(whispers)

Had you just taken an Adderall?

MANDY

No I had not just taken a fucking Adderall!

GEORGETTE

Okay....well...it's all just a

bit...

(whispering)

Much...

MANDY

Well, the ongoing genocide of the Global Majority is "a bit much" too Mother! It's meant to be terrifying! It's meant to be destablising!

(MORE)

MANDY (CONT'D)

It's meant to be deeply fucking uncomfortable to watch because the truth itself is deeply fucking uncomfortable.

GEORGETTE

Well, then it's a triumph. Utterly unwatchable.

MANDY

Fuck your fucking snide, apathetic, nihilistic respectability politics! This is...a primal scream on behalf of the dispossessed!

GEORGETTE

Darling, you recorded this in the Centurion Lounge while you waited to board your first class — not business class — first class flight. I mean...

MANDY

Don't you <u>dare</u> weaponise the privilege that <u>you</u> have continually forced upon me against me.

GEORGETTE

Be honest with me: is this is all just some sort of terribly elaborate performance art thing like how you used to do?

(beat)

Remember when you were an artist for those few semesters at Yale? That was so much fun. So many chic little parties and fabulous sorts floating about...

MANDY

Wow.

GEORGETTE

Can I tell you what your problem is?

MANDY

Absolutely not.

GEORGETTE

You believe the stakes of what you're doing couldn't possibly be higher, but in reality, they couldn't possibly be lower.

(beat)

(MORE)

GEORGETTE (CONT'D)

Trust me: by the time this trip is over, no one will even remember what was said or why they were even mad at you in the first place because absolutely none of it really matters.

(beat)

Unless you're doing the whole performance art thing, it which case, it's bound to be a triumph.

MANDY

You're a fucking monster.

GEORGETTE

Honestly, I think this whole imbroglio is a fantastic excuse to set down the phone for once and be present here with your father and me.

MANDY

I can't just "set my phone down and be present" Mother! I'm actively being throttled and muzzled and silenced and disappeared by the very forces that I had the temerity to name and shame! I have to defend myself! I have to fight back!

GEORGETTE

You really don't.

David finally looks back from the window.

DAVID

What's going on?

GEORGETTE

White Supremacy has temporarily felled our daughter.

DAVID

Oh dear.

Georgette's attention is suddenly captured by a vast terraced rice paddy populated by dozens of farmers harvesting the grains.

GEORGETTE

How pretty!

EXT. CHIANG MAI - RURAL ROAD - CONTINUOUS

An aerial view of the same scene. The van speeds along a winding road that cuts through dense jungle of Northern Thailand. It passes out of sight.

After a moment, another van appears on the road, speeds through, and passes out of sight. Then a third. Then a fourth.

EXT. WHITE LOTUS - DAY

The hotel manager CHET and the assistant manager SUDA wait for the guests to arrive. Both are Thai, in their late 30s, and have warm, inviting (if inscrutable) faces.

Chet stands ramrod straight with his hands clasped behind his back. Suda holds a tray of drinks, perfectly balanced and unmoving. A phalanx of PORTERS stand behind them. The Morgan's van pulls up in front of the hotel.

Georgette gets out first, followed by David, then Mandy.

Chet and Suda bow deeply.

CHET

Mr. And Mrs. Benson; Ms. Benson: Welcome to the White Lotus. My name is Chet. And this is my colleague Suda.

Suda rises from her bow then proffers the tray of drinks.

Georgette and David help themselves to a drink from Suda's tray.

SUDA

Sawasdee.

GEORGETTE

Thank you so much.

DAVID

Thank you.

Mandy, ignores Chet and rudely pushes past her parents straight into the hotel lobby. Georgette shoots an apologetic look in Chet's direction.

GEORGETTE

Forgive our daughter. She's busy marinating in the exquisite tragedy of her own existence. It's all been a bit much for her — and us, frankly.

Chet freezes in confusion.

CHET

Well, I trust her stay with us will be sufficiently restorative...

GEORGETTE

God, I hope so.

CHET

And is this your first visit to Thailand?

GEORGETTE

For me, yes. My husband was here many, many, years ago. Early seventies, right doll?

David nods.

CHET

Oh! May I ask where you visited, Mr. Harding?

DAVID

All over, really. Mostly the Northeast. Nakhon Ratchasima. Ubon Ratchathani. Sattahip. Umm...yeah.

CHET

How unusual! Especially all those years ago...there must have been very little tourism.

DAVID

I wasn't a tourist. They're US Military bases.

Georgette touches his arm reassuringly then takes an exaggeratedly big sip of her drink.

GEORGETTE

Mmm! Divine! Doll, you have to try
this!

She thrusts the drink into his hand.

GEORGETTE (CONT'D)

So! Shall we head inside?

Chet bows slightly then gestures toward one of the Porters.

CHET

Please. My colleague will be happy to show you to your Villa. And don't hesitate to contact us should either of you need anything at all. And your daughter too, of course.

GEORGETTE

Thank you so much. I'm sure everything will be perfect.

Georgette looks expectantly over to David, but he's staring dreamily up at the sky.

GEORGETTE (CONT'D)

Doll?

David snaps back to the moment and walks over to join Georgette. They head inside.

Chet leans over to Suda.

(Unless otherwise noted, Chet and Suda always speak Thai with each other, and English with everyone else)

CHET

That poor woman.

SUDA

Why?

CHET

Her family barely acknowledges her.

SUDA

I don't think she noticed.

A moment later, a second van pulls up. A Porter opens the door and a woman steps out: AÏDA AUBERT (late 30s, Senegalese-French). Her outfit is simple and austere, but expensive: crisp white shirt, flowing trousers, silk head scarf, esoteric jewellery. She's travelling with only a small carry-on bag and a tote bag. The Porter reaches for her suitcase but she jerks it away.

AÏDA

I'm fine, thank you.

She approaches Chet and Suda, who greet her with a bow.

CHET

Welcome to the White Lotus, Ms. Aubert.

SUDA

Sawasdee.

AÏDA

Thank you.

CHET

I trust you had a pleasant journey?

ΑÏDA

Not particularly...

Chet freezes.

CHET

I'm so sorry to hear that. Was there any problem with the transfer? Is there anything we can do to-

ΑÏDA

No no no. Just to say it was typical. Unremarkable. I was in France, now eighteen hours later, I'm here. What is there to say?

Chet continues to stare blankly. Aïda winces.

AÏDA (CONT'D)

It was fine. Yes. Thank you. Very nice.

Aïda forces a smile then helps herself to a drink from Suda's tray.

AÏDA (CONT'D)

Merci. Thank you.

CHET

And is this your first time in Thailand?

ΑÏDA

No. I was here once before, many years ago.

Chet once again looks at Aïda expectantly. At great effort, she summons some faint cheer.

AÏDA (CONT'D)

It was lovely. A very significant trip.

CHET

I hope we can make this visit as memorable as your last.

AÏDA

I'm sure.

Chet gestures toward the hotel entrance.

CHET

If you would like to follow my colleague, he would be happy to show you to your room.

The same Porter once again reaches for Aïda's bag, but this time she allows him to take it.

AÏDA

Thank you.

Chet and Suda bow deeply. The Porter nervously leads the way into the hotel. Aïda strides calmly behind him.

CHET

What a bitch...

SUDA

You love it.

CHET

A fabulous bitch.

The next van pulls up. The doors open and a family of four emerges.

MAI SCOTT (60s, Asian-American, slightly overdone, rich-but-not-chic, Republican-coded) steps out first.

Next is her adult daughter TIFFANY HARDING (late 20s, biracial, similar vibe as her mother but ever-so-slightly gawdier, always smiling).

Mai's husband and Tiffany's father BRIAN SCOTT (60s, white, fit, tidy, preppy, utterly bland) steps out next.

And finally, out steps Tiffany's husband ADAM HARDING (early 30s, white, fit, tidy preppy, utterly bland...which is to say, an uncanny-slash-Freudian mirror image of his father-in-law).

Mai and Tiffany both look around with an exaggerated, almost deranged level of awe. Tiffany holds her phone out in front of them and terrorisingly cheerful smiles spread across their faces on command: they're shooting content.

Brian and Adam shoot each other a vaguely judgmental look and step around their spouses to greet Chet.

CHET (CONT'D)

Mr. Scott; Mr. Harding. Welcome to the White Lotus.

BRIAN

Thank you.

ADAM

Yeah, thank you.

CHET

Just to let you know, Mr. Scott, we've actually gone ahead and upgraded your suite. I think you and your husband will be very pleased with it.

Brian flushes and looks perturbed. Adam SCOFFS confusedly.

BRIAN

You mean my wife?

Chet winces and bows apologetically.

CHET

Of course. Please forgive me. My English is very imperfect.

BRIAN

That's fine.

Behind them Tiffany and Mai are filming and narrating everything in real-time.

TIFFANY

(performative)

...we have <u>just</u> landed in Chiang Mai, Thailand, and: y'all? That was the longest travel experience I have ever...I mean, I truly do not know what day it is! We have been travelling for what? 30 hours?

MAI

Mmmhmm. Thirty six hours...

TIFFANY

Thirty six hours! You guys!
Thankfully it was a smooth trip—

MAI

Such a smooth trip.

TIFFANY

So we are tired, we're a little disoriented, we probably need a long hot shower...

Tiffany and Mai laugh fakely.

TIFFANY (CONT'D)

...but we just $\underline{\text{had}}$ to hop on here real quick and submit something that we're grateful for because...

MAI

...because happiness begins with gratitude.

TIFFANY

That's right. So today, I am grateful to the White Lotus for making this trip of a lifetime happen!

MAI

Me too. It's just such a blessing to be here!

TIFFANY

Absolutely. We just feel so blessed to be here. And we cannot wait to show y'all absolutely every little detail. Stay tuned!!!

Tiffany lowers her phone and stops recording. She plays back the video as they walk. She appraises it carefully, and seems pleased. They join Brian and Adam. Both women nuzzle affectionately into their husbands' sides. Chet and Suda bow to them.

CHET

Welcome to the White Lotus.

SUDA

Sawasdee.

Suda proffers the tray of drinks; Tiffany takes one.

TIFFANY

Thank you! Oh my gosh: how gorgeous is this?

She immediately takes out her phone to document it. Just as she's about to take a sip, Adam pushes her hand down.

ADAM

Excuse me? Is there alcohol in this?

SUDA

No sir: just fresh lime juice with sugarcane.

ADAM

Oh okay. That's fine...

TIFFANY

Babe, it's fresh lime juice!

Adam removes his hand and Tiffany takes a sip.

TIFFANY (CONT'D)

MMM! Oh my GOSH: you have to try this!

ADAM

I'm good.

TIFFANY

Babe, it's un-real!

ADAM

Maybe later...

TIFFANY

But just have a little sip now! It's so good!

ADAM

(pissy)

Can we please just go get settled in Tiff? Honestly.

TIFFANY

(chastened)

No, for sure. Let's go!

CHET

If you'd like to follow my colleague, he will show you all to your suites.

Brian, Adam, and Mai all follow after the Porter and make their way toward the entrance.

Tiffany lingers behind, pulls out her phone shoots some additional footage of the glass in her hand. Adam waits impatiently in the entrance.

ADAM

(whining)

TIFFANY

Sorry! Coming!

Tiffany holds out her phone and slowly turns around in a circle to get a 360 view of everything, then sprints after her family.

Chet once again leans over to Suda.

CHET

(whispering)

Mormons...

Suda looks at him quizzically.

CHET (CONT'D)

A Christian sect that believes in...I don't know, actually.

The fourth van pulls up in front of the entrance. Chet leans over to Suda.

CHET (CONT'D)

I think it's them...

The van comes to a stop. A porter steps forward and opens the door.

And there she is: BELINDA LINDSEY.

Since we saw her last in Season 1, she's had a promotion — Group Director of Spa and Wellness Operations — and a glow-up to match. She looks fucking phenomenal.

Trailing a few steps behind her is her colleague (technically her superior) TIMO LAINE (40s, Finnish, achingly handsome). He's the Managing Director Asia Pacific for the White Lotus.

Belinda confidently strides up to Chet and extends her hand.

BELINDA

Belinda Lindsey, Group Director of Spa and Wellness Operations.

CHET

Ms. Lindsey. Welcome. So nice to finally meet you. We've been anxiously awaiting your arrival.

Suda places her palms together and bows her head.

SUDA

Sawasdee.

Belinda mirrors Suda's gesture, then helps herself to one of the drinks on the tray.

Timo trails behind, ambling at a leisurely pace. He stares around dreamily, as if contemplating something very profound. Finally, he catches up and extends his hand to Chet.

TIMO

Timo Laine. Pleasure.

BELINDA

Timo is the Managing Director for Asia Pacific...

TIMO

(chuckling)

All these silly little titles they give out to keep us happy...who can bother to keep track?

Timo helps himself to a drink from Suda's tray and takes a sip.

TIMO (CONT'D)

Delicious. Thank you. Not too sweet.

Timo looks at Suda carefully. Very carefully. For an uncomfortably long time. Then he looks over to Chet. Then back to Suda. Then to Belinda.

TIMO (CONT'D)

There's an uncanny resemblance between them, isn't there?

Belinda, assuming the racist worst, shoots Timo a horrified glare.

BELINDA

Timo...

Suda starts to laugh. Then Chet.

CHET

I should hope so. We're twins.

BELINDA

Oh!

TIMO

I knew it. What fun it must be, to work together everyday, side by side. You must share such a special bond.

CHET

Yes. We're very fortunate. We've always done everything together. Absolutely everything.

TIMO

How wonderful. I'm so fascinated by twins. What a beguiling kind of intimacy...

Timo once again looks at Suda, Suda in turn looks at Chet, and Chet looks at Timo. A frisson of...something passes between the three of them.

BELINDA

Umm, so...shall we head inside?

Chet smiles warmly then gestures to one of the Porters.

CHET

Of course. My colleague will show you to your rooms now. And perhaps I can arrange a treatment in our wellness centre for later in the day if you'd like? BELINDA

That's so thoughtful. But I think We'll just spend the day settling in and familiarising ourselves with everything.

Belinda leans in and touches Chet's arm warmly.

BELINDA (CONT'D)

(hushed)

Please don't feel you need to go to any extra trouble for us...we're just here to learn and observe.

CHET

Of course. We would only ever treat you as we would treat any other quest.

(beat)

But please do let us know if there is anything at all that we can do to make your time with us more pleasant and efficient.

Belinda once again bows to Chet.

BELINDA

Thank you so much.

The Porter leads Belinda and Timo inside the hotel.

SUDA

He's peculiar...

CHET

You can afford to be strange when you look like that...

SUDA

Do you fancy him?

CHET

Do you?

(beat)

He's very important. We have to keep him happy.

SUDA

And the American?

CHET

Easier to please, I suspect.

INT. LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Belinda and Timo walk through the lobby behind the Porter. Belinda walks at an efficient clip, while Timo ambles at a leisurely pace. She looks over her shoulder, notices he's fallen behind, and shoots him an expectant/annoyed glance...which he doesn't notice. She stops and waits for him to catch up.

BELINDA

So...

Timo finally looks up.

TIMC

(distractedly)

Hmm?

BELINDA

I was thinking we could meet in about an hour to review everything?

Timo continues to look around dreamily, only half listening to Belinda.

TIMO

Hmm?

BELINDA

Let's meet in an hour?

TIMO

Okay...

(beat)

To...?

BELINDA

To...work?

TIMO

Oh. Yes. Sure. Right!

Timo stops at a large round table in the centre of the lobby. In the middle of the table is a shallow clay vessel filled with water, atop which floats a single lotus blossom. He admires it reverently. Belinda joins him; she's considerably less impressed.

TIMO (CONT'D)

The White Lotus. It's been here since the hotel opened, nearly forty years ago. This same one.

BELINDA

I didn't think they lived that long...

TIMO

They have no upper-bound lifespan, if cared for properly.

Belinda shoots him an incredulous look.

BELINDA

I don't know if that's true...

TIMO

Every night a dome is placed over the flower to simulate nightfall, and overnight, the bloom closes in on itself and submerges beneath the water to rest. In the morning when the dome is removed, it re-emerges: the same bloom as before, technically, but renewed; refreshed; reborn.

BELINDA

(unmoved)

How poetic.

INT. BRIAN & MAI'S ROOM - DAY

A PORTER opens the door to Brian and Mai's suite and gestures for them to enter. They look around the room approvingly.

MAI

Oh Bri...it's incredible.

Brian pulls out his wallet and hands the Porter a \$20 bill.

BRIAN

Is USD okay?

PORTER

Yes, of course sir. Thank you very much sir. Thank you.

The Porter takes the money and clasps it reverently between his hands and bows slightly.

BRIAN

You're very welcome, son.

PORTER

Thank you.

The Porter excuses himself and gingerly shuts the door behind $\mbox{him.}$

Mai meanwhile has stepped out onto the private terrace.

MAI (0.C.)

Brian? There's a pool.

Mai reappears in the room.

MAI (CONT'D)

Oh my gosh...this is just...

Mai continues to glide around the room, admiring everything. She stops at a small table where a spread has been laid out for them: fresh fruit, desserts, a bottle of champagne and a small card addressed to them.

MAI (CONT'D)

Brian! Look at all this...oh wow...

Brian looks over at the table. A concerned look passes across his face. Oblivious to his reaction, Mai picks up the card and opens it.

MAI (CONT'D)

(reading)

"Dear Mr. and Mrs. Scott. We are delighted to welcome you to the White Lotus Chiang Mai. Please do not hesitate to reach out to myself directly should there be anything you need or desire to make your stay with us a more serene and restorative one. Warmest regards, Chet Bho, General Manager."

Brian comes up beside Mai and grabs the bottle of champagne.

BRIAN

They left us champagne.

MAI

Wasted on us...

BRIAN

But they must know that we don't drink...

MAI

I'm sure it's just something they do for all their guests.

BRTAN

But that's something they should know.

MAI

I'm sure they'll take it later when they see we're not drinking it. It won't go to waste.

BRIAN

BRIAN (CONT'D)

I don't like the temptation being around.

MAI

Temptation? What temptation?

Brian looks at her pointedly.

BRIAN

It's in the moments when you think you've conquered temptation; when pridefulness starts to make you feel invincible: that's when the enemy strikes. He's always hiding in plain sight: waiting, waiting, waiting for us to slip up: one little mistake; one little lapse: that's all it takes. Believing it could never happen to you is the first step down a very dangerous path.

MAI

(sighs)

So we'll send it back.

BRIAN

We'll send it back.

INT. AÏDA'S ROOM - DAY

Aïda sits on her bed as she unpacks her suitcase. Stacked beside here are identical white shirts, cotton camisoles, trousers, silk scarves, socks, underwear, and bras: precisely seven of each. There's also a small jewellery case and a toiletries bag.

She starts to hang the shirts, pants, and scarves in the wardrobe, carefully smoothing each piece and arranging the hangers just so. As she does, her phone PINGS.

She glances over briefly, but ignores it and continues hanging up her clothes. It PINGS again. And again. And three more times after that.

She walks over to the bed and picks up the phone: there are six messages from "E." She dismisses all the notifications, then tosses her phone to the side and returns to unpacking.

INT. TIFFANY & ADAM'S ROOM - DAY

Adam sits on the bed doing work on his laptop. Tiffany emerges from the bathroom, freshly showered, wearing just a towel. She waits for a second for Adam to notice her, but he doesn't. She walks over to the bed and perches on the edge.

She looks over at Adam expectantly, but he still doesn't acknowledge her. Finally she shuffles over and starts to stroke his chest. He flinches slightly at her touch.

ADAM

Hi?

TTFFANY

Hi...

Tiffany continues to run her fingers across Adam's chest. Adam continues to ignore her and fixate on his computer.

TIFFANY (CONT'D)

Whatcha doing?

ADAM

Just catching up on work emails.

TIFFANY

Babe! You're on holiday...

ADAM

No; you and your parents are on holiday. I'm working while on holiday.

TIFFANY

Well, technically I'm working too...

Adam rolls his eyes.

ADAM

Sure...

TIFFANY

Babe! I am! This is work! (sheepish)

We're here because of my work...

ADAM

Tiff: I could've afforded to pay for this vacation. For us and your parents.

TIFFANY

That's not what I'm saying. Of course. It's just...

Tiffany pouts for a second, but quickly resumes stroking Adam's chest and staring at him pleadingly: not that he notices. Eventually her hand starts to move down his torso toward his groin. Just as her fingers reach the band of his underwear, he jerks away violently.

ADAM

(shouting)

JESUS!

(catching himself)
Tiff, what're you doing?

TIFFANY

You seem stressed...

ADAM

I'm not stressed. I just need to send these emails. But you distracting me \underline{is} kinda stressing me out.

TIFFANY

Well...finish up those emails, then maybe I could help you relax...get into holiday mode...

Tiffany returns her hand to Adam's torso and starts to playfully dance her fingers across his stomach.

ADAM

(tersely)

Tiff...I'm tired...and I just showered and—

TIFFANY

But we need to keep trying...it's been months and...

ADAM

And whose fault is that?

Tiffany looks at Adam, wounded and confused. Her eyes start to well with tears. Adam closes his laptop and takes Tiffany's hand in his.

ADAM (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, Tiff. I'm sorry. I didn't mean that. I love you so much.

TIFFANY

We just have to keep trying...

ADAM

I know. You're right. You're always right. And you're so patient with me.

(beat)

That's how I know you're going to make the best mom.

TIFFANY

Awww...Babe...

Tiffany melts into Adam and starts stroking his chest again.

TIFFANY (CONT'D)

And you're going to make the best Daddy! And I so want to give you that; to give you a family.

ADAM

I know. And you will; we will. It hasn't been our time just yet, but God has a plan for us.

TIFFANY

I guess.

(sighs)

No, you're right.

(beat)

You know: we don't have anywhere to be until dinner...

ADAM

Good. Plenty of time for a nap. (yawns)

I'm exhausted.

Adam leans in and give Tiffany a peck on the cheek then returns to his emails. Tiffany just sits there, confused and sad: like a chastened little girl.

INT. THE MORGANS' VILLA - THROUGHOUT - LATER

Georgette unpacks her luggage alone in the main room of their villa. She hangs up her clothes on a large rolling garment rack which is already nearly full. She pulls out a badly creased dress and steps back to appraise it. She winces.

GEORGETTE

(muttering)

Shit.

Georgette walks over to the window and throws open the curtains. She looks at the dress in the daylight. It's even more creased than it first appeared.

GEORGETTE (CONT'D)

Fuck.

GEORGETTE (CONT'D)

(shouting)

David, doll: have you seen the steamer anywhere?

There's no response.

Georgette flicks at the curtains disapprovingly.

GEORGETTE (CONT'D)

(muttering)

Hideous.

(beat)

Good quality though.

(beat)

David?

There's no reply.

GEORGETTE (CONT'D)

David?

Georgette walks over the bedroom. David is asleep on the bed. He lies on his back, rigid and perfectly still. He looks serene, almost beatific.

Georgette stops in her tracks. A split second look of terror passes across her face until she sees his chest decisively rise and fall. She relaxes and watches him for a moment, then quietly leaves the room, shutting the door behind her.

Out in the main room, Mandy has emerged from her bedroom. She's still engrossed in her phone.

MANDY

Mom, what the fuck's wrong now?

GEORGETTE

(hissing)

Shh!!! Your father's asleep.

MANDY

Did you check to make sure he's still alive?

GEORGETTE

Don't be morbid.

MANDY

I've never seen anyone sleep so soundly.

GEORGETTE

He has a clear conscience.

MANDY

Maybe he shouldn't...

GEORGETTE

You're becoming really goddamn tedious, Amanda.

MANDY

Calm down, mother. I love you and Daddy. But I hate what you represent.

GEORGETTE

Which is what exactly?

MANDY

(archly)

I dunno? Not giving a damn about anything outside of yourselves? Defending systems of oppression because you happen to have personally profited by them? Collapsing into cynicism and insisting that that somehow makes you morally and intellectually superior to anyone else who would deign to ask why they fuck the world is the way it is?

GEORGETTE

Your father and I aren't cynical: we're realists. And we know precisely how, and why, and what the world is; we see it all too clearly. And we've made our peace with it. And yes: profited along the way. Handsomely. Deservedly. You're welcome.

MANDY

You know what Mom? You're right!
Fuck doing shit about shit! The
world's on fire; let's just all
melt into our basest instincts and
the most abject carnal pleasures!
(beat)

In fact, give me Daddy's AMEX! I'm going to go buy a tight little dress that hugs my hips and cradles my ass and pushes my titties up to my chin. And I'll slink all around the hotel bar until I catch the eye of some dumb, awful, hideously rich, white man. And I'll drop to my knees right there in the fucking bar and pull out his dick - his thin, flaccid, crusty mushroom dick - and I'll cradle it in my hands and look at it, and him, with all the love and admiration in the world. And then: you can finally be at peace knowing that I've come to my senses and accepted that my life's work and my highest purpose will now and forevermore be pleasing, and honouring, and servicing this rich white man and his disgusting white dick.

(beat)
Would that make you happy?

GEORGETTE

(unbothered)

Deliriously.

Georgette pulls a shirt from the garment rack and dangles it in front of her.

GEORGETTE (CONT'D)

This would be nice for you, for dinner.

Mandy assesses the shirt. (It would be nice for her).

MANDY

(sighs)

I'm going out.

GEORGETTE

Mmm. Sounds like you have a lot to

Mandy stomps out of the room and slams the door behind her.

INT. CORRIDOR - DAY

Belinda knocks on Timo's door. There's no response. She looks impatiently at her watch, then checks her phone. She knocks again. Finally, the door swings open. Timo stands there, nude but for a tiny, tight speedo that strains mightily to contain all of...him.

TIMO

Hello!

BELINDA

(taken aback)

Oh! Sorry I-

(beat)

Am I interrupting?

TIMO

Not at all.

Timo notices Belinda noticing his swimsuit.

TIMO (CONT'D)

I was just about to go swimming.

BELINDA

Right...

(beat)

Weren't we going to meet now?

TIMO

Oh; right. Yes. Right. Was there anything in particular you'd like to discuss?

BELINDA

Yes. Plenty of things...

TIMO

Like...?

BELINDA

Well, everything? Like, for example, how are we going to structure our audit?

TIMO

Hmm. Good question. I think it can be sort of...ad hoc.

BELINDA

Ad hoc?

TIMO

Mmm.

BELINDA

Okay. But within that "ad hoc" framework, will we be making recommendations or just presenting our findings?

 $exttt{TIMO}$

Oh, I think making recommendations, definitely.

(gently mocking)
I recommend that we make recommendations!

BELINDA

Okay...

(beat)

And how thorough should they be? Should we prepare detailed action plans or more general suggestions of how one *could* proceed?

TIMO

Hmm. Detailed...what Was it?

BELINDA

Action plans?

TIMO

Right! Yes, let's do that. People appreciate details.

BELINDA

Great...and who we should speak with? Who have we been cleared to speak with? Do we have permission to speak to anyone on staff or only department heads?

TIMO

Hmm. I don't know...I think let's start by speaking to the department heads and then maybe they can advise who we should speak with? Or not speak with...

BELINDA

Right...

TIMO

Anything else?

BELINDA

No...I think that's it.

(beat)

Um, I suppose could start by drafting a set of planned deliverables?

TIMO

Great! Wonderful! Yes!

(beat)

There is a lot to do...quite a lot to be done.

BELINDA

There is...

TIMO

But...after so much travel...perhaps we just rest today, and make a fresh start tomorrow?

BELINDA

Tomorrow?

TIMO

Yes. Tomorrow morning? First thing!

BELINDA

Sure...and in the meantime...?

TIMO

Hmm. Well...you could make an itinerary?

BELINDA

For our meeting tomorrow or for our entire trip?

TIMO

Um...both? Yes, both would be good!

Belinda leans against the door frame in exasperation/confusion, blocking Timo's way. Timo is slightly unnerved by this.

TIMO (CONT'D)

So...I'm going to go now...

Belinda looks at Timo's nearly-nude state in confusion and disbelief.

BELINDA

Are you ready?

Timo looks at Belinda with an equal measure of confusion and disbelief.

TIMO

Yes, of course.

BELINDA

You don't need...I don't know, your phone or a...

Belinda gestures vaguely at his groin.

BELINDA (CONT'D)

Towel?

TIMO

hallway and slams the door shut behind him.

No...they'll have towels at the pool of course!

(beat)

And a phone to go swimming? How funny!

(affected American accent)
Life hack you guys: take your phone

swimming!

Timo chuckles at his little riposte, then steps out into the

TIMO (CONT'D)

You're very, very diligent, Belinda. A pleasure to work with. But you must learn to relax.

Timo pats Belinda on the back, then strides off down the hall.

INT. LOBBY - A LITTLE LATER

Chet stands at one end of the front desk, calmly surveilling the goings-on of the lobby. It's quiet, with only a few quests passing through.

He turns around and is suddenly face-to-face with Brian, who's holding the unopened bottle of champagne from the room. Brian sets the bottle of champagne down on the counter.

CHET

Mr. Scott! How are you finding
everything?

BRIAN

Fine. But, well, my wife and I are a little troubled by something...

CHET

Oh no...

BRIAN

We found this in our room...

CHET

Yes...

BRIAN

What was it doing there?

CHET

Oh! It's just a small gesture from us to welcome you to the White Lotus.

(whispers)

Entirely complimentary.

BRIAN

I'm not concerned about the cost.
It's champagne, no?

CHET

Yes, of course...the very best champagne, I can assure you.

BRIAN

My wife and I don't drink.

A look of confusion/consternation passes across Chet's face.

CHET

Ah, yes of course. My sincere apologies Mr. Scott. I'm sure it was just an unfortunate oversight.

BRIAN

Yes, that's what my wife said.

CHET

And she's exactly right. I do apologise again. To you and your wife.

An uncomfortable silence ensues. Eventually Chet gestures to the bottle of champagne.

CHET (CONT'D)

Would you like me to take that back?

BRIAN

Please.

Chet takes the bottle. Another uncomfortable silence.

Just then, Timo appears in the lobby. Post-swim, he's glistening with water droplets and the residue of sun cream. His exquisite physique (and extravagant bulge) set off a minor but perceptible stir in the lobby.

Brian immediately clocks Timo and stares, very much in spite of himself. Chet notices Brian noticing Timo, and is similarly transfixed. They both track Timo as he strides across the lobby until he disappears around a corner. Their gazes meet. Brian flushes. Chet smiles warmly; knowingly.

CHET

I'd be very pleased to send up something else for you to enjoy. What might your wife enjoy?.

BRIAN

Oh, um, anything. Thank you.

CHET

Wonderful. I'll have something sent up straight away. And once again, please do accept my sincere apologies for the oversight.

BRIAN

Yes, uh, thank you.

INT. HOTEL BOUTIQUE - AFTERNOON

Georgette browses the hotel's boutique. An austere, dimly lit space filled with a meticulously curated assortment of useless but exquisite *objets*. Georgette is alone save for a SHOP ATTENDANT who rigidly stands guard in the corner.

As she assesses one of the aforementioned dresses, Georgette's eye is caught by another customer entering the boutique: Aïda.

The Attendant nods and bows to Aïda.

ATTENDANT

Madam. Welcome...

AÏDA

Thank you.

Aïda breezes past the Attendant without making eye contact. She starts to idly browse the wares. She stops at the jewellery case and leans over to examine a necklace. The attendant swiftly glides over.

SHOP ATTENDANT

Would you like to take a look?

AÏDA

Please.

The Attendant opens the case and retrieves the necklace, and places it gingerly on a velvet-lined tray. Aïda picks it up to examine it. She's pleased. She gestures to the Attendant.

AÏDA (CONT'D)

May I?

SHOP ATTENDANT

Of course.

The shop attendant takes the necklace, drapes it across Aïda's collarbones, then steps behind her to fasten the clasp.

SHOP ATTENDANT (CONT'D)

If you'd like to take a look?

The Attendant gestures to a nearby mirror. Aïda nods and walks over. She looks at herself approvingly and makes a few small adjustments to how the necklace is sitting.

Meanwhile, in the reflection of the mirror, Georgette watches Aïda intently. Eventually their gazes meet. Aïda quickly looks away. A second later she looks back: Georgette is still staring at her. Again, she looks away. She looks back, but Georgette has disappeared from View. Aïda turns around and Georgette is suddenly standing right there.

AÏDA

(startled)

Oh!

GEORGETTE

That is absolutely stunning on you. Sorry. I just had to come over and tell you.

AÏDA

Thank you. That's very kind. (to Attendant)

How much?

SHOP ATTENDANT

150,000 Baht.

GEORGETTE

Oh! That's auspicious.

AÏDA

Why?

GEORGETTE

Three-eight-three-eight-three-eight?

ΑÏDA

I don't believe in that sort of thing. I don't like these silly little games people play with their money. That you must find omens or otherwise justify yourself...For what? To whom? You have money? Spend it how you choose!

Aïda looks Georgette up and down.

AÏDA (CONT'D)

And you do have money, non?

Georgette swoons a little.

GEORGETTE

You're quite refreshing, you know that?

AÏDA

I'm just blunt.

(archly)

A bitch by any other name.

GEORGETTE

I've certainly been called as much...

Aïda shoots her a knowing look.

AÏDA

Yes, I can imagine you have.

Georgette isn't sure whether to be offended.

AÏDA (CONT'D)

A compliment. From one bitch to another.

Aïda unfastens the necklace and examines it once more. She passes it to the Attendant.

AÏDA (CONT'D)

Yes. I'll take it please.

Georgette clasps her hands together excitedly.

GEORGETTE

Fabulous.

(beat)

I'm Georgette. Georgette Morgan.

Aïda extends her hand.

ΑÏDA

Aïda Aubert.

GEORGETTE

Enchantée.

AÏDA

Vous parlez français?

GEORGETTE

Oh no! Not a damn word.

ΑÏDA

Your name though...it's quite French, non?
(beat)

GEORGETTE

I'm named after a famous actress that no one remembers anymore: Georgette Harvey. It's all quite common, I'm afraid.

AÏDA

That doesn't sound common at all.

The Attendant gestures for Aïda to follow her to the till. Aïda follows the Attendant, and Georgette follows them both.

GEORGETTE

So...

ΑÏDA

Excuse me?

GEORGETTE

Who are you? What do you do? Where do you live? What brings you here?

ΑÏDA

Ah, how quickly you succumb to your American instincts.

GEORGETTE

Sorry.

The Attendant once again presents the necklace to Aïda.

SHOP ATTENDANT

Madam. May I take payment?

AÏDA

Yes of course.

Aïda passes her credit card to the Attendant then turns back to Georgette.

AÏDA (CONT'D)

That answers your questions?

GEORGETTE

Yes, but I have one more...

Aïda gestures for her to continue.

GEORGETTE (CONT'D)

Who are you travelling with? Husband? Wife? Friends? Lover?

AÏDA

No. No husband. No wife. No friends or lovers. I'm travelling alone.

GEORGETTE

That's bliss.

(beat)

So never married?

AÏDA

Another question. I was. But my husband struggled to make a life with a woman who had such strong convictions.

GEORGETTE

They always do.

AÏDA

Yes. It was all very predictable. In the end, our marriage was undone by all the oldest clichés about men and women. An insecure man and a dissatisfied woman: how dull.

GEORGETTE

Well, you're here now. And free to do whatever you like.

AÏDA

I suppose so.

(beat)

But what is it they say? "The cost of freedom is loneliness?"

GEORGETTE

So you're lonely?

Aïda contemplates this for a moment.

AÏDA

Actually not at all. I don't know why I said that...just a thing to say, I suppose.

The Attendant hands Aïda's credit card back to her and presents an impeccably wrapped packet with a slight bow.

SHOP ATTENDANT

Madam.

AÏDA

Thank you.

Aïda takes the packet then looks at Georgette nervously and somewhat expectantly.

GEORGETTE

When you get to my age, you start to realise that that's all life amounts to most days: just grasping around for the right thing to say to fill the silence. Or anything, really.

Aïda smirks approvingly.

AÏDA

Bravo.

EXT. POOL - LATER

Mandy lies by the pool. She's attempting to relax, but looks profoundly uncomfortable and even agitated as she does so. Eventually, her attention is captured by something on the other side of the pool: it's Tiffany, shooting more content.

Mandy removes her sunglasses and leans forward to take a closer look. Tiffany holds her phone out high above her, cranes her neck and cocks her head to one side, and stares adoringly into the camera. Mandy looks on contemptuously.

Just then, Mandy's phone PINGS with a notification. She ignores it. Another PING. Then another. And another. And another. And-

She grabs her phone and scrolls through the notifications. She clicks into the most recent one: a message that contains a link. She clicks on it and a New York *Times* Op-Ed pops up. The headline reads: "The Centre Did Not Hold: The intellectual incoherence and moral indecency of the New Left has been laid bare. Does anyone care?"

Mandy quickly skims the article.

MANDY

Oh, bitch...

She keeps reading, and a big, broad, almost crazed smile starts to spread across her face.

MANDY (CONT'D)

(gleeful)

Fuck fuck fuck fuck!!!

She gets up, then starts to pace frantically back and forth. After a moment, she holds up her phone and starts recording a video.

MANDY (CONT'D)

Babe, you might think you're having a good day, but no one is having as good a day as me. This bitch, right the fuck here, has been name checked — officially — as a menace to polite society by some some crusty, dusty hhh-white hhh-woman in the pages of what? Thee New York Times.

Across the pool, Mandy's monologue has captured Tiffany's attention. Tiffany sets down her phone and starts to watch Mandy, who is oblivious to the attention.

MANDY (CONT'D)

But what they do not understand; what they cannot understand is that with their words of confusion, and ignorance, and hatred, they are in fact anointing me. Their fuckery is my baptismal water, and with it, I am reborn the fuck anew.

Tiffany continues to watch Mandy, transfixed but unnerved.

MANDY (CONT'D)

You could not POSSIBLY have the gall, Karen; the audacity, Becky; the tomfoolery, Stacy, to think you could come for me like this and succeed!

(à la Nicki Minaj)
Like, I mean, I don't even know why
you girls bother at this point.
Like, give it up: it's me. I win.
You lose. Hahahahahaha. Oh shit.
Haha. Yo.

Mandy stops recording, presses "Post" then tosses her phone to the side, puts her sunglasses back on, lays down on the lounger, and softly CHUCKLES to herself with a manic glee.

Tiffany continues to stare at Mandy: confused; destabilised; in awe.

INT. SPA - AFTERNOON

Belinda walks into the spa. It's serene, silent, and completely empty. She approaches the front desk and peers around to see if there's anyone there.

BELINDA

Hello?

There's no response. Belinda ventures a little further and peers down the corridor leading to the treatment rooms. She walks ahead a few paces. There's still no sign of anyone.

BELINDA (CONT'D)

Hi?

Suddenly, from behind her, footsteps.

WOMAN (O.S.)

Belinda?

Belinda turns around to see who's addressing her.

And you guys...

It's Laura Fucking Dern...

...as <u>AMY FUCKING JELLICOE</u> (of "Enlightened")

Welcome to the Mike White Cinematic Universe, officially.

AMY

Belinda! Hi! Amy Jellicoe. I'm the Wellness Coordinator here at the White Lotus. Yeah! Wow! So great to finally meet you!

Amy bows overly deeply.

AMY (CONT'D)

Sawasdee-ka. Welcome.

BELINDA

Hi! Amy! Oh! I-

(beat)

So nice to meet you too!

Amy rises from her bow, then extends her arms for a hug. Belinda hesitantly accepts and the two women embrace. Amy wraps her arms tightly around Belinda, rests her head on her chest, and closes her eyes. Belinda tenses and limply pats Amy on the back. Amy melts even further into Belinda.

AMY

Mmmmm...

(dreamily)

Okay....

Amy opens her eyes and releases Belinda from her embrace.

AMY (CONT'D)

(practically orgasmic)

Wow. I mean...did you feel that?

BELINDA

Oh . . . I —

AMY

That was phenomenal.

BELINDA

Oh . . .

AMY

Wow. WOW. You are the real deal, Belinda.

Amy carefully appraises Belinda for a moment, then she grabs both her hands and stares directly at her.

AMY (CONT'D)

A natural born healer. My God! There's this intense energy that just radiates off of you like...whoa!

BELINDA

Oh wow...Thank you...that's so kind!

AMY

Thank you. (beat)

You know, when I first heard you were coming, I was worried you'd be some corporate asshole like all the rest of them. You know, slashing budgets and indiscriminately sacking people and stripping the place for parts so you can sell the carcass to some fucking private equity fund in Qatar!

BELINDA

Oh! Well...that's definitely not why—

AMY

Oh I know. I've done my research. I know <u>all</u> about you. And Belinda? (beat)

(MORE)

AMY (CONT'D)

I was blown away. I mean, talk about an incredible journey! I was just like: Finally! Someone who gets it! Finally, someone who is going to approach this role with compassion, and decency, and some humanity! Like, we're in the business of wellness but we're not actually making people well...

(whispering)

We're fucking snake oil salesmen ...

BELINDA

Right. Well...I do agree we've lost
sight of certain ideals that—

AMY

"Lost sight of???" Belinda: we're stumbling around in the dark, blindfolded! It's insane!!!

BELINDA

Yeah...

(beat)

You know, when this role was offered to me, I was definitely disillusioned with...everything. But I thought, I can either leave and try and build something on my own, from scratch, with no resources, or—

AMY

You can try to enact change from within the system.

BELINDA

Exactly!

AMY

I so get you. We are so on the same page.

BELINDA

Yeah...

(beat)

So, Amy, tell me: how long have you been in this role?

AMY

Oh gosh, let's see...right after my mother died I-

BELINDA

Oh! I'm so sorry...

AMY

It's honestly <u>so</u> fine. Her passing was such a blessing in disguise — for both of us. I wanted her to be a different kind of mother, she always wanted me to be a different kind of daughter, blah blah blah. But in the end we were able to find a really beautiful kind of acceptance for each other.

BELINDA

Well...mothers can be hard. Especially women of a certain generation.

AMY

Right? So much unprocessed trauma that just got fucking dumped on us...

(beat)

Anyways, after she was gone, I just realised that this was it: this was my no-or-never moment where either I rebuild everything from the ground up and completely re-program my life or...just live out the rest of my days among the wreckage!

(beat)

So I sold everything and came over here, and decided to give myself the gift of becoming whole. Finally! And I've never looked back.

BELINDA

Wow. That's incredible...

AMY

Thank you.

(beat)

Meanwhile, if I had held on to that shitty little house in Riverside, I would have been set for life. But fuck it! My sanity is worth more than the 1.7 million I left on the table because my listing agent was a fucking moron.

(beat)

The housing market in California has gone absolutely bananas! It's disgusting honestly.

BELINDA

Wow. Yeah. Um...so that's been how long now?

AMY

About five years. Give or take.

An awkward, vaguely stunned silence ensues.

Amy touches Belinda's arm in an overly familiar way.

AMY (CONT'D)

You know Belinda, I think we're going to make some big changes around here, the two of us. I can just feel it.

EXT. RESTAURANT TERRACE - EVENING

Georgette, David and Mandy sit at a large table on quiet, secluded section of the restaurant's terrace. David is characteristically quiet; he stares off into the distance at nothing in particular: contented but faraway. Every so often he looks affectionately at Georgette, who's busy craning her head every which way to scan the entire crowd. Mandy is preoccupied on her phone.

GEORGETTE

There's a lot more Chinese here than I was expecting...

That gets Mandy's attention.

MANDY

I'm in hell. I'm going to set myself on fucking fire.

Georgette peruses her menu, non-plussed.

GEORGETTE

Well that's redundant.

At this, David perks up and interjects.

DAVID

Let's just try and not antagonise each other, alright? Just for tonight.

Georgette warmly strokes David's arm.

GEORGETTE

Your father's exactly right. (beat)

But I don't know why you're so quick to defend the Chinese...
(whispering)

They're very racist!

Mandy scoffs incredulously.

MANDY

I simply cannot.

They all fall back into silence.

Georgette continues to look around the terrace. In the distance she spots Aïda being seated. She gestures excitedly in her direction.

GEORGETTE

Oh!

Aïda sees Georgette and waves in return, rather more reluctantly.

GEORGETTE (CONT'D)

I made a friend this afternoon...

Mandy looks over at Aïda and clocks her reticence.

MANDY

Does she know that?

Georgette gets up from her seat and beckons Aïda over. Aïda feigns refusal for a moment, but eventually relents and walks over. She approaches the table hesitantly.

ΑΪDΑ

Hello...

Georgette stands up to greet her and immediately pulls her into an embrace. She kisses Aïda's cheeks once, twice, thrice.

Georgette gestures to David and Mandy. David stands up to greet her. Mandy remains seated.

GEORGETTE

This is my family. My husband, David. My daughter, Mandy.

DAVID MANDY

Hey.

Hello.

AÏDA

Enchantée.

GEORGETTE

Please, won't you join us?

Aïda freezes.

AÏDA

Oh no...I couldn't possibly interrupt your meal.

GEORGETTE

Oh God, please do. My daughter's on the verge of self-immolation, so if you're lucky, you'll get dinner and a show.

AÏDA

I don't understand...

DAVID

It's nothing. Please join us; really.

GEORGETTE

Honestly. You can't eat alone.

Aïda stands uncomfortably for a few seconds, equivocating. There's no way out.

AÏDA

Okay, yes. Fine. Thank you.

GEORGETTE

Wonderful!

David walks around the table and pulls out a chair for Aïda next to Georgette. She takes a seat.

ΑÏDA

Thank you.

Georgette sits down and David returns to his seat. Mandy stares across the table at Aïda and appraises her intently, and not at all disapprovingly.

MANDY

Are you Muslim?

GEORGETTE

Mandy! Forgive my daughter. She has an irrepressible urge to slot everyone she meets into her grand matrix of oppression...

AÏDA

?It's fine. It's a perfectly natural thing to do: categorising people; creating tribes. How else are we to understand each other?

(beat)

But to answer your question: no. I'm an atheist.

GEORGETTE

Fascinating!

ΑÏDA

Not at all. My beliefs are simply the absence of belief: quite boring. Faith is what's fascinating. To believe in something so strongly in the absence of any proof...

Mandy gestures to Aida's headscarf

MANDY

So that's just for...

ΑÏDA

Style? Yes; I suppose. But I also have a condition.

GEORGETTE

(whispering)

Alopecia?

Aïda smirks and leans in, conspiratorially.

AÏDA

(whispering)

Cancer.

GEORGETTE

Oh my God. I'm...I'm...

AÏDA

Please don't trouble yourself to find the right reaction: I've made peace long ago. For me, it is as unremarkable as...the colour of my eyes. Now, it is mostly just a thing that affects other people's perception of me.

Georgette shuffles her chair over and clasps Aïda's hand.

GEORGETTE

But you're okay? You've gotten good care? You're in remission?

ΑÏDA

Good care? Yes.

(beat)

Remission? Non.

GEORGETTE

What do you mean?

AÏDA

That I will die.

A stunned silence falls over the table.

Georgette squeezes AÏda's hand even tighter

GEORGETTE

Three of my best girlfriends have gone through this. They were given months, but they fought like hell and they beat it. You need a second, third, fourth, fifth opinion.

Aïda smiles impassively and removes her hand from Georgette's grip. She picks up her glass and takes a sip.

AÏDA

It's not one doctor; it's the second and the third and the fourth and the fifth. And it's not a battle; it's simply an illness. Bad cells that kill good cells are multiplying, and soon there will come a point when the bad overtakes the good, and then I — this — will all be over.

MANDY

Fuck.

Georgette pulls out her phone and brandishes it before Aïda.

GEORGETTE

I know the best oncologist in America! Honest to God: let me make the call right now!

Aida gently pushes the phone away.

AÏDA

I have complete peace within. It is only outside of me that there is chaos and anger and confusion. Other people cannot accept what is happening to me, but I can. And I have.

DAVID

That's lovely.

Georgette smacks him.

GEORGETTE

What's wrong with you??

AÏDA

(laughs)

No: he's exactly right! Not too many people have the luxury of knowing essentially when and how it will end.

MANDY

Unless you kill yourself.

ΑÏDA

True.

GEORGETTE

(hissing)

Amanda. That's vile. I'm so sorry about her...

AÏDA

Not at all. She simply said a true thing. You can be unsettled by the truth, but never offended. And I am neither.

A dense silence once again descends upon the table.

AÏDA (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I think I've made your dinner very strange.

GEORGETTE

No...

ΑÏDA

Yes. But however strange, we are all here, together. So let's have a toast?

Aïda raises her glass. The others follow suit.

AÏDA (CONT'D)

(in French)

"Friends for a meal are easy to find; friends until the end of life are difficult to find. But tonight, I have found both."

David understands and chuckles.

GEORGETTE

What does it mean?

ΑÏDA

Something like "may we always be so lucky as to have friends to share a meal with."

GEORGETTE

Well: cheers to that.

INT. BRIAN & MAI'S ROOM - EVENING

Brian and Mai lie in bed, each on their own side, engrossed in their phones. Together but apart.

Eventually Mai stops scrolling and pauses on something that makes her smile. She holds her phone out to Brian, across the divide.

BRIAN

Hmm?

MAT

Looks like Tiff and Adam had a nice dinner...

Brian takes Mai's phone and looks at the picture in question: Tiffany and Adam, all smiles at dinner, taken just moments ago, already posted.

BRIAN

Very nice. Food looks great.

Brian hands the phone back to Mai.

MAI

Mmm. Doesn't it?

Mai continues to stare at the picture.

MAI (CONT'D)

They look happy. Really, truly happy.

BRIAN

Of course they do. Why wouldn't they?

MAI

No, nothing. I'm just grateful that she's found someone who keeps that smile on her face.

BRIAN

Well, she has.

MAI

Time for bed I think.

(yawning)

I'll be up early...

BRIAN

You always are.

MAI

Are you tired?

BRIAN

Not yet. Not at all, really. I might actually go for a quick workout...

MAI

Good for you...

BRIAN

Goodnight my love.

MAI

Goodnight.

BRIAN

Shall I say a prayer?

MAI

Mmm.

Brian collects his thoughts for a moment. He closes his eyes.

BRIAN

Heavenly Father, thank you for this day that you have blessed us with. We are so fortunate to be here in this beautiful place, in joyful communion with the ones we love.

(beat)

We know that your love for us is infinite, Lord, and that all you ask of us in return is a joyful submission to Your Will.

(beat)

And should we ever err, and fall prey to pridefulness, or intemperance, or fleshly pleasures, may you see fit to illuminate the path back to righteousness, and swiftly return us to your loving embrace.

(beat)

Lord, we give thanks for our many blessings and vow to always carry your light within us, so that we may bless others in the way that you have so richly blessed us. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Brian looks over. Mai has fallen asleep. He gently sets her hand down, pulls the covers up over her, then turns out the light.

INT. GYM - LATER

Brian lifts weights in the gym. It's quiet and completely empty. The only sounds are Brian's laboured breathing and the the din of the HVAC system.

He finishes his set and sets the weights down. As he catches his breath, he starts to appraise himself in the mirror.

He walks a little closer to the mirror and continues to admire himself. He slowly raises his shirt and inspects his abdomen: it's flat and toned. He lifts his shirt up a little higher so that his whole midsection is now exposed. He walks closer to the mirror and runs his free hand over his stomach, pulling the skin taut so that his well-developed abdominal muscles become even more prominent.

He raises the shirt up even higher, exposing his chest. He traces a line under and across his pectorals. He looks around to make sure he's completely alone then he takes off his shirt and tosses it to the side.

He walks even closer to the mirror, and starts to flex and preen with total abandon. His biceps bulge, his chest tenses, and his forearms are suddenly criss-crossed with thick, pulsing veins, and—

STAM!

Brian is jolted from his trance. It's Timo, standing in the doorway. Their eyes meet in the mirror. Brian is temporarily transfixed by the sight of Timo. Eventually he breaks eye contact, grabs his t-shirt, and tries to put it on. But it's sweaty and twisted and inside-out, so he ends up holding the shirt up awkwardly to his bare torso. Timo shoots him a warm, disarming smile.

OMIT

Please don't get dressed on my account.

BRIAN

Yes, well, I just got very hot while I was working out, and I just...yeah.

TIMO

Of course! You're working out very hard! Why should you be uncomfortable?

BRIAN

Well...

Timo is now standing directly behind Brian. He winks at him.

TIMO

(playfully)

And perhaps, maybe, you like to take a little look at yourself while you work out? To understand your body better? And what is wrong with that? You work very hard, you have a very nice physique...why not admire it? Study it? BRIAN

I suppose...

TIMO

If we were in Ancient Greece, we'd both be naked right now...and probably much happier for it!

Timo slaps Brian's back playfully.

BRIAN

Oh, well...

TIMO

I won't interrupt you any longer. I'm just heading to the sauna.

BRIAN

In this weather?

TIMO

I'm from Finland, you see: everywhere I go, I first must seek out the sauna.

BRIAN

Oh, uh, right: I suppose you have saunas everywhere over there, right?

TIMO

Yes, so many! And everyone is completely naked, all the time! Which is why I can never understand this hysteria around nudity. A uniquely American thing...

BRIAN

Yes, well, I suppose it's just...different cultures.

TIMO

Yes. But it's all very silly.

BRIAN

I guess...

TIMO

So perhaps I'll see you there?

BRIAN

Where?

TIMO

The sauna. After a workout it's the very best thing.

BRIAN Oh. I...maybe...

TIMO

Well, I'll leave you now. Ciao ciao!

Timo strides out of the gym and through the door that leads to the sauna. Brian stands still, vaguely dazed. He looks at the sauna door for a long moment. Then at himself in the mirror. He quickly pulls his t-shirt on and marches out of the gym.

INT. GEORGETTE & DAVID'S BEDROOM - DAWN

Georgette and David are both asleep in bed. David starts to stir slightly and makes a faint WHIMPERING sound. Eventually, his movements intensify. He starts to thrash violently, then makes a strange, piercing MOAN that startles him awake.

Georgette reaches over, still half asleep, and places her hand on David's hand and rubs it soothingly. They stay like that for a moment. David's breathing slows, and Georgette quickly falls back asleep.

David then slips out of bed and walks over to the window. He draws back the curtain slightly, slides opens the door to the terrace, and steps outside.

EXT. GEORGETTE & DAVID'S TERRACE - CONTINUOUS

He stares out at the rolling hills in the distance. The sky, still an inky purple overhead, is illuminated by a thin line of pink and orange at the horizon. Heavy mist clings low to the rice fields in the foreground.

Then in the distance, he notices a FIGURE walking along a narrower path in between the fields. No details can be made out about them except that they're dressed entirely in white. The Stranger in White dips in and out of the heavy veil of mist, completely camouflaged by it at times. David is intrigued.

INT. LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER

Suda stands by the large circular table in the centre of the lobby that holds the white lotus. She removes the domed cover and inspects the bloom, still submerged beneath the water. She gently prods the tip of the flower with her finger, then plunges her hand into the water, swiftly rips out the plant, and tosses it in a bin bag on the floor. She then kneels down and retrieves a fresh lotus blossom from a crate, and replaces it gingerly in the vessel on the table. She carefully wipes up the water droplets left behind then heads back to the front desk.

As she approaches the front desk, she hears footsteps: it's David. She quickly deposits the crate and the bin bag behind the counter, out of sight. David smiles and nods at Suda, and she bows deeply to him in return. He stops briefly to admire the lotus blossom in the centre of the lobby, then continues on, out the front door.

EXT. FIELD - A WHILE LATER

David walks along the same path where he saw the Stranger in White. The sun has just begun to crest above the horizon, and the mist has begun to clear somewhat. He stops for a moment to admire the scene.

Then, in the distance, the Stranger in White appears again — just for a second. They quickly disappear back into the bank of heavy mist. David takes a few steps forward then strains to try and make out the figure, but there's seemingly no one there. He keeps walking.

Suddenly, a low, heavy, indistinct DIN begins to sound out. David turns to see where the sound is coming from, but he can't determine its origin.

The sound intensifies and starts to become a more discernible WHOP-WHOP rhythm that's coming from overhead. David looks up to sky and cranes his head all around, but there's nothing. The sound continues to intensify: little sonic BOOMS crack through the air, causing the trees to visibly shake. But still there's no sign of anything overhead.

The noise is deafening now. David physically braces himself against the force of the shockwaves.

Just when it seems it couldn't possibly get any louder, a black helicopter zooms directly overhead, so close to the ground that it almost seems like it's going to lop off the topmost fronds of the tallest trees.

David instinctively drops to the ground and burrows himself into the brush at the side of the path. The helicopter passes out of sight, and the noise gradually subsides.

David slowly pulls himself up from the ground and gathers himself. He steps back on to the path and continues to walk, dusting off dirt and debris as he goes. After a moment, he looks up, and standing right in front of him is the Figure in White.

It's Mai. Out for a morning walk.

They both stop and look at each other, slightly confused. Mai's gaze quickly travels to the streaks of dirt on David's shirt. He tries to brush off a few of the larger pieces of debris.

DAVID

Did you see all that?

Mai laughs softly.

MAI

I did.

David flushes.

DAVID

I don't like helicopters.

MAI

Me neither.

Mai and David appraise each other nervously.

MAI (CONT'D)

So: are you staying at the hotel?

DAVID

I am. We are. My wife and daughter. You?

MAI

Mmmhmm. Us too. My husband and daughter. And son-in-law.

DAVID

Good, good.

MAI

You're American?

DAVID

We are.

MAI

Me too. Where are you from?

DAVID

Boston area. Washington before that. St. Louis originally. And you?

MAI

Salt Lake City. Sacramento before that. Hanoi originally.

A strange, pained expression passes across David's face.

DAVID

Did you...

(beat)

Were you?

MAI

Yes. I left in 1975. Right at the end.

DAVID

Did you leave by yourself?

MAI

Yes. By then, it was just me. Mother, father, sister...I was one of the lucky ones.

DAVID

Oh. I- I'm sorry.

MAI

It was so long ago. It feels like it happened to a different person. It did, in a way.

A long, pregnant silence.

MAI (CONT'D)

Did you serve?

David averts his gaze.

DAVID

I did.

MAI

Thank you for your service.

DAVID

It's not something to be thanked for.

MAI

That depends on who you ask.

Silence. They stare at each other piercingly.

MAI (CONT'D)

Well, I think I'll be...

Mai gestures in the direction David came from.

DAVID

Oh, of course. And I'm going to...

David gestures in the direction Mai came from.

MAI

Well, enjoy your walk.

DAVID

Thank you. You as well.

MAT

Yes. Maybe our paths will cross again?

They exchange a polite smile and carry on their respective ways. After a moment, David looks back, but Mai has already disappeared once again into the mist.

EXT. HELIPAD - MOMENTS LATER

The helicopter that just passed overhead sits on the White Lotus' helipad. Its blades slow to a stop.

Chet stands at the edge of the tarmac, rigid and expectant. He's flanked by an even larger phalanx of Porters than the day before.

The door of the helicopter unlocks with a CLICK then flings open. A man, JAMES MA (30s), hops out. He's sleek, masculine, and debonair. He stands on the tarmac and extends his hand to help out the other passenger, JIAO ZHANG (late 20s). She's similarly polished, petite, and deeply aloof. Chet steps forward to greet them. He looks past James to Jiao.

CHET

Ms. Zhang. Welcome to the White Lotus.

Jiao nods, but avoids shaking Chet's outstretched hand.

Chet now turns his attention to James.

CHET (CONT'D)

Mr. Ma. Welcome. I trust you had a pleasant journey?

JAMES

(impeccable RP accent)
Yes. Quite, thank you.

CHET

And this is your first time visiting Thailand, I understand?

James quickly turns his attention back to Jiao. He scrutinises her, as if to try and anticipate what she might need.

JAMES

(distractedly)

Mmm.

(beat)

If we could just proceed directly to the hotel...

CHET

Yes of course. Please.

Chet gestures toward a nearby golf cart. James winces.

JAMES

Is that the only transport?

CHET

What do you mean?

JAMES

Well, perhaps...a car?

CHET

I'm afraid there's only a very narrow footpath leading back. But we will drop Ms. Zhang directly at her villa. And you at your room.

JAMES

(sighs)

I suppose we don't have a choice.

CHET

And the porters will follow directly behind with your luggage.

JAMES

(archly)

Yes. What else would they do?

Chet smiles falsely, then gestures to the Porters to begin unloading the luggage from the helicopter. He walks toward the waiting golf cart and hops into the driver's seat. James helps Jiao into her seat. She shifts uncomfortably, and looks around with curiosity...or perhaps dismay. James sits down next to her.

(Unless otherwise noted, Jiao and James always converse in Mandarin, but speak English with everyone else)

JAMES (CONT'D)

What do you think?

JIAO

It's pretty...but quite dated.

James sniffs disapprovingly and nods in assent.

JAMES

Very.

Chet turns around to address them.

CHET

Shall we head off?

JAMES

Please.

Chet switches on the golf cart, and they begin to drive down the path toward the main complex. Jiao cranes her head to get a better look. After a moment, she leans toward James.

JIAO

If we buy it, we'll have to tear it all down and start over completely.

JAMES

Definitely. I don't see a thing worth saving.

CUT TO BLACK.

END OF EPISODE